

An Investigation of the Effect of Fan Relationship Management Factors on Fan Lifetime Value

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was investigation of the effect of Fan Relationship Management on Fan Lifetime Value in Iranian premier Football league. The necessary data were gathered through interview, observation, review the relevant theoretical literature and questionnaires. The statistical population was consisted the upper of sixteen years of football fans. The number of 527 questionnaires was used from gathered 674 questionnaires. Results showed that service quality (Beta=0.394) and knowledge management (Beta=0.543) have positive effect on fan lifetime value directly. Also, organizational support has indirectly effect on fan lifetime value. There is necessary for sport clubs that spend extensive efforts for maintaining current fans and attracting new fans by providing suitable facility, conducting customer based program and creating knowledge and information through various relational channels to increase fan lifetime value.

Keywords: fan relationship management, fan lifetime value, fan, football

1. Introduction

The need for fan relationship management is one of the basic requirements in sport industry. The football industry lags behind other industries in implementing customer relationship management (CRM) techniques and so it has follower advantages in learning from mistakes made elsewhere. There are, however, crucial differences in football compared with conventional businesses. As a result, the unique characteristics of the sport and its fans need consideration when developing or implementing CRM techniques and a new CRM framework which consider the specificity of sport, is required for football club (Garry et al., 2006). For the purpose of sports organizations and sporting events, CRM seeks to achieve three goals through precision marketing: Generate new fans, Enlarge attendance and purchases of current fans, Motivate and maintain current fan loyalty and identification (Wakefield, 2007). This study focuses on Iranian football fans and from point operational definition, fan is said who attends more than 8 games of their favorite teams games at the stadium during a competition season. If an individual is a fan of a professional or major college sports team, even a losing team, the fan will likely: Identify with and follow the behavior of the team and individual players on that team, on and off the field (via team Web sites, newspapers, television, radio, wireless, etc.); Purchase licensed merchandise (jerseys, automobile paraphernalia, caps, mugs, etc.) promoting the team; Donate or pay for permanent seat-licenses (PSLs) in order to buy season tickets; Travel to see games of that team outside the local market; Support tax-based initiatives to pay for a new arena or stadium for the team; Be a supporter of the conference or league in which the team plays; and, Devote significant social time attending, watching, and discussing the team with others devoted to the same or other teams (Wakefield, 2007).

2. Success Factors of FRM

Numerous studies have been accomplished on the factors of success in customer relationship management applications by researchers in recent years (Rigby et al., 2002; Wikstrom, 2004). Research has shown that there is different reasons for the lack of success in customer relationship management programs. In general, CRM failure is caused by the complexity of technical and organizational issues that are associated with CRM implementation (Goodhue et al., 2002).

According to Nguyen et al., (2007), the lack of factors such as top management support, aligning internal

processes, linking CRM project to organization's higher-level strategies, focus on ROI (Return on Investment), achieving success early in the project effect on CRM programs. Lachvtz et al., (2001) have mentioned to increase the lifetime value of basketball fans; developing strategies for more loyal customers; data collection; and developing communication with fans. Chalmeta (2006) pointed out the following factors as causes for CRM failure: 1. Thinking of CRM as a pure technology; 2. Lack of management support; 3. Lack of customer-centric culture; 4. Lack of readiness process; 5. Poor quality data; 6. Lack of change management; 7. Lack of vision and strategy; 8. Lack of involving the final user in designing CRM solutions. Kale (2004) has named seven reasons for CRM failure: 1. viewing CRM as a technology; 2. lack of customer based vision; 3. insufficient appreciation for customer lifetime value; 4. inadequate support by top management; 5. understanding the importance of change management; 6. failing in re-engineering business process; understanding difficulties related to data mining and data integration.

Other studies have focused on more factors as possible causes for the CRM failure and success. For example, Almotairi (2009) has noted to factors such as the commitment of senior management, data management, customer relationship management, strategy development, technology and processes. Kim et al., (2011a) has argued that the causes of the success CRM are: human resource management; interaction between staff and customers; team quality management decisions to allocate resources to relationship marketing programs; understanding managers of communication with sport customers and improving service quality. Also, It was shown that the service quality has a positive impact on maintenance and satisfaction of customers (Olorunniwo et al., 2006; Burton et al., 2003, Dagger & Sweeney, 2006; Keillor et al., 2007). Researchers in the content of sport marketing also have shown that service quality has significant effect on prediction fans behavior (Theodorakis et al., 2009; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). The important factors in successful implementation of customer relationship management and the content of sport fans will be examined in three categories and how each of them and the impact on the successful implementation of fan relationship management and lifetime value.

2.1 Service Quality (SQ)

Service quality is one of the most researched subjects in services, in general, and sporting events, in particular. The service provided on the field in the form of the sporting event is the core service provided fans. The service in the stands is a secondary service provided fans, but is vital to keeping fans once they come to see the game. Why is service quality so important? For those fans who attend the game for reasons apart from the sporting event itself (e.g., social reasons, business reasons, family obligations, etc.), the service in the stands may be the most important aspect in determining their satisfaction with the event. For those highly identified fans who attend for their love of the team and the game, the service provided in the stands will determine (Wakefield, 2007).

Keller (1993) identified two types of attributes: (1) Product-related – components necessary for delivering the function(s) expected by consumers; (2) Non-product-related – components impacting consumption, but not the overall performance of the product. Product-related and non-product-related attributes were identified for inclusion in this study. The team's success, the presence of star players, the head coach of the team, and the management of the team were identified as product-related attributes. The design and appearance of the team's logo (corporate identification), the stadium or arena in which the team plays, the overall delivery of the sport product (both the contest and the peripheral elements such as promotion), and the tradition of a team were identified as non-product related attributes (Gladden & Funk, 2001).

2.2 Knowledge Management (KM)

Successful CRM needed knowledge management process. Knowledge has been seen as a strategic resource for organizations. So far use of this rich source, the knowledge management issue is one of the organizations agenda. The value of KM and CRM is well recognized by many leading companies. KM sees the knowledge available to a company as a major success factor. Many organizations currently engage in knowledge management in order to leverage knowledge both within their organization and externally with shareholders and customers (Lin et al., 2005; Xu & Walton, 2005). Tiwana (2000) defined Knowledge-enabled Customer Relationship Management as “managing customer knowledge to generate value-creating lock-ins and channel knowledge to strengthen relationships and collaborative effectiveness, knowledge-enabled CRM is more of a business model/strategy than a technology-focused solution.” Rowley (2002) defines customer knowledge as:

- 1) knowledge about customers, which includes knowledge about potential customers, customer segments and individual customers; and
- 2) Knowledge possessed by customers.

Minna and Aino (2005) differentiate customer knowledge from customer data and customer information, and suggest that customer knowledge can be explicit, the structured customer information in databases, or in tacit customer knowledge –knowledge in mind of employees and customers. It can be argued that knowledge gained on customers will enable organizations to make intelligent decisions as to which customer to acquire and develop, what channels to use when contacting the customer, what products/services to sell, acquire and develop, and how to get the business to deliver excellence using the CRM strategy (Xu and Walton, 2005; Lin et al., 2005).

Since collecting, storing and distributing relevant knowledge for those CRM processes makes the deployment of KM techniques necessary, it is evident that an organization's KM capabilities play a key role in CRM success (Dous et al., 2005). Key knowledge management process includes knowledge creation, dissemination and use of knowledge (Geib et al., 2005). Generally, in customer area, Knowledge is to type: Knowledge for customers and Knowledge from customers. Knowledge for customers is required in CRM processes to satisfy knowledge needs of customers. Examples include knowledge about products, markets and suppliers. So, its need acquiring and continuously updating knowledge about customer needs, motivations and behavior over the lifetime of the relationship. Knowledge from customers is knowledge of customers about products, suppliers and markets. Within interactions with customers this knowledge can be gathered to feed continuous improvement, e.g. service improvements or new product developments (Gebert et al., 2002). The key to all network-enhanced precision marketing efforts is the quality of the customer information in the database. As sports fans seek to affiliate themselves in some way with the team or players, the organization has ample opportunity to gather customer-specific data. Market oriented organizations do three things effectively: Generate customer information, Disseminate customer information, and Respond to customer information in a way that meets customer needs and fulfills organizational goals.

Without customer information, the organization is merely working from management's intuition and experience. This can lead to ineffective management, In any case, no matter the background or training, management requires knowledge of their customers that exceeds their own abilities to observe and analyze. Even relying upon open access to fans does not mean that management will make effective marketing decisions. However, sports organization that can obtain information search tendencies associated with specific customers in their relational database can more effectively target communications to them. Organizations need to spend as much or more effort in maintaining and keeping their current loyal fans due to the fan lifetime value (FLV) (Wakefield, 2007).

2.3 Organizational Support (OS)

Top management is an essential element for bringing an innovation online and ensuring delivery of promised benefits. Customer-centric management requires top management support and commitment to CRM throughout the entire CRM implementation. Without it, momentum quickly dies out. Furthermore, top management should set the stage in CRM initiatives for leadership, strategic direction and alignment of vision and business goals (Chen & Popovich, 2003). The top management should support customer- centric approach and focus on integrating customers strategic planning. In fact, customer- centric management requires to support and commitment of senior management in all phases of the implementation of CRM. Otherwise, CRM programs will fail (Bove & Johnson, 2000). According to the reciprocity rule as employees receive greater support from their supervisors, their sense of obligation to reciprocate with greater effort increases. Training programs sponsored by an organization can improve employees' task-related and behavioral skills; enhance their capability to deal with varying customer needs, personalities and circumstances effectively (Liang & Jung, 2010).

While both technology and business processes are both critical to successful CRM initiatives, it is the individual employees who are the building blocks of customer relationships. There are several underlying dimensions surrounding management and employees that successful CRM implementations require (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Sin et al., 2005). According to Gummeson (1990), employees must be trained to become part-time marketers. For dealing with customers experience-related desires, employees will be required to have advanced social skills such as understanding of role conflict, role theory, communications and personality identification. Employees will need to be content experts who do not only know how to work with and exploit technology, but also can manage the information exchange and match customers to experiences (Sigala, 2005). In this research, our mean of organizational support refers to supporting of clubs top management and employees from customer based programs.

3. Fan Lifetime Value (FLV)

In a relationship-oriented strategy, companies have to decide with which potential customers to engage in relationships. Because companies have to invest in relationships, they need information on the potential value of

a relationship. A useful measure for this is the customer lifetime value (LTV) concept (Hoekstra & Huizingh, 1999). The measurement of customer lifetime value has become a key issue for developing and maintaining long-term profitable customer relationships. It plays a significant role in customer acquisition and retention decisions. Accordingly, both the acquisition and maintenance of customers must result in superior cash flows and augmented shareholder value. It was suggested that customer relationships should be viewed as investment decisions. Thus, customer relationships are assets and customers are generators of revenues (Stahl et al., 2003).

Customer lifetime value is defined as the net present value of a single customer's value. Keith and Richards and Jones (2008) identified 7 items that increase customer value including: Improved ability to target profitable customers, Integrated offerings across channels, Improved sales force efficiency and effectiveness, Improved pricing, Customized products and services, Improved customer service efficiency and effectiveness, Individualized marketing messages. Lifetime value provides insights into the current value of a customer to the business, as well as projecting the value of that customer into the future (Lachowetz et al., 2001).

Customer lifetime value should be viewed as the net present value of the profit that you will realize on the average new customer during a given number of years (McDonald, 1996). Thus, customer lifetime value is the profit produced by all of the steps that an enterprise takes to maintain a relationship with the same customer (Ing Wu & Chi Li, 2011). However, little attention has been paid to the link between customer lifetime value and shareholder value. The authors of this paper provide a conceptual framework for linking customer lifetime value to variables that are affected by FRM constructs. Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine the impact of KM, service quality and organisational support on the Fan Lifetime Value and FLV variables including: consumption quantity, word of mouth, media usage and attend intentions. Given these theoretical claims and findings of previous studies, following hypotheses were suggested:

H1: fan relationship management (FRM) is positively related to fan lifetime value.

H1a: organizational support is positively related to FLV and FLV variables.

H1b: knowledge management is positively related to FLV and FLV variables.

H1c: service quality is positively related to FLV and FLV variables.

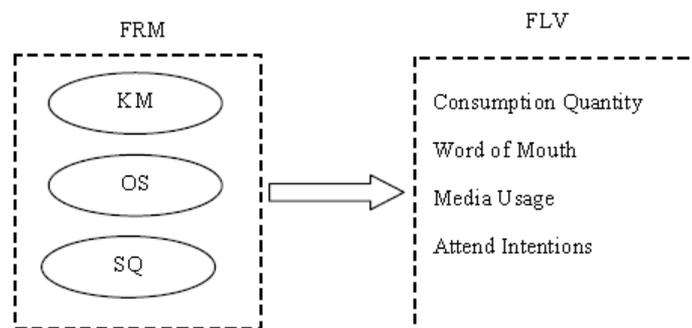


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

4. Methodology

This study was a correlational study as we were interested to investigate the effects of independent variables KM, OS and SQ on the dependent variable FLV. The data were gathered through interviews with relevant theoretical literature and questionnaires. In this research, at first variables were identified by qualitative research phase including nineteen in-depth interviews and surveying literature related CRM and Fans, a structured questionnaire was developed and pilot tested. The final questionnaire incorporate a six-item knowledge management scale, a four-item organizational support scale, a 12-item service quality scale and 16-item scale measuring fan lifetime value. All items were measured by the means of a five point Likert scale. Data was collected via survey questionnaire from fans of the Iran Football League. Random sampling was used on selecting subjects. The statistical population consisted the upper of sixteen years of football fans in the premier football league. The numbers of 527 questionnaires was used from gathered 674 questionnaires based on research definition from fan that attendance average of them was above of 8 games in a season for their team's favorite. All data was collected at many time in different stadium. The impact of the three independent variables KM, organization support and service quality on the dependent variable FLV was measured by the means of a multiple regression analysis.

5. Results

Table 1. Demographic information for the sample (N= 527)

	Frequency	Percent
Age		
24-16	137	26
34-25	278	52.8
44-35	65	12.3
54-45	38	7.2
More than 55 years	9	1.7
Martial status		
married	155	29.4
single	372	70.6
Attending at games in a season		
2-4 games	81	12
5-7 games	66	9.8
8-10 game	110	16.3
More than 10 games	417	61.9
Yars of attending as fan		
Under 1 year	22	4.2
2-3 year	46	8.7
4-5 year	36	6.8
More than 5 years	423	80.3
Education		
Under diploma	87	16.5
diploma	199	37.8
Advanced diploma	89	16.9
Bachelor	111	21.1
Master and uper	41	7.8
Job		
Self-emploeid	244	46.3
Administrative Officer	108	20.5
Employee Education	36	6.8
Military	49	9.3
Pupil	42	8
student	33	6.3
Other	15	2.8
Income		
Less than \$300	93	17.6
\$301-\$500	124	23.6
\$501-\$700	141	26.8
\$701-\$900	74	14
More than \$900	95	18

A total 674 questionnaire were distributed and received from the fans of the football clubs, but only 527 questionnaires were useable because of operational definition of fan for club in this research. According to results from 527 respondents, mean age was 29.4 years. 155 were married (29.4%) and 372 were single (70.6%). In terms of monthly socioeconomic status, 93 were from families with annual income under \$300 (17.6%), 124 were from families with income between \$301 and \$500 (23.6%), 141 were from families with income from \$501 to \$700 (26.8%), 74 were from families with income from \$701 to \$900 (14%), 95 were from families with income greater than \$901 (18%). Other demographic results are shown in Table1.

Table 2. FRM and FLV variables support means, standard deviations, K-S test and Cronbach alphas

Factors	Mean	SD	K-S	α
Fan Relationship Management	45.95	9.10	0.338	0.84
Knowledge Management	11.95	3.24	0.095	0.75
Service Quality	27.62	5.62	0.139	0.73
Organisational Support	8.58	2.40	0.085	0.70
Fan Lifetime Value	32.46	6.28	0.081	0.76

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for scales measuring the three fan relationship management constructs and Overall FRM and fan lifetime value. All scales had satisfactory alpha values. And test of normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (K–S test) for variables (see table 2).

Table 3. Correlations among FRM dimensions and FLV variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
knowledge Management	1						
Organizational Support	0.447**	1					
Service Quality	0.694**	0.623**	1				
Consumption Quantity	0.902**	0.433**	0.712**	1			
Word of Mouth	0.631**	0.253**	0.592**	0.602**	1		
Media Usage	0.260**	0.310**	0.359**	0.266**	0.140**	1	
Attend Intentions	0.416**	0.363**	0.491**	0.430**	0.260**	0.668**	1

** $P \leq 0.01$

The results of correlation test among fan relationship management constructs and fan lifetime value variables showed that there is high correlations among variables (see table 3).

Table 4. Regression analysis for the prediction of FLV from fan relationship management dimension

	Beta	t	p
Knowledge Management	0.453	17.038	0.001
Service Quality	0.394	10.781	0.001
Organisational Support	0.024	0.814	0.416

$r^2 = 0.724$ $F_{3, 523} = 458.126$, $P < 0.001$

Table 5. Regression analysis for the prediction of FLV from overall fan relationship management

	Beta	t	p
overall fan relationship management	0.759	26.692	0.001
$r^2 = 0.576$, $F_{1, 526} = 712.462$, $P < 0.001$			

Table 6. Regression analysis among FRM constructs and FLV variables

Independent and Dependent variables		B	Beta	Sig
Knowledge Management	Consumption Quantity	0.767	0.788	0.001
	Word of Mouth	0.336	0.430	0.001
	Media Usage	0.010	0.018	0.752
	Attend intentions	0.093	0.143	0.006
Service Quality	Consumption Quantity	0.097	0.188	0.001
	Word of Mouth	0.173	0.419	0.001
	Media Usage	0.077	0.259	0.001
	Attend intentions	0.115	0.335	0.001
Organisational Support	Consumption Quantity	0.045	0.036	0.124
	Word of Mouth	0.201	0.200	0.001
	Media Usage	0.101	0.141	0.007
	Attend intentions	0.076	0.091	0.061

The direct path from General fan relationship management to fan lifetime value was significant and explained 58% of the variance ($F_{1, 525} = 712.462$, $P = 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.576$) (see Table 5). At the next step, a regression analysis was conducted to examine the degree three fan relationship management dimensions. The regression analysis produced a significant effect ($F=458.126$, $p < 0.001$). The results showed that Two dimensions of FRM had significant contributions to the prediction of FLV: KM (Beta=0.543, $p < 0.001$), and SQ (Beta=0.394, $p < 0.001$; see Table 4 and 5). The direct path from fan relationship management constructs to domain Consumption Quantity was significant and accounted for 83% of the variance ($F_{3, 523} = 847.331$, $P = 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.829$). The direct path from fan relationship management constructs to domain Word of Mouth was significant and accounted for 47% of the variance ($F_{3, 523} = 153.798$, $P = 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.469$). The direct path from fan relationship management constructs to domain Media Usage was significant and accounted for 14% of the variance ($F_{3, 523} = 28.610$, $P = 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.141$). The direct path from fan relationship management constructs to domain Attend intentions was significant and accounted for 26% of the variance ($F_{3, 523} = 60.236$, $P = 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.257$) (see Table 6).

6. Discussion

Nowadays, there has been increased attention in the content of sports marketing on relationship-building and increasing lifetime circle of customers. Building relationship with customer especially fans is essential for any sport organization. Relationships with customers are considered a primary element for estimating customer equity and customer lifetime value (Kim et al., 2011b). The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions: what are the most important factors in fan relationship management and how are the effects these factors on fan lifetime value constructs? The results of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for scales internal consistency reliability measuring the three fan relationship management constructs and Overall FRM and fan lifetime value showed that all scales had satisfactory alpha values.

Our results indicate that domain knowledge management is significantly linked to Consumption Quantity (Beta= 0.788), word of mouth (Beta= 0.430) and Attend intentions (Beta= 0.143) but not significantly related to Media Usage (Beta= 0.018, Sig=0.752). Gathering customer data related to demographics, geographics, psychographics, and behavioral variables allows the sports organization to make effective pitches to those organizations seeking to sponsor or advertise with the team due to similar target markets. In order to effectively target precision marketing campaigns, teams must collect precise, reliable, and valid customer data. The more precise the

database, the more precise is the targeting. The result is less wasted effort by the organization and achievement of the CRM objectives of generating more fans, enlarging purchases, and maintaining loyal, identified fans. For the fans, they receive information and offers from the team that are beneficial not only to themselves, but to others with whom they share the information and offers. Without precise customer information, fans experience confusion and waste effort viewing (and deleting) irrelevant emails or ignoring other poorly targeted media (Wakefield, 2007). Byon et al. (2010) have shown that Knowledge was shown to be the most impactful factor in determining repatronage intentions after vicarious achievement and the most impactful factor in predicting online viewership. Our results are also in line with the previous research finding that indicating knowledge management is one of direct predictors of customer lifetime value after service quality (Filo & Funk, 2005; Goldwasser, 2007; Kale, 2004; Almotairi, 2009; Lachowetz et al., 2001).

Results indicate that domain organizational support is significantly linked to word of mouth ($Beta= 0.200$) and Media Usage ($Beta= 0.141$) but not significantly related to Consumption Quantity ($Beta= 0.036$, $Sig=0.124$) and Attend intentions ($Beta= 0.091$, $Sig=0.061$). Findings are in line with previous research that showed organizational support is an important predictor and play a central role in organizational success (Burke & Greenglass, 2001; Burke, 2003; Kritsonis, 2004; Chen & Popovich, 2003; Nguyen et al., 2007; Kale, 2004). Leadership behavior has direct and matchless impact on the work environment, work outcomes and the success of organizations (Kritsonis, 2004). Also, Liang and jung (2010) showed the relationship among perceived organizational support with customer-oriented behavior and service quality. Top management should support customer based vision and integrate marketing and customer focus in strategic planning process (IBM cooperation, 2001). Estimates of regression weight for organizational support showed that conducting and supporting operative customer based programs by manager and staff is very important for improving FLV.

Evaluating effects of fan service quality on fan lifetime value constructs show that the domain service quality is significantly relationship to all four fan lifetime value constructs; Consumption Quantity ($Beta= 0.188$), word of mouth ($Beta= 0.419$), Media Usage ($Beta= 0.259$) and Attend intentions ($B= 0.335$). This finding is in line with the previous research in various areas suggesting that service quality is an essential variable for attracting and satisfied customers and it is a significant predictor of various consumer behavior variables such as cooperation, word of mouth, and purchasing (Choi, 2001; Theodorakis et al., 2011; Hill & Green, 2000; Westerbeek, 2000; Liu, 2008; Ko & Pastore, 2004). In this line, Davis (2008) has indicated that attendance is influenced by winning games and the quality of games.

7. Conclusion

The results showed that two dimensions of FRM has significant contributions to the prediction of FLV directly: KM and SQ. organizational support has indirectly significant with FLV by KM and SQ. as said before While both technology and business processes are both critical to successful CRM initiatives, it is the individual who are the building blocks of customer relationships. So, it's important for more effectively service quality and knowledge management and raise fan lifetime value considering customer based program by managers and employees in football clubs. The results of this study show that operators in the football clubs should work to realize customer value, increase service quality, and consolidate knowledge from and for fans to improve their business performance effectively. So, understanding fans needs to increase the maximum lifetime value involves the implementation of appropriate systems to support customer knowledge acquisition, sharing and the measurement of FRM effectiveness.

The results of this study show that when organisation show higher attention on the FRM programs of the football league, the recognized FLV will be improved; following, the higher the four dimensions of FLV. This result suggests that all kinds of football clubs should emphasize FRM programs since the effects of CLV on consumption quantity, word of mouth, media usage and attend intentions can be enhanced. Finally, in this study it has been shown that fan relationship management is a crucial variable for predicting and increasing fan lifetime value in Iranian football league. So, it can be said that understanding of fan needs is an important factor for success in any sport organizations. Sport clubs need to spend more efforts for maintaining current fans and attracting new ones by providing suitable facility, managing and directing customer based programs and creating necessary knowledge. As resulted in this article, fan lifetime value will be increased though this action.

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