

Investigation on identification and loyalty features of Euro Cup basketball fans

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to test the identification and loyalty levels of Euro Cup fans. 354 people from the Euro Cup fans, male (n = 249) and female (n = 105), participated in the study. Male participants constitute 70.3% of the total sample, while female participants constitute 29.7%. Identification and loyalty scale, which was adapted to Turkish from the scale created by Donovan et al. (2005) for the determination of the degree of identification and PCT (Psychological Commitment to Team) scale created by Pritchard et al. (1992) and tested for validity and reliability by Mahony et al. (2000) to analyze the level of psychological commitment of the fan by Giray (2008), and whose reliability and validity was made, was used in this study. Non-parametric analysis methods were used in the study. In conclusion, statistical differences were found between the groups of gender, income status, occupations and age variables of the participants.

Keywords: Basketball, identification, loyalty, fans.

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INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that sports events increase in value day by day as many fields in this sector attract worldwide attention. Advertisements, sponsors, TV broadcasts, communication and digital developments make sports events and organizations more qualified. Therefore, people have created a system that can follow all the movements in sports events. A period has emerged when individuals can learn many subjects about the teams and the private lives of athletes that they admire, and this has helped people to devote more time to sports. In parallel with the developments worldwide, effective sports organizations are held in basketball, where the number of followers increases daily.

Audiences who are consumers of sports games, have an important place and in this context, a lot of research has been done on sports spectators or audiences (Turğut and Yaşar, 2019; Kim and Ko, (2019); Turğut et al., 2018; Sveinson and Hoerber, 2016; Watanabe et al., 2018). Shank and Beasley (1998) emphasized the importance of this by saying, "if the sports event is the heart of the sports industry, the sports audience is the blood that beats this heart". Sports audience and fan are different concepts. While the sports audience is seen as the

person who follows and watch the sports events in their free time, fans are seen as committed to the team and the players that they support (Trail et al., 2000; Wann, 1997). According to another definition, the fans are the people who support sports clubs and purchase the clubs' services for a certain fee (Genç, 1998). Fans no longer observe sporting events and are shifting towards identification with the teams that they support to a certain extent. While observing an event leads to forgetting it in a short time, a fan loyal to the team that he supports does not easily forget events, he continues to live it in his own world (Trail and James, 2001).

Identification with the team above all represents the psychological connection of the fans to the team (Wann and Wiggins, 1999). This identification with the fans can cause a process in the individual, starting from being an audience and going to hooliganism (Trail and James, 2001). Hooligans take being fans to a different dimension, as a fan can exceed the monitoring state to become someone who harms the environment and himself (Şahin, 2003). According to Wann (1997), the fans who are identified with a team, see their passion as an extension of themselves, the idea and expression

such as "I am a supporter of this team" constitute the center of their self-concepts and make them feel that they are better people than their competitors.

Wann and Branscombe (1990) divided the fans into two parts, the "die-hard" and the "fair-weather" (Wan, 1990). On the other hand, Sutton et al. (1997) divided the fans into three parts as "low", "medium" and "high" according to their level of identification with their team (Sutton, 1997).

Fan types

Hunt et al. (1999), who works in the most detailed way in the literature for sports fans, evaluated the supporters in five classifications. These are:

1. The temporary fan: It is the advocacy for a sports team, athlete or an organization. If there is a time restriction, it is perceived as a temporary fan. After the interest in the element that is the subject of the support has ended, the tendency to support this situation may disappear.
2. The local fan: Geographical features are important in this kind of advocacy. This advocacy is the tendency to support the team in places where people are born and raised. If the athlete he/she is connected with, moves away from the region where he/she lives and goes to another team, there may be a decrease in commitment.
3. The devoted fan: There are no restrictions for this fan. There is a place and time commitment to the supported team. Therefore, he/she does not give up in his/her commitment under any circumstances.
4. The fanatical fan: This kind of person sees being a fan as an important part of his/her identity. Therefore, there are occasions where he/she sees being a fan to be even above all other areas of responsibility.
5. The dysfunctional fan: This type of fan tends to disturb the social changes in him/her and in the environment rather than supporting his/her team. This fan has various features that can make excuses in many ways and disturb other people, and can be described as equivalent to a hooligan.

Identification in fans

Identification is explained as "believing that someone or something is closely connected or related to something" (Oxford Dictionary, 2018; Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). In order for identification to occur as a process or fact in definitions, both sides must exist (Turunc, 2011). Identification has to do with answering to the question, "Who am I?" that a person often ask himself, with "I am the only one" kind of statement that he/she uses while integrating with the group that he/she is in (Mael and Ashforth, 1992).

Identification is not only individualized but there are

many areas of psycho-cultural interaction. With the Person-Team Identification; one can identify with a famous team or athlete. It is a kind of trust and pride for the people who are supported. In this sense, we can give cheerleaders as a good example. The fact that people are generally fans of a strong team which is trying to gain a strong identity. People can see their team as a part of their own personality, as if they win when their team wins, and as if they lose when their team are defeated. The sense of being fan is a passion (Erkal et al., 1998).

For the fan identified with the team, the team's role is central to their social identity. While the team's performances are related to their own values, the role of watching the team for the fans with low identification is only to consider it as an environmental element (Wann and Scradler, 2000).

People who are identified with their favorite team integrate the success or failure of the team to their private lives (Şahin, 2009). They defined the level of identification of the fans as the level of interest of the team that a fan supports psychologically. Individuals with a high level of identification with the team they support are delighted with the success of their team and upset when the team loses. Another important indicator of identification is that fans who advocate for their teams carry their products on the materials they wear and use, and show their commitment to their teams by purchasing and using licensed sports products. Torlak et al. (2014) determined that the fans' feelings of self-confidence and the increase in their socialization levels were as a result of the identification of the fans with their teams.

Fans' loyalty

Although the loyalty of fans to their teams has been known for many years, little is known about the social and psychological factors that increase emotional loyalty to sports teams. As an indication of loyalty, behavioral measurements act to measure consistent and repetitive purchasing behavior. Therefore, the missing aspect of the behavioral approach is that repeat purchases do not occur as a result of a psychological loyalty to the brand or business each time (Bowen and Chen, 2001; Tepeci, 1999). Although the re-participation of the fans in the sports event is an important indicator of loyalty, the psychological processes that affect the participation of some fans in the sports event over time should be taken into consideration (Mahony et al., 2000). Loyalty to being a sports fan is the person's level of admiration for the team (Hunt et al., 1999). Fans are a highly commitment to sports-specific branches and their team (Goldstein, 1989). According to the championship of the team they support, their success in the group or the region they are in, their loyalty is formed. These fan groups make their loyalty constant by spending time at team facilities, purchasing a number of team products (Steward and

Smith, 2000).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research group

The sample of the study was applied on Euro Cup fans. The research was applied to 427 fans in Tofaş and Limoges Cercle Saint-Pierre basketball match in Tofaş Sports Hall in Bursa province and Galatasaray and Ewe Baskets Oldenburg Euro Cup Basketball match in Sinan Erdem Hall in Istanbul province. 73 participants who were deemed not suitable for the study were excluded. The study consists of 354 people, 249 men and 105 women. Participants were selected by non-random sampling method.

Data collection tools

"Identification and loyalty" scale, which was adapted to Turkish from the scale created by Donovan et al. (2005) for the determination of the degree of identification and PCT (Psychological Commitment to Team) scale created by Pritchard et al. (1992) and tested for validity and reliability by Mahony et al. (2000) to analyze the level of psychological commitment of the fan by Giray (2008), and whose reliability and validity was made (Giray, 2008), was used in this study. The scale has 8 demographic components and 24 measurement expressions, is a 5-point Likert-type and reverse scored. In the scale, the most positive perception dimension was determined as 1 and the point value of the most negative response was determined as 5. In the analysis, evaluations were made by taking this structure of the scale into consideration.

Analysis of the data

The analysis of the data was carried out by using the software package IBM SPSS 25. Firstly, the reliability of the data was found to be $\alpha = 0.791$, which was tested with the Cronbach Alpha method. Since all the α value found was over 0.70, the study was determined to be reliable and analysis was performed (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). To examine the differences between the demographic variables in terms of scale scores; comparison was made using independent sample T test for comparing variables with scale scores with two categories, and one-way ANOVA methods for comparing variables with more than two categories with scale scores. In case the difference is detected as a result of one-way ANOVA; Bonferroni Test, one of the post-hoc methods, was used to determine which category or categories originated from the difference. Pearson correlation was used to compare two continuous variables. In the study, the type I error rate was taken as 0.05. (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants.

	N	%
Gender		
Male	249	70.3
Female	105	29.7
Age		
Between 19-23	235	66.4
Between 24-29	51	14.4
Between 30-34	41	11.6
35 and above	27	7.6
Occupation		
Employee	55	15.5
Employer	23	6.5
Civil servant	46	13.0
Seasonal / part time	29	8.2
Not working	201	56.8
Income level		
1-2500 TL	246	69.5
2501-3000 TL	10	2.8
3001-3500 TL	39	11.0
3501-4000 TL	7	2.0
4001 TL and above	52	14.7

RESULTS

Scale scores of participants in terms of gender were compared with independent sample T test. As a result of comparisons; It was determined that there was a significant difference in terms of identification ($p = 0.009$) and loyalty ($p = 0.004$), and there was no significant difference in terms of political loyalty ($p = 0.129$) and commitment ($p = 0.154$). It was found that women had higher identification and loyalty scores than men (Table 2). It was concluded that there were statistically significant differences in the level of identification and loyalty of males and females according to gender, and that females showed more identification and loyalty than men ($p < 0.05$).

The scale scores of the participants in terms of age groups were compared with one-way Anova. As a result of comparisons, it was determined that there was a significant difference in terms of identification ($p < 0.001$), loyalty ($p < 0.001$) and political loyalty ($p < 0.001$). According to the age variables of the participants, it was determined that the fans, who are 30 years old and over, showed more identification than the 19 to 29 age and it was found that participants who were 24 years old and over have higher level of loyalty than those who were 23 years old and below and the difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). In the evaluation of the political loyalty levels of the participants' age variable, it was

Table 2. Comparison of scale scores of the participants in terms of their gender.

Dimension	Gender	Mean	SD.	t	P
Identification	Male	2.80	0.98	-2.62	0.009*
	Female	3.09	0.91		
Loyalty	Male	2.47	1.06	-2.88	0.004*
	Female	2.82	1.01		
Political loyalty	Male	3.11	0.91	-1.52	0.129
	Female	3.27	0.94		
Commitment	Male	2.44	1.14	-1.42	0.154
	Female	2.62	0.91		

*p < 0.05.

Table 3. Comparison of scale scores of the participants in terms of their ages.

Dimension	Age**	Mean	Sd.	F	p	Difference
Identification	19-23 (A)	2.70	0.89	15.97	0.001*	C.D>A.B
	24-29 (B)	2.87	0.92			
	30-34 (C)	3.48	1.03			
	35 and Above (D)	3.67	0.88			
Loyalty	19-23 (A)	2.38	0.98	8.38	0.001*	B.C.D>A
	24-29 (B)	2.97	1.01			
	30-34 (C)	2.94	1.28			
	35 and Above (D)	2.96	1.04			
Political Loyalty	19-23 (A)	3.00	0.92	9.66	0.001*	C.D>A.B
	24-29 (B)	3.21	0.90			
	30-34 (C)	3.71	0.75			
	35 and Above (D)	3.58	0.81			
Commitment	19-23 (A)	2.43	0.99	1.70	0.167	-
	24-29 (B)	2.76	1.18			
	30-34 (C)	2.62	1.32			
	35 and Above (D)	2.37	1.22			

*p < 0.05.

concluded that the political loyalties of the fans aged 30 and over were more than the fans aged 29 and below, and there were statistically significant differences between them. Also no difference in commitment sub-dimension ($p = 0.167$) scores. Participants in the age group of 30 and over have higher identification and political commitment scores than participants under the age of 30, and participants in the age group of 24 and over have higher loyalty scores than those under the age of 24 (Table 3).

The scale scores of the participants in terms of the occupations were compared with analysis method of one-

way Anova. As a result of it was determined that there was a significant difference in terms of identification ($p < 0.001$), loyalty ($p = 0.015$) and political loyalty ($p < 0.001$), sub-dimensions and no difference in commitment ($p = 0.403$) sub-dimension scores (Table 4). Employers and civil servants have higher identification and political loyalty scores than other participants. In addition, employees were found to have the lowest loyalty points according to analysis (Table 5).

In terms of income levels of the participants, the scale scores were compared with one-way Anova. As a result of comparison, it was determined that there was a

Table 4. Comparison of scale scores of the participants in terms of their occupations.

Dimension	Occupation	Mean	Sd.	F	p	Difference
Identification	Employee (A)	2.67	.905	7.80	0.001*	B,C>A,D,E
	Employer (B)	3.58	.985			
	Civil servant (C)	3.35	1.08			
	Seasonal/part time (D)	2.87	.995			
	Not Working (E)	2.75	.884			
Loyalty	Employee (A)	2.33	1.01	3.12	0.015*	B,C,D,E>A
	Employer (B)	2.95	1.10			
	Civil servant (C)	2.90	1.25			
	Seasonal/part time (D)	2.74	.978			
	Not Working (E)	2.49	1.00			
Political Loyalty	Employee (A)	3.07	.897	5.61	0.001*	B,C>A,D,E
	Employer (B)	3.68	.794			
	Civil servant (C)	3.55	.872			
	Seasonal/part time (D)	3.24	.925			
	Not Working (E)	3.01	.912			
Commitment	Employee (A)	2.35	1.03	1.00	0.403	-
	Employer (B)	2.34	1.20			
	Civil servant (C)	2.56	1.31			
	Seasonal/part time (D)	2.81	.90			
	Not Working (E)	2.48	1.04			

*p < 0.05.

Table 5. Comparison of scale scores in terms of income status of participants.

Dimension	Income L.	Mean	Sd.	F	p	Difference
Identification	1-2500 TL(A)	2.71	.882	7.72	0.001*	C,E>A,B,D
	2501-3000 TL(B)	2.95	.769			
	3001-3500 TL(C)	3.41	1.09			
	3501-4000 TL(D)	2.84	1.00			
	4001 TL and above (E)	3.29	1.03			
Loyalty	1-2500 TL(A)	2.45	1.00	2.55	0.039*	C,E>A,B,D
	2501-3000 TL(B)	2.63	.731			
	3001-3500 TL(C)	2.91	1.30			
	3501-4000 TL(D)	2.69	.868			
	4001 TL and above (E)	2.83	1.10			
Political Loyalty	1-2500 TL(A)	3.01	.924	6.71	0.001*	C,E>A,B,D
	2501-3000 TL(B)	2.90	.648			
	3001-3500 TL(C)	3.69	.714			
	3501-4000 TL(D)	3.23	.658			
	4001 TL and above (E)	3.46	.926			
Commitment	1-2500 TL(A)	2.46	1.03	0.70	0.590	-
	2501-3000 TL(B)	2.10	.699			
	3001-3500 TL(C)	2.61	1.33			
	3501-4000 TL(D)	2.85	.852			
	4001 TL and above (E)	2.53	1.17			

*p < 0.05.

significant difference in terms of identification ($p < 0.001$), loyalty ($p = 0.039$) and political loyalty ($p < 0.001$), and no difference in commitment ($p = 0.590$) scores. It has been determined that participants with income of 3001 to 3500 TL and 4001 TL and above have higher identification, loyalty and political loyalty scores than other participants (Table 6). In the evaluations of the fans in terms of their occupation, it was concluded that the employer and the civil servant fans showed more identification than the employees, part-time workers and those who did not have a job. Statistical differences were found between them. It has been concluded that employers, civil servants, part-time workers who did not have job show more loyalty to teams than the employees. Statistical differences were found between them. It is concluded that the level of political loyalty of the employers and civil servants is higher than that of the part-time workers, unemployed and employees. There was a statistical difference between them ($p < 0.05$).

It is concluded that there is a significant difference in terms of identification ($p < 0.001$), loyalty ($p = 0.039$) and political loyalty ($p < 0.001$) in the evaluation of the fans according to their income level. It has been determined that participants with income of 3001 to 3500 TL and 4001 TL and above have higher identification, loyalty and

political loyalty scores than other participants. It is concluded that there are statistical differences.

Relationship levels between the sub-dimensions of the scale were examined using Pearson correlation. As a result:

- A strong positive relationship between loyalty scores ($p < 0.00$; $r = 0.760$),
- A positive moderate to severe relationship between political loyalty scores ($p < 0.00$; $r = 0.601$),
- A positive moderate to severe relationship ($p < 0.00$; $r = 0.605$) between commitment scores was determined.

With loyalty scores:

- A positive moderate to severe relationship between political loyalty scores ($p < 0.001$; $r = 0.542$),
- A positive moderate to severe relationship between commitment scores ($p < 0.001$; $r = 0.697$) was determined.

With political loyalty scores:

There was no relationship between commitment points ($p = 0.416$) (Table 6).

Table 6. Examining the relationship levels between scale sub-dimensions.

		Loyalty	Political loyalty	Commitment
Identification	R	0.760	0.601	0.605
	P	0.001*	<0.001*	0.001*
Loyalty	R		0.542	0.697
	P		<0.001*	0.001*
Political Loyalty	R			.354
	P			0.416

DISCUSSION

Among the gender variables of Euro Cup fans, while the level of identification and loyalty of women is higher than men's significantly, there is no statistically significant difference in political loyalty and commitment. Demirel et al. (2007) concluded that male fans have more identification scores than female fans in different universities, and there were statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$). In this case, the European continent seems likely to have achieved such a result, especially since it has a football fan base. It can be said that a result was obtained in favor of women, since women as basketball fans were more intense when compared to men. It was observed that there was a significant gender difference in the validity and reliability

study of the sports fan identification scale performed (Wann and Branscombe, 1993; Günay and Tiryaki, 2003). In the study of Wann and Branscombe (1993) and Günay and Tiryaki (2003), the results are similar to the results of this study, with the results of the fans show differences in gender and identity levels.

In the results of the identification and loyalty level research conducted by Baş (2008) on football fans, the results of our 15-18 age group showed the highest level of identification on their teams when compared to other age groups, in this study, it was concluded that the scores of the fans of Euro Cup basketball fans 24 and over group had higher scale points. In the study conducted in two branches, more identification was shown at a young age in terms of identification and loyalty to football, and it was concluded that Euro Cup

Basketball fans are more interested and related in their young adulthood. It was observed that the income levels had an impact on the identification, loyalty and political loyalty of participants, and the statistically different results were found ($p < 0.05$). It can be said that due to the social interactions of individuals who can spend time on sports events as their income level increases, their loyalty, identification and political loyalty also act in parallel. Karjaluoto et al. (2016) stated that the loyalty of individuals is related to the image of the brand. Another researcher, James (1997), who evaluated the adherence of the fans on cognitive and socialization, evaluated the loyalty in the results of cognitive complexes of individuals who are described as loyal fans in their study. Among the main reasons for a person's devotion is the tendency to make a cognitive choice against sports, the team or the player.

The development and level of fans are related to the social activities experienced and the direction of communication. In the study conducted by Giray (2008), it was concluded that when the sports fans' favorite teams were followed from the media, it created more identification for them. It can be said that this factor is valid for Euro Cup basketball fans as well. Since basketball is the most popular sport event after football in the European continent, it can be said that the fact that it takes place in the print media, social media and visual media as much as possible, has an impact on the level of identification and loyalty of the fans.

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