

THE ROLE OF FAN UNIONS ON THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACTIVITIES IN TURKEY

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Purpose

The purpose of the study was to identify the impact of the conducted social responsibility projects to the sport clubs and the community which the fan unions belong.

Literature

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a concept that roots its origin to philanthropy (Godfrey, 2009). Göcenoğlu ve Onan (2008) mentions that the factors leading CSR workouts are classified according to the various stakeholder groups. Also, they emphasized institutional management and financial organizations, multinational enterprises, legislative organs, government, internationally accepted agreements, civil society unions and media as the leaders of social responsibility operations. Therefore, it can be said that the enterprises, civil society unions, government institutions, charities etc. are providing much more social responsibility activities. Fan unions are one of these organizations. As civil society associations, composed of sport club fans which operate in various regions of the country, fan unions are important organizations. Fan unions are civil society associations which reserve properties such as vast amount of memberships, including various types of people from different socio-economic status showing loyalty to the same sport club. Fans are representing their sport club in society via fan unions. Therefore, the activities and performances which were/will be conducted by the fan unions are reflexions of the sport club in which society it operates. Sport clubs find opportunities in corporation with the society, constructing bonds with the society, satisfying the needs of society and having the opportunity to move with their fans by the help of their fan unions. From this aspect, it could be said that fan unions are important associations in integrating the sport clubs with the society. In recent years the social responsibility activities appeared as an important concept for this integration.

Methodology

In this study interview and survey techniques of qualitative research methods were conducted. The population of the study was composed of the administrators of Fenerbahçe Fan Unions which operate all over the world. The administrators of unions operate in Biga, Bolu, Düzce, Hatay and Uzunköprü were determined as the subject group of the study with purposive sampling method. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the union directors. After then the data generated by interviews were transcribed in the second stage of the process where the codification of the data was done. Additionally to the conducted interviews, the web sites of the Fenerbahçe fan unions and Fenerbahçe Sport Club were surveyed.

Results

Findings indicated that even the Fenerbahçe Fan Unions and Fenerbahçe Sport Club did not have a direct or formal bond, as organizational structures, they both serve to a common mission in social responsibility activities, which is being the foremost organization in conducting CSR activities. Increase in social reputation, increase in sympathy towards the sport club, surge of cooperation among the fans, and increase in the fan number were reported as the impact of the social responsibility activities on the sport club, The data gathered from the interviews and surveys made on the websites pointed out that fan unions organized events such as blood donation campaigns, health examination campaigns, constructed school buildings and playgrounds/parks for children, supported the amateur sport clubs/sport branches and gave support to regions where natural disasters lived (earthquake lived in Van) etc. Support to the peace, happiness, welfare and unity of the society were mentioned both by the fan union directors and club web-sites as the impact of those activities on community.

Discussion

It was supposed that the initiative of the CSR activities, which are conducted in Turkey, was under the control of enterprises and it was assumed that the civil society associations did not have any effect on the implementation of such activities (Çabuk, 2009). But on the contrary, the findings of this research, it can be concluded showed that the fan unions of Fenerbahçe move with their own initiative in organizing social responsibility activities which generate the peak of the corporate social responsibility pyramid (Carroll, 1991). Fans unions, which conduct social responsibility activities to respond the social needs of society, creates positive impact on the images of their sport clubs, on the other hand fans identify with their sport club by participating in social responsibility campaigns. The solidarity among fans and fan unions is strengthened. Finally, if fan unions in Turkey and World play an active role in social responsibility activities, both their community and their sport clubs will benefit.

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