

Services of sports agencies and demand patterns of professional Turkish football players in relation to these services

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Aim of paper and research questions

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the requirements in relation to sports agencies and representation services in Turkey. Hence, the questions arise (1) What services are the agent(s) to perform for Professional athletes in general, (2) How sport agents provide a variety of function on behalf of the athletes, (3) Which representation services are expected by the Professional Turkish Football players? Demand patterns developed in relation to representation services has also been of interest. Current findings show that a higher number of Turkish football players prefer individually contracted representatives over sports agencies. Yet representation services are very limited and usually inclusive of transfer and contract negotiations, and legal advising in Turkey.

Literature review

Ruxin (2004) states "The term agent covers a broad range of relationships with an athlete. An agent may simply be a personal friend, family lawyer, teacher or coach who offers advice on a contract negotiation." Shropshire & Davis (2003) states "The last ten years have been marked by an evolution influenced significantly by consolidation of the athlete agent industry." According to Staudohar (2006), "Today, sports agents organise like a professional company with qualified sports managers and provide a variety of functions on behalf of the players, including determining the value of a player's services, negotiation of the player's contract with the club, providing financial management services, counselling a player about his/her post career years." Parks and Qourterman (2003) state that an agency might perform several or perhaps only one function; some agencies, which are called full-service agent, perform all of them. According to Shropshire (1990) "The advantage of a full-service agency is that the athlete gets complete representation without having to gather a group of specialists." The agent's role is shifting toward more complete representation in recent years. As a result, players are becoming even more guarded in their private lives.

Research design and data analysis

This is a descriptive-analytic study and it has been done by means of a field research. For this study, a questionnaire composed of 90 questions was developed. In order to provide the adequacy and representativeness of the instrument face and content validity has been established by a jury. A Cronbach' Alpha coefficient has been computed to determine the internal reliability. The reliability coefficient is $R = 0.87$ and acceptable. Initially, the questionnaire forms have been applied as a pilot study to a pre-determined sample group, comprising 48 football players to remove deficiencies and contradictions in the question form. Results of the research were interpreted from the tables comprising of descriptive frequency analyses and chi-square method considering degree of importance and significance relations ($P < 0.05$). Questionnaires were

applied to the Professional Turkish Football Players in the Turkcell Super League 2008-2009 season. In total 259 football players participated in this research.

Results

According to Champion (1997) “services of the sports agents may include the following: providing advice regarding financial matters such as tax, investment, insurance and money management; obtaining and negotiating endorsement contracts; medical and physical health and training counseling; post – playing career and media image counseling.” Yet, most of the professional football players (65 – 75 %) participating in this study do not have services as stated above. Issues such as family consultancy and education services, health and life planning, financial inspection and insurance, social security and retirement, post career and personal development, image-determination and public relations are not popular practices in sports agents industry in Turkey. Football players only receive transfer, contract and legal advising services from their representatives.

Discussion and conclusion

The results revealed that 46 % of the football players do not trust at all and 45 % of them partially trust football managers who are active in the sports agent industry in Turkey today. They also do not trust the sports managing system because of the unqualified individual representatives. These kinds of representatives do not have necessary official certification and perform illegally in general. On the other hand, football players expect to have sport agencies from which they can receive variety of consultancy and representation services throughout their football life and post career. Also the financial protection needs of professional Turkish footballers result in higher demand of sports agents as representatives. Furthermore, the players have a diversity of demand patterns related to professional sports agent services and need to work with more qualified representatives for their career. Future studies must focus on the sports agents’ legal foundation and professional organisational structures.

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