

## **ESTIMATED COMPARISON OF GIRLS SUPORTERS LOYALTY IN MASHHAD CITY SCHOOLS FOR ESTEGHLAL AND PERSPOLIS CLUBS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is Estimated Comparison of Girl supporters Loyalty in Mashhad City Schools in Esteghlal and Persepolis clubs. The statistical population of this research consisted of 600 participants among Girl Loyal supporters in Mashhad City Schools; the resulting from human resources was conducted in 1392; the sample size was 233 people. This study used a Descriptive and conducted a survey method. Data gathering has been collected by questionnaires of Hamony *et al.*, (2000) Loyalty with Cronbach Coefficient Alpha for questionnaires was computed (0/87) and reasonable validity for questionnaires was computed (0/82). Data analyses were conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics with Software SPSS19. The results showed here indicated no significant difference between attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty ( $p \geq 0.05$ ). This subject indicates that the supporters Loyalty of the two clubs are the same. So attitudinal and behavioral loyalty of Esteghlal and Persepolis club fans, none of the two is better than another.

**Keywords:** *Supporters, Sport Club, Esteghlal and Persepolis*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sport industry has increasingly and considerably been affected by changes in life styles such that interest in health maintenance is increased in public motivating them to spend more and more of their times in sports related activities. On the other hand, based on existing information soccer is thought of as the most popular sport in most countries so that it is regarded as the national sport in those countries. Casting football competitions on TV with millions of spectators has made this sport the most popular one in world.

In Iran also, football is the most common and popular sport having the highest number of sportsmen, supporter and spectators in comparison with other sports. Sport clubs play a significant and effective role in publicizing as well as augmentation of professional sport. These clubs through motivation and absorption of the young towards heroic sport and training sportsmen in different branches along with conduction of competitions and tournaments create delight and vivacity in public. This sport foundation is sponsoring elite athletes on their way to gain international honors, the results of which would provide political, economical and cultural benefits (Khalili, 2007).

Customer loyalty is one of the most important issues in sportsmen industry where satisfaction rate and quality of services are always considered as challenging subjects (Wilians, 2009). Health and physical fitness is an industry rapidly growing in the world. More than 33000 health recreation centers exist in USA and their quantity is increasing in Europe as well. There are 1300 fitness centers in Greece with 311500 customers and annual income of above 164 million dollars making it a competitive industry. Provision of higher level of catering and services is antecedent to success and customer satisfaction.

In this context, maintaining the motivation and vivacity of fans and supporters is the main target of sports clubs as customer satisfaction is bound to their loyalty. Fans play an undeniable role in preserving the life of sport industries. Their importance is so much that is considered as one of the main assets of professional clubs and provides identity for sport leagues.

Fans make up the core of the clubs support, are highly visible and vocal and thus have a significant influence on the clubs profile and profitability.

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This is why keeping fans and supporters satisfied is quite significant as they are the assets needed for success of sport clubs, federations and societies. One method to absorb fans and increase their loyalty is to provide different varieties and facilities and conduct good matches to make spectators enjoy during their watching time.

Qualitative and quantitative researches on sport industry supporter loyalties indicate that a full understanding of sport consumer behavior is far from acquired. Studies about sport industry marketing also indicate non-extensive works in this ground. Greenwell *et al.*, (2008) studies in regard with suitability of welfare services provided for sport spectators implied that their satisfaction depends on quality and suitability of services as well as the rate of their contributions in decision makings. Elahi *et al.*, (2011) focused their research on competency situation of Iran's professional soccer league with the results indicating that the more predictable the matches, the less number of spectators in stadium. David Rylander (2008) researched on motivation elements for attraction of varsity students in America.

There were five elements found to be effective in absorption of spectators consisting of sociability, stress, entertainment, social ego and personality. Mak-Prichard *et al.*, (2009) worked on hurdles for repeated presence of fans that were job and personal commitments plus family ties. Another result of Elahi (2008) indicating to be useful in attraction of fans were items like famous athletes and coaches, quality of matches and their time schedules, fringe benefits or gifts and suitability of stadiums. Sadjjadi *et al.*, (2013) in their research about fans loyalty to professional soccer leagues concluded that three factors of head coach, management, and brand are the most effective ones. Farahani *et al.*, in their research comparing loyalty of customers of private and governmental sport clubs resulted that a meaningful difference lacks to exist between brand selection, change cost, satisfaction and loyalty, but this difference was noticeable when comparison analysis was based on qualities of services provided by private or governmental clubs. Wang and Tsuji (2011) also worked on fan loyalty and motivations.

Team attachment, aesthetic, sociability and sport knowledge are effective on attitudinal loyalty, whereas team devotion, interest to baseball and team vicarious achievements effect on behavioral loyalty.

Based on above results increasing loyalty of fans is derived from their satisfaction. Thus, club managers in order to create dynamicity and maintain team's reputation, should continuously or periodically measure the quality of services, customer satisfactions and fan loyalties to recognize the weak and strong points to make necessary actions to reduce the weak points and arouse the strong points. From the other hand, since female presence in stadiums is banned in Iran, they can be thought of as indirect fans and by sales of team related goods through media and assistance of sponsors clubs can reach their financial objectives. At the moment, young girls are half of the soccer team fans and thus enriching their idle times by the fact of watching sport competitions at heretic levels shall play an effective role on public health. This paper is prepared to compare the fan loyalties of girls to Esteghlal and Perspolis clubs.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research is descriptive and is done based on field surveys and the variables are gathered through questionnaires.

Society and statistical sample: statistical society of this research includes Mashhad art college girls that are fans of Esteghlal and Perspolis clubs in Khorasan Razavi province. Based on information given by the prince vice presidency of educational health, their number is 600 in 2013 so that using Kokaran formula sample volume was estimated equal to 233.

Measurement tools: for the purpose of measuring the variables Mahony *et al.*, (2000) questionnaire is used to measure the variables of attitudinal and behavioral loyalties and the data were weighed based on 5 value scales ( 1 very low, 2=low, 3=average, 4= high, 5= very high) and dynamicity and credibility were 0.87 and 0.82 as estimated by the researcher.

Data analysis was performed in descriptive and deductive levels by SPSS software.

Statistical methods: For analysis of data descriptive statistics (average, standard deviation, tables, diagrams, etc) and deductive statistics ( Kolmogrov Smirnov test #8, two statement test, and Uman Whitney) were used. Also Kendal coefficient was used to measure tolerance and Krunbach coefficient  $\alpha$ .

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was applied to estimate questionnaire dynamicity. All statistical analysis and activities were done using SPSS software version 19.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section at first stage using descriptive statistics by abundance distribution tables we have described study sample data and data captured from questionnaire and on second stage results of statistical analysis are presented performed by deductive methods including Kolmogrov-Smirnov and Uman Whitney tests.

**Table 1: Tehran Esteghlal and Perspolis clubs fans based on age, educations, legal presence probability, media**

Variable		Abundance		Percent	
		Esteghlal	Perspolis	Esteghlal	Perspolis
Age	Less than-18-years	123	93	95/3	89/4
	Between18-25 years	6	11	4/7	10/6
Education	Class 1 student	51	29	21/9	12/4
	Class 2 student	40	55	17/2	33/6
	Class 3 student	38	20	16/3	8/6
legal presence	yes	103	123	99	95/3
	no	1	6	1	4/7
presence probability	1 - 3 times	27	30	20/9	28/8
	4 - 6 times	44	18	34/1	17/3
	7 - 9 times	13	8	10/1	7/7
	More than 10	44	48	34/1	46/2
Media news	TV	110	86	85/3	82/7
	Radio	0	1	0	1
	newspaper	2	0	1/6	0
	Internet	16	17	12/3	16/3
Team support years	Less than 1	4	3	3/1	2/9
	Between 1 & 2	12	14	9/3	13/5
	2 to 3	28	7	21/7	6/7
	3 to 4	22	10	17/1	9/6
	4 to 5	22	15	17/1	14/4
	Greater than 5	41	55	31/8	52/9
Total sum		129	104	100	100

Above table indicates that 85% of Esteghlal fans age less than 18, and 4% age between 18 and 25, whereas for Perspolis team these are 89% and 10%. Also from education point of view it is shown that Esteghlal fans are mostly class 1 and their least is class 3, but for Perspolis team most fans are class 2 , least fans class 3. Legal presence showed that 99% of Perspolis club fans said “yes” 1% saying “no” but

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for Esteghlal fans 95% said “yes” 4% saying “no”. Estimated presence in stadium when it is legal 34% of Esteghlal fans are keen to be present more than 10 times whereas for Perspolis fans, 46% are eager to be present more than 10 times. From media viewpoint, 85% of Esteghlal fans followed up the news by TV, 2% by Radio, 12% via internet, whereas for Perspolis fans, 83% followed up the news by TV, 1% by Radio, 16% via internet. Finally regarding years of supporting their favorite club, only 32% of Esteghlal fans had supported the team more than 5 years, whereas for Perspolis fans, 53% had supported the team more than 5 years.

**Table 2: Kolmogrov Smirnov test to determine normal distribution of data**

Row	Loyalty	Statistics	
		Statistics KS	Meaningful level
1	Attitudinal loyalty	2.18	0/01
2	Behavioral loyalty	1.50	0/02

Above table shows that estimation of normal distribution of data for comparison analysis of attitudinal and behavioral loyalty is not correct.

**Table 3: Comparison of attitudinal loyalties of Esteghlal and Perspolis fans**

Team	Quantity	Mean point	Uman Whitney	P
Esteghlal	130	116/05	6571/5	0/808
Perspolis	103	118/2		

Table 3 indicates that considerable difference between fans attitudinal loyalties of the two clubs doesn't exist.

**Table 4: Comparison of behavioral loyalties of Esteghlal and Perspolis fans**

Team	Quantity	Mean point	Uman Whitney	P
Esteghlal	130	116/05	6571/5	0/808
Perspolis	103	118/2		

Table 4 indicates that considerable difference between fans behavioral loyalties of the two clubs doesn't exist.

**Results**

In general, loyalty of fans is significantly effective on sport clubs popularity. Therefore in today's era where marketing is becoming more important, achieving fan loyalty of sport clubs customers is regarded as a key element in making sport clubs successful in competitive arena. It is necessary for providers of sport services to recognize the significant factors that are expected by customers to base their works on them. Thus in this paper we have made comparison between Esteghlal and Perspolis clubs girls fan loyalties. According to the results of descriptive research via abundance distribution method, 99% of the sample group of girl students said “yes” to legal presence for Perspolis whereas this was 95% for Esteghlal club. Therefore as fan loyalties of Esteghlal and Perspolis clubs are almost the same without a meaningful difference, it is up to managers and planners of Esteghlal and Perspolis clubs to find some clues and take approaches as a result of which presence of females especially young girls in stadiums becomes legal. Abundance distribution on sample group shows that estimated number of being present in stadiums when it is legal, 34% Esteghlal fans will be present for more than 10 times whereas this is 46% for fans of Perspolis club. Van *et al.*, (2006) in their research about motivation elements effecting on customer behaviors showed that only 6% of J and K- League spectators were present more than 10 times.

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Sagha in 2011 showed similar but a little higher presence of Iranians in stadiums. Van *et al.*, (2006) and this paper also show that the women that are fans of Esteghlal and Perspolis clubs shall be present in stadiums just like the men to prove their loyalties to their favorite clubs. This research indicates that country sport managers can optimize their marketing opportunities by creating desirable conditions and environments to enable the presence of women in stadiums. This research gave us some significant results. As an example, while soccer game is regarded as professional sport in Iran, average coach and player are getting high wages in a season. In spite of this, there exist fans who without any expectations and quite voluntarily by spending their time watch a football game. Based on data derived from this research on preference of girl students, their attitudinal loyalty to Esteghlal and Perspolis clubs are so much that they like their favorite clubs even more than their close friends. This issue indicates that fans loyalties are quite high for favorite clubs and this result correlates with the results of researches done by Tsuji (2011) and Saatchian (2011). But it doesn't correlate with Sajjadi *et al.*, (2013) research in which it is shown that classmate's admission is also effective on fans behavior and Iranian professional soccer league fans like to classify themselves and their friends in different social groups also it was shown that fans like to be divided into different social groups. Since this research was done on girl fans, the researches viewpoint is that the result would have been the same for boys and the only significant issue is the age group. Therefore it is a shame that women who are half of the population cannot be present in stadiums as they were before revolution. It is expected that female fans with their high loyalties to their favorite clubs have the minimum right of a fan that is to be able to watch the matches in stadiums, but this achievement requires provision of necessary infrastructures by sport managers and authorities. This cannot be achieved unless like other developed countries on the world (that Iran was one of them 40 years ago!) we utilize advanced educational system such as spectators training classes, etc. Other outcome of this research based on comparison of attitudinal and behavioral loyalty of fans of Esteghlal and Perspolis clubs indicates that attitudinal and behavioral loyalty of fans of Esteghlal club do not differ from attitudinal and behavioral loyalty of fans of Perspolis club. Previous researches like Rylander (2008) also showed that loyalty is to be measured by both attitudinal and behavioral aspects. For instance, Wang et al and Tsuji (2011) studied on motivations and loyalty of fans. Results showed that team attachment, aesthetic of games, sociability and sport knowledge are effective on attitudinal loyalty, whereas team devotion, interest to baseball and team vicarious achievement effects on behavioral loyalty. Therefore in this paper we have used psychological commitment to measure attitudinal loyalty, and length of time spent on watching games on TV and following up sport news from newspapers to measure behavioral loyalty. Since loyalty to both clubs is almost the same, and upon previous researches emphasizing on both behavioral and attitudinal loyalty, it seems it is quite necessary for both these two clubs to conduct an integrated overall planning to achieve their marketing objectives and absorption of more fans.

### **Research Constraints**

Individual differences of customers were not controlled.

Different motivations of those filled up questionnaire were not controlled.

No controls were made on mental conditions and rate of interest of those who contributed in filling the questionnaires.

No controls on location variables such as immediate decisions about the teams during questionnaire filling time that could be different from their attitudes and popularity of the teams.

Time and location conditions were constant and perhaps not desirable by all those who contributed in filling the questionnaires.

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