

# THE STUDY OF FANS' BRAND LOYALTY IN IRANIAN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Vajihe Javani<sup>7</sup>, Mohammad Ehsani  
aTarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran  
bTarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran  
[v\\_javani2005@yahoo.com](mailto:v_javani2005@yahoo.com)

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## Abstract

The brand associations are everything that is connected with the brand in its customers' mind (Aaker, 1991). According to the Keller's customer-based brand equity model attributes, benefits and attitudes have been considered as the dimensions of brand associations (Keller, 1993). In sport industry, a sport team can be regarded as a brand and the fans are considered as the customers. So, fans' brand loyalty to sport teams is similar to customers' brand loyalty to other industries (Logger, 2010). And, Sport managers consider brand of teams as the basis of marketing strategies for attracting customer loyalty and fans loyalty (Gladden and Funk, 2002). Therefore, This research aims to study the effects of brand associations' dimensions (attributes, benefits, and attitudes) on fans' brand loyalty in professional football league of Iran. A ten-minute pen and paper questionnaire was distributed to fans of five superior teams of Iranian professional football league in 2009-2010 seasons. A sample of fans (912) have responded Team's Association Questionnaire developed by Gladden and Funk (2001) was used for data collection. To analyze the hypotheses of this study which consist of the cause and effect relationships between brand associations' dimensions and fans' brand loyalty, Structural Equation Model (SEM) was utilized. The findings showed three dimensions of brand associations influenced on fan's brand loyalty of which the attitude was the most important. Benefits and attributes were placed in the second and third rank respectively. In addition, the obtained model of this research highlighted strong interactional effects between the three mentioned dimensions of brand associations. But some of subscale Influenced brand loyalty more strongly than the others between fans of Iranian professional football league. Subscales of importance (0/71), products delivery (0/69), and identification (0/61) were the most effective respectively. Totally, findings of this study verified influencing brand associations' on fans brand loyalty in Iranian football leagues. So, the executives of Iranian clubs should notice these elements, and use them to improve the promotion of their brand for earning advantages like earning more revenue because of attendance of more fans in the stadium, selling more tickets, increasing the purchasers of the club's brand products, absorbing investment, and increasing the price of club's shares.

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