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## THE EFFECT OF FOOTBALL SUPPORTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' COMMITMENT TO THEIR TEAMS ON THEIR CONSUMPTION BEHAVIORS

**Tuncay ÖKTEM**

Assist. Prof. Dr., Bayburt University, Bayburt, Turkiye, [tuncayktm@gmail.com](mailto:tuncayktm@gmail.com)  
ORCID: 0000-0003-2770-1774

**Eda ADATEPE**

Dr., Bayburt University, Bayburt, Turkiye, [edaadatepe@bayburt.edu.tr](mailto:edaadatepe@bayburt.edu.tr)  
ORCID: 0000-0003-1254-9300

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### ABSTRACT

Today, fan loyalty is one of the important issues that come to the fore in the field of sports. The football branch or the football industry also constitutes its fields of study. Sports Sciences also examines these issues with sub-disciplines such as sports marketing, sports economics, sports sponsorship, sports management and club management. Because of this, it is thought that the psychological attachment of fans to the team influences their consumption behavior. In this study, according to opinions of the students, psychological commitment to the team and football supporter consumption behavior levels were determined and the relationship between these two phenomena was investigated. The sample of the study consists of 348 football supporter students from Bayburt University. Questionnaires were collected by random sampling method. As a data collection tool in the study; personal information, Football Supporter Consumption Behavior Scale and Psychological Commitment to the Team Scale were used. Descriptive statistics were performed with SPSS 25 program and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed for compliance with normal distribution, Pearson Correlation Analysis was performed to determine the relationships between scales, and Simple Regression Analysis was performed to determine whether psychological commitment to the team was a predictor of football supporters' consumption behavior. As a result of the research, while no relationship was determined between the age variable and the scale sub-dimensions, it was seen that there was a positive significant relationship between the sub-dimensions of resistance to team change and loyalty to the team and all sub-dimensions of the football supporter consumption behavior scale. Psychological commitment to team was found to be a significant predictor of football supporter consumption behavior.

**Keywords:** University students, football supporter, consumption behavior, psychological commitment to team

## **INTRODUCTION**

Consumption is defined as the provision of services through the use of products and services to satisfy the needs of individuals (Tek & Özgül, 2010). A consumer is a real person who has a need that needs to be satisfied, who has money to spend, and who is willing to spend money (Mucuk, 2009). On the other hand, the sports consumer can be defined as a person who consumes products and services related to sports (Öztürk, 2013). The first concept that comes to mind as a sports consumer is supporters. A supporter is a person associated with the colors of the athlete or athlete, club, or flag (<https://sozluk.gov.tr/>, 2022). The most important factor in the concept of supporters is loyalty.

Sudhabar et al. (2006) define loyalty as a psychological process that causes the degree of usefulness of a company's services, the tendency of customer preference and intention, and/or brand loyalty (Eskiler et al., 2011). Psychological commitment is an attitude that reveals many beneficial behaviors, including loyalty behaviors (Tüfekçi et al., 2016). Some researchers have determined that commitment is a variable that is an antecedent of loyalty and acts as an antecedent of loyalty attitude (Dick & Basu, 1994; Giray & Gültekin Salman, 2008). Selin et al. (1988) state that commitment is the attitude component of loyalty. Loyalty is understood in the literature as the constant commitment of the sports supporter to the sports team. Loyalty explains the natural relationship between the sports team and sports supporters that lasts for many years and plays an important role in the supporters' decision-making mechanism (Mahony et al., 2000; Köse, 2014). It is known that supporters' motivation to attend sports events is also influenced by loyalty to the team (Borland & MacDonald, 2003). Today, the football or football industry is the most important area that stands out in terms of supporter loyalty/loyalty in sports.

In the context of the above information, the purpose of this study is to investigate how the psychological commitment of university students to the football teams they support affects their supporter consumption behavior.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

According to the opinions of Bayburt University students, this research, which aims to determine the relationship between psychological commitment to the team and football supporters' consumption behavior and to investigate the differences, was designed in the survey model, which belongs to quantitative research methods. The survey model represents the information obtained from the sample consisting of a large number of people (Büyükoztürk et al., 2012).

### **Population and sample**

The population of the study is students of Bayburt University. The sample consists of 143 (41.1%) female and 205 (58.9%) male students who were selected from different faculties and departments of Bayburt University and

are students supporting a team. The questionnaires were collected randomly. When the age of the participants (min 18 - max 30) was examined, it was found that the average age was 21.25 years (Sd ± 2.18). The sample's demographic characteristics are shown in the table (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variable		f	%	Variable		f	%
Institution Where You Study	Faculty	259	74,4	Where do you follow the status of the football team you	TV	100	28,7
	Vocational School	89	25,6		Internet sources	229	65,8
	Low	86	24,7		Stadium	19	5,5
	Medium	243	69,8		Newspaper	-	-
Income Level	High	19	5,5	Do you play sports under license?	Yes	69	19,8
	Do You See Yourself as a Fanatical Fan?	Yes	184		52,9		
	Galatasaray	128	36,8	No	279	80,2	
Football Team You Support	Beşiktaş	63	18,1	Is there anyone in your family who is a fanatical fan of any team?	Available	218	62,6
	Fenerbahçe	105	30,2		Not available	130	34,7
	Trabzonspor	26	7,5				
	Other	26	7,5				

**Data Collection Tools**

Two scales were used to determine the relationship between students' psychological commitment to the team and football supporters' consumption behavior and to examine the differences. The data collection tool was prepared in three parts. Personal information, including demographic information, is included in the first part, the Football Supporter Consumption Behaviour Scale (FSCBS) is included in the second part, and the Psychological Commitment to the Team Scale (PCTS) is included in the third part. Students who participated in the study were asked to check one of the options indicated on a five- and seven-point Likert scale for the statements in both scales.

**Football Supporter' Consumption Behaviour Scale**

The Football Supporter Consumption Behavior Scale (FSCBS) was developed by Kim (2008) and translated into Turkish by Köse (2014). The scale consists of 11 items and is rated on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=Strongly Agree). In the pilot study conducted by Köse (2014), Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the validity and reliability analysis of the scale, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to determine the dimensional and construct validity of the scale. The KMO value of the scale was 0.889 and was found to be adequate for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The 5 factors, their names, and internal consistency coefficients that emerged after the exploratory factor analysis were as follows:

(1) participation in competition = 0.83, (2) media consumption = 0.91, (3) consumption of licensed products = 0.83, (4) word of mouth = 0.8. The internal consistency coefficient of the football supporter consumption behavior was reported as 0.90.

**Table 2.** Football Supporter Consumption Behavior Scale Reliability Analysis

Scale & Sub-dimensions	Number of items	Cronbach' Alpha
General	All items (11)	,947
Competition participation	10-11	,795
Word of mouth communication	7-8-9	,847
Media consumption	4-5-6	,914
Licensed product consumption	1-2-3	,933

**Psychological Commitment to the Team Scale**

The psychological Commitment to Team Scale (PCTS) is a scale for measuring supporter commitment. The PCTS scale is a 7-point Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree and 7 - strongly agree) and consists of 14 items. The scale PCT is based on the work of Churchill (1979) and Pritchard et al. (1999) and was originally developed by Mahony et al. (2000). In the Turkish version by Eskiler et al. (2011), the reliability coefficients Cronbach's alpha, Spearman-Brown, and Guttman split-half indicating the internal consistency of the Psychological commitment to the Team Scale (PCTS) were 0.80, 0.71, and 0.70, respectively, for all items. These values indicate that the internal consistency of the scale is high.

**Table 3.** Reliability Analysis of the Psychological Commitment Scale to the Team

Scale & Sub-dimensions	Number of items	Cronbach' Alpha
General	All items (14)	,857
Resistance to team change	8-9-10-11-12-13	,805
Loyalty to the team	2-4-5-6-7	,872
Loyalty questioning	1-3-14	,746

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The collected data were processed using the SPSS 25 data analysis program. The normality test was applied to determine whether the data were normally distributed before analysis and to decide whether the tests to be applied would be parametric or nonparametric. A normal distribution is a prerequisite for parametric tests and is the most significant of the distributions of the variables (Ural & Kılıç, 2013). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to fit the normal distribution. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), the distribution is considered normal when the values of skewness and kurtosis of the variables are between +1.5 and -1.5. The values for skewness and kurtosis of the variables in the study were between +1.5 and -1.5 (Table 4 and Table 5).

Descriptive statistical methods (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) were used to analyze the data and evaluate the sample's demographic information. Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between scales. Results were analyzed bilaterally with a 95% confidence interval and a

significance level of  $p < .05$ . A regression analysis was conducted to determine whether football supporter consumption behavior was predicted by psychological commitment to the team.

**FINDINGS**

**Results Related to Psychological Commitment to the Team and Football Supporter Consumption Behavior Scale and Its Subdimensions**

**Table 4.** Mean Values of the Psychological Commitment to the Team Scale

Scale & Sub-dimensions	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Skewness	Kurtosis
General	348	5,04	,059	-,261	-,785
Resistance to team change	348	5,36	,069	-,631	-,412
Loyalty to the team	348	4,94	,082	-,618	-,408
Loyalty questioning	348	4,82	,083	-,377	-,802

Examining Table 4, students who participated in the study indicated that they participated in the subdimension of resistance to change in the team ( $\bar{X}=5.36$ ), the subdimension of loyalty to the team ( $\bar{X}=4.94$ ), and the subdimension of questioning loyalty ( $\bar{X}=4.82$ ). Comparing the sub-dimensions, participation in the team's sub-dimension of resistance to change is the highest, while the sub-dimension of questioning loyalty to the team is the lowest. The scores of students participating in the study on the scale of psychological commitment to the team were calculated as follows ( $\bar{X}= 5.04$ ).

**Table 5.** Football Supporter Consumption Behavior Scale Average Values

Scale & Sub-dimensions	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Skewness	Kurtosis
General	348	3,69	,047	-,718	,283
Competition participation	348	3,63	,052	-,609	,046
Word of mouth communication	348	3,79	,049	-,797	,524
Media consumption	348	3,71	,056	-,783	,026
Licensed product consumption	348	3,60	,055	-,710	,024

As can be seen in Table 5, the students participating in the study participated in the sub-dimension of participating in the competition ( $\bar{X}= 3.63$ ), they participated in the sub-dimension of word-of-mouth communication ( $\bar{X}=3.79$ ), and in the sub-dimension of media consumption ( $\bar{X}=3.71$ ). They indicated they agreed with the sub-dimension of consuming licensed products ( $\bar{X}=3.60$ ). Regarding the sub-dimensions, participation in word of mouth is the highest, and participation in the consumption of licensed products is the lowest. The scores of students participating in the study on the scale of psychological commitment to the team were calculated as follows ( $\bar{X}= 5.04$ ).

**Results on the Relationship Between the Scale of Psychological Commitment to the Team and the Football Supporter Consumption Behavior Scale and Its Subdimensions**

**Table 6.** PCT and FSCB Scale Interdimensional Correlation Analysis

		FSCB_CP	FSCB_WOM	FSCB_MC	FSCB_LPC
PCT_RTC	<b>r</b>	,470**	,560**	,537**	,532**
	<b>p</b>	,000	,000	,000	,000
PCT_LT	<b>r</b>	,615**	,656**	,695**	,645**
	<b>p</b>	,000	,000	,000	,000
PCT_LQ	<b>r</b>	-,003	-,003	,001	,056
	<b>p</b>	,949	,948	,989	,294

(RTC: Resistance to team change, LT: Loyalty to the team, LQ: Loyalty questioning; CP: Competition participation, AAI: Word of mouth communication, MC: Media consumption, LPC: Licensed product consumption)

Examining Table 6;

There are moderately strong, positive, and significant relationships between the subdimension of resistance to change in the team and participation in the competition, word of mouth, media consumption, and consumption of licensed products ( $p=0.000 < 0.01$ ).

A moderately strong, positive, and significant relationship was found between the subdimension of team loyalty and participation in the competition, word of mouth, media consumption, and consumption of licensed products ( $p=0.000 < 0.01$ ).

There was no statistically significant relationship between the loyalty subdimension and any of the Football Supporter Consumption scale subdimensions.

**Results and Comments on the Prediction of the Football Supporter Consumption Behavior Scale with the Psychological Commitment to Team Scale**

The regression analysis for predicting the prediction of Football Supporter Consumption Behavior Scale according to the Psychological Commitment to team scale is shown in Table 8 below:

**Table 7.** Regression Analysis of the Predictions of Football Supporter Consumption Behavior According to Psychological Commitment to the Team

	<b>B</b>	<b>Standard Error <math>\beta</math></b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
Constant	,934	,166	-	5,628	,000
PCT	,541	,032	,675	17,015	,000

Examining the results of the regression analysis in Table 7, it can be seen that psychological commitment to the team is a significant predictor of football supporter consumption behavior,  $R= .675$ ,  $R^2= ,456$ ,  $F(1, 346)= 289,505$ ,  $p<,01$ . 46% of the consumption behavior of football supporters is explained by psychological commitment to the team.

## **CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION**

Looking at the average scores of the sub-dimensions of the football supporter consumption behavior scale (Table 5), we find that the participation in word of mouth is the highest, and the participation in the consumption of licensed products is the lowest. Word of mouth (WOM) can be defined as informal advice between people about products, services, and social issues (East et al., 2007). Word of mouth (WOM) is recognized as a key factor in consumer decision making (Litvin et al., 2008). It can be said that the participation is high due to the fact that word-of-mouth communication is an influential factor on people. Second situation can be interpreted to mean that licensed products are usually high-priced and high-income individuals prefer them. In this study, the high number of participants with a medium income level (see Table 1) is also the cause of this situation.

When examining the correlation analysis between the scale of Psychological commitment to the team and the football supporter consumption behavior scale sub-dimensions (Table 6), there are significant positive correlations between the sub-dimension resistance to change the team and participation in the competition, word of mouth, media consumption and consumption of licensed products. There are significant positive relationships between the sub-dimension team loyalty and participation in the competition, word of mouth, media consumption, and consumption of licensed products. No statistically significant relationships were found between the loyalty sub-dimension and any of the Football Supporter Consumption scale sub-dimensions. Participation in Competition; When the consumer who buys a ticket to a sporting competition uses that ticket to enter that competition, he/she is participating in the competition (Erdeveciler et al., 2019). Broughton et al. (1999) state that in addition to the increase in ticket sales due to increased participation in sports competitions, sports clubs can also generate significant revenue from the sale of licensed products at stadiums and facilities, as well as from parking revenue (Köse, 2014). Word of mouth, the most important informal communication tool among consumers (Filser, 1996), is defined by Westbrook (1987) as an informal source of communication with other consumers about the ownership or characteristics of certain goods and services and their sellers (Derbaix & Vanhamme, 2003). Word of mouth is a factor that directly impacts consumers' purchase decisions and is much more effective than other promotional activities used by marketers. The most important reason is that interpersonal communication is more reliable and persuasive than other methods (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Köse, 2014). One of the most important characteristics of consumption activities in sports is that sports consumers can consume their products through radio, television, and the Internet, which can be called mass communication media. This situation is referred to as media consumption. Well-marketed, well-established teams can reach more supporters through the media and earn significant revenue from broadcast rights. At the same time, teams with high media consumption attract the attention of sponsors, and the sales of licensed products increase (Goff & Arshwell, 2005; Köse, 2014). Licensed product sales are critical for sports organizations because they are an important source of revenue for sports teams and leagues. They help sports organizations communicate their brand identity to their supporters (Kim et al., 2011). Additionally, by using licensed products of the clubs they support, supporters show other people their commitment to their team (Kwak & Kon, 2009). Consistent with the above information, participants' resistance to team switching and increasing their loyalty to

their team will enable them to participate in the competition from the stands or follow the team they support through the media, make speeches in favor of their team through word-of-mouth, support their team both in terms of income generation, and support other people in their team through the consumption of licensed products. It can be said that this increases the behaviors of showing commitment.

When analyzing the effects of participants' psychological commitment to the team on football supporters' consumption behaviors (Table 7), it can be seen that psychological commitment to the team is a significant predictor of football supporters' consumption behaviors. Considering this situation, psychological commitment to the team is an important factor in explaining the variance in football supporters' consumption behavior among college students. This study found that psychological commitment to the team explained 46% of football supporters' consumption behavior. Therefore, the higher the psychological commitment of participants to teams, the higher the consumption behavior of football supporters. In the study of Aytaç and Yenel (2012) with supporters of professional football teams, it was found that supporters support their teams by consuming licensed products from their clubs. It was concluded that supporters' consumption behavior is focused on loyalty/commitment with great devotion to the team they support. This study also supports the research.

When the results of the study are evaluated, it is found that there is a relationship between psychological commitment to the team and the consumption behavior scale of football supporters and that psychological commitment to the team influences the consumption behavior of participants who are football supporters. From this point of view, the psychological commitment of football supporters to their team can be an important factor that influences the consumption of products for their team. This study was limited to football enthusiast students studying at Bayburt University.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

For future studies, conducting more comprehensive studies involving different universities is recommended. It is believed that the studies conducted in this and other samples could be useful for customer relationship management (CRM) studies of teams that have a large number of supporters and that market, promote, and sell licensed products.

## **ETHICAL TEXT**

Before the research was conducted, the necessary permission was obtained from the Bayburt University Ethics Committee (Document Number: E-51694156-050.99-115371). "In this article, journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics rules, journal ethics rules have been followed. Responsibility for any violations that may arise related to the article belongs to the authors."

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