

## **The Impact of Social Responsibility on Satisfaction and Loyalty of the Customers of Sports Complexes in West Azerbaijan Province**

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**Abstract:** *The current study aimed at evaluation and investigation of the impact of the social responsibility on satisfaction and loyalty of sports complexes customers in West Azerbaijan province. The current study is of causal-comparative type. In terms of objective, it is of applied type and regarding the data collection method, it is a field study. The statistical population of the study is all the customers of sports complexes in Urmia city among which, 362 persons were chosen by random sampling, using the Cochran Formula. The research instrument were Carroll's Social Responsibility (1991), Fan Satisfaction (1998), and Lim Customer Loyalty (2006) Questionnaires, whose reliability were approved by Cronbach's Alpha test. The descriptive tests were used for describing the customers' status and the model fitness was tested through Partial Least Squares. The results indicated that the social responsibility both directly and indirectly affects the complexes' customer loyalty through the mediating role of satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** *social responsibility, satisfaction, loyalty, sports clubs customers*

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### **I. Introduction**

Today, one cannot be naive about business success and due to this, understanding the consumer behavior is key to success in planning and the changing and transforming management (Kim, 2010). In the new century, that market wins which own the most satisfied and dependent customers to its products and services and always tries to keep that customer with planned and continuous efforts (Parsian, 2005). Meanwhile, sports is among the phenomena which greatly affect the modern society and also, in the international level, it is eleventh industry among the others (Seyedameri et al, 2009). One of the important and effective factors on service organizations success is reaching the goal of customer's satisfaction (Gohar Rostami, 2012). Willard Hom (2000) defines the customer satisfaction as the extent of their positive feeling perception of the services they expect to receive from the organization. The customer satisfaction is fulfilled when the real needs of customers are met and their requests are provided in due time and in the way they wish (Spring, 1996). The concept of athletes satisfaction is also derived and extended from theories and the research on job satisfaction. Therefore, due to operationalizing the concept of athletes' satisfaction, the aspects and dimensions of job satisfaction have been less investigated. Athletes satisfaction is defined as a positive emotional state obtained by complex evaluation of processes and structures, as well as the consequences related to sports experiences (Riemer, 2007). Meanwhile, numerous research show that high levels of satisfaction affect also the customers' loyalty (Olorunniwo, 2006). The customer loyalty is also among the controversial issues of sports industry (Williams, 1998). Today, loyalty is a subject which has great effects on commercial organizations and service centers, especially in terms of profitability. Oliver (1999), knows loyalty as a strong and deep commitment to repurchase or steady purchase of a product or service as the result of which, despite the actual or potential environmental effects or marketing activities of competitors to change customer shopping behavior, it leads to repurchase or steady purchase of one or several products or services. The customer loyalty is among the most important and controversial subjects of sports industry (Williams, 1998). Chandon (2005), stating that the increase and affluence of service organizations business is obtained through customers loyalty and satisfaction, has defined these two variables as concerted and spun in. Loyal customers are those who have tasted the joy of gratitude and loyalty and only the satisfied customers express their satisfaction (Park & Kim, 2000). The extent of increase in customers' satisfaction is not necessarily parallel to the increase in their loyalty, i.e. the relationship between the customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is not a linear one. Satisfaction only determines 37% of loyalty (Sunderland, 1998). On the other hand, in the modern market and business processes, the social responsibility has become a sociologic and thematic subject that can be investigated and evaluated in various fields as political, economic, cultural, social and environmental (Colby, 2003). The term liability, or responsibility, alone refer to the sense of loyalty, accountability, and commitment (Allen, 2010). Social responsibility is one of the

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issues highly recognized by companies and organizations, in the current marketing. At the micro level, social responsibility is considered as a commitment and action by individuals in their roles towards each other (Sklair & miller, 2010). Social responsibility has various dimensions. Kakabadse (2009), in this regard and based on different social life situations, has considered 5 types of citizens as political, economic, social, global and virtual citizens. Social psychologist Bierhoff defines the social responsibility as a supreme personality trait of people which is shown in interactions with others in different situations and in practice (Talebi & Khoshbin, 2012). Miller (2004) has also mentioned two types of actions as individual action and social action and indicated that collective action is the prerequisite of responsibility and responsibility moral. He, besides pointing to three types of responsibility as natural responsibility, role-based responsibility and moral responsibility, notes the consideration for the rights as their main element. The quantitative and qualitative studies on loyalty, satisfaction, and the customers' responsibility in sports services are indicative of limited and sporadic research in this field. Also, studies and research in the field of sports marketing and service suggests that no extensive and significant studies can be found. Honari (2010), in his study, came to the result that the social interaction of the employees, proper fees, the facilities and convenience, rates, management, staff expertise and, the expertise and competence of the coaches, and convenient and easy access are among the factors in customers satisfaction with these clubs and complexes. Rezaei et al (2013) analyzing the effects of corporate social responsibility on the symbolic image, functional image and brand loyalty reported the legal and moral responsibilities, and customers loyalty are connected to each other through the mediating bridge of symbolic and functional images. Khalili et al (2014) in determining the effects of social responsibility of sports production firms on salespeople loyalty concluded that among the four dimensions of the Carol's social responsibility pyramid, the three dimensions as economic, legal, and ethical dimensions affect the salespeople loyalty. However, the humanitarian dimension showed no significant effects on loyalty. Wolf and Batkowski (2012) investigating the firms abilities and social responsibility communities as an introduction to customers satisfaction concluded that social responsibility in customer satisfaction and behavior in Germany was higher than that of the America. Perez (2015), reported that the customers' perceptions from the social responsibility are continuously affected by satisfaction, suggestion, and repurchase. The results of the study indicated that implementation of programs that are based on social responsibility would always lead to customers satisfaction. Shin (2015) in his study concluded that the organizations responsibility-related programs focused on moral issues and environmental actions lead to the customers' satisfaction which in turn result in customer loyalty. The research on integration of the role of loyalty based on the variables of social responsibility have been sparse. Also, there have been few efforts to determine the relationship between social responsibility and satisfaction/loyalty in the field of sports. Therefore, since the organization social responsibility is effective on customers' satisfaction and loyalty, the current study has thought to answer the question that what is the effect of social responsibility on sports complexes customers' satisfaction and loyalty?

## II. Methodology

The current study is of causal-comparative type which was conducted as a field study. The statistical population of the study were all the customers of sports complexes in Urmia city. Since the exact data on the number of athletes were not available, 362 persons were chosen by random sampling, using the Cochran Formula. The research instrument were Carroll's Social Responsibility (1991), Fan Satisfaction (1998), and Lim Customer Loyalty (2006) Questionnaires which were all measure in 5-point Likert scale. In a pilot study, the reliability of measurement instrument using Cronbach's alpha were 0.89, 0.87, and 0.91 for the three instruments, respectively.

## III. Findings

The results of the descriptive findings (table 1) showed that 73.3% of the study were male and 36.7% were female. The highest portion of the population (40.9%) were 31-40 years old and the lowest portion (5.5%) were older than 50. 52.2% of the samples were single and 47.8% were married. The highest percentage (31.5%) used the sports clubs and complexes 4-7 times a month and the lowest percentage (9.1%) used these places once a month. The highest percentage of the customers (28.5%) had an associate degree and the lowest percentage (12.2%) had under-diploma education. The highest percentage of samples (29.8%) had 300-500 thousands Tomans income and 27.6% of samples used the sports complexes for body fitness.

**Table 1:** the descriptive findings of the study

| Statistic |              | Frequency | Percentage | Statistic |                    | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| gender    | Male         | 229       | 63/3       | Degree    | Under diploma      | 44        | 12/2       |
|           | Female       | 133       | 36/7       |           | Diploma            | 73        | 20/2       |
| Age       | 18-20 of age | 35        | 9/7        |           | Associate          | 103       | 28/5       |
|           | 21-30 of age | 115       | 31/8       |           | Bachelor           | 97        | 26/8       |
|           | 31-40 of age | 148       | 40/9       |           | Master's degree or | 45        | 12/4       |

|                           |                    |     |      |                              |              |     |      |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----|------|------------------------------|--------------|-----|------|
|                           |                    |     |      |                              | above        |     |      |
|                           | 41-50 of age       | 44  | 12/2 | Income                       | 50 - 150 \$  | 108 | 29/8 |
|                           | above 50           | 20  | 5/5  |                              | 150 - 250 \$ | 70  | 19/3 |
| Marital status            | Single             | 189 | 52/2 |                              | 250 - 350 \$ | 67  | 18/5 |
|                           | Married            | 173 | 47/8 |                              | Above 350 \$ | 48  | 13/3 |
| The number of use of club | Once a month       | 33  | 9/1  | goal of exercise at the club | championship | 15  | 4/1  |
|                           | 2-3 times a month  | 104 | 28/7 |                              | Body fitness | 100 | 27/6 |
|                           | 4-7 times a month  | 114 | 31/5 |                              | Health       | 123 | 34   |
|                           | 8-10 times a month | 67  | 18/5 |                              | Leisure      | 96  | 26/5 |
|                           | Above 10 times     | 44  | 12/2 |                              | Socializing  | 28  | 7/7  |

According to the algorithm, for investigation of the fitness of study's structural model, several criteria are being used among which, the most important and basic one is the Z significance coefficients or t-values. The model fitness using the t-values is in a way in which the values must be higher than 1.96 in order to confirm their significance at 95% confidence level. For this model, as it is shown in the above figure, the coefficient of social responsibility methods path to the loyalty is 3.944, the social responsibility to satisfaction is 8.064, and satisfaction to loyalty is 5.727, which are all above 1.96 and indicate the significance of these paths and propriety of the structural model.

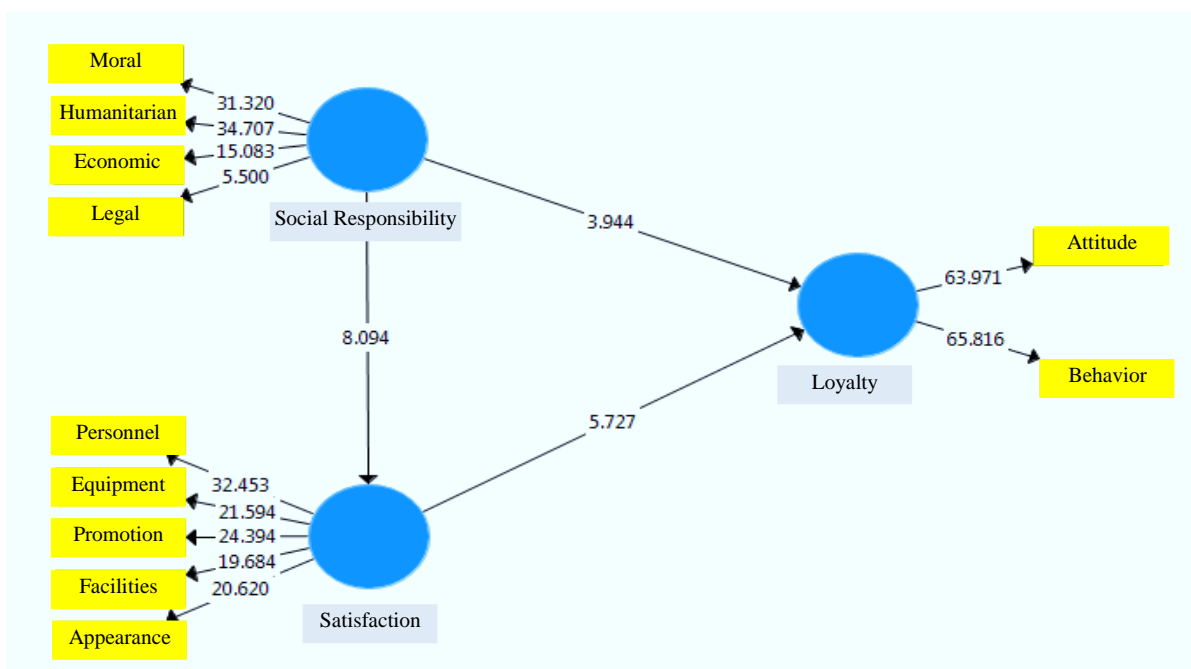
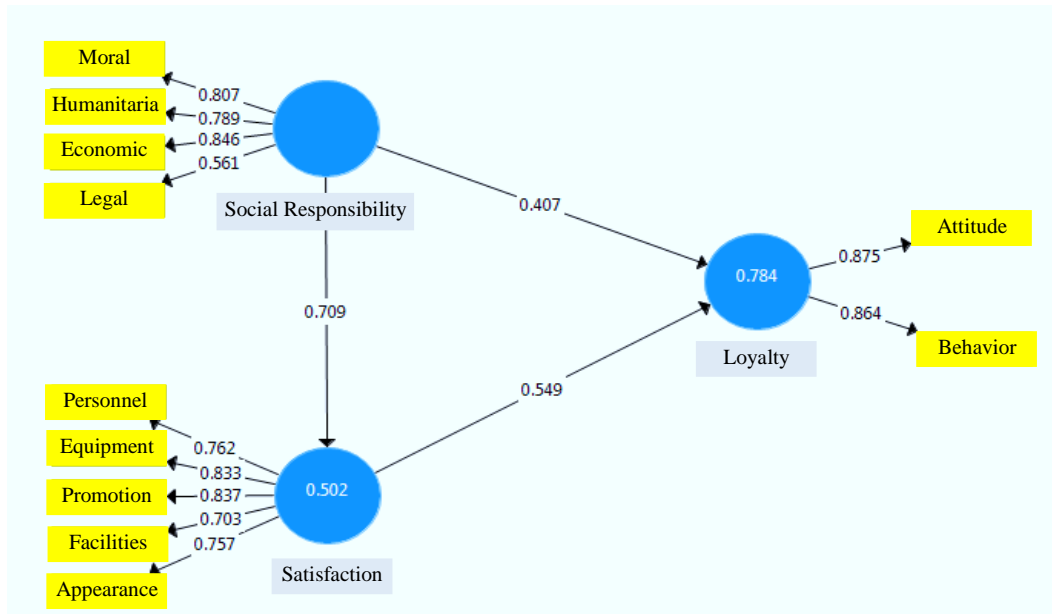


Figure 1: the ultimate output of PLS in significance state

The second criterion for evaluation of structural fitness in a study is the  $R^2$  coefficients for the endogenous latent (dependent) variables of model.  $R^2$  is a criterion indicative of effect of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable. The three values 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 were chosen as the weak, medium, and strong values of  $R^2$ . According to the figure 2-4, the value of  $R^2$  for satisfaction construct is 0.502 and for loyalty is 0.549 which based on the three benchmarks, confirm the fitness of structural model. Another criterion that should be evaluated is effect extent ( $f^2$ ). This criterion determines the intensity of the relationship between model constructs and the values 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate the weak, medium, and strong effect of one construct on the other one, respectively. Based on the obtained results, the ( $f^2$ ) value was calculated as 0.27 which is indicative of strong effect. Finally, the last criterion that should be evaluated is the prediction power of model ( $Q^2$ ). In case the ( $Q^2$ ) value for an indigenous construct is 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, it is respectively indicative of weak, medium, and strong predicting power of the construct with the related exogenous constructs. Since the ( $Q^2$ ) value of indigenous construct of self-efficacy is 0.29, it is indicative of a strong predicting power of model for this construct and again it confirms the fitness of the structural model of the study. Also, the obtained results indicate that social responsibility can indirectly affect the athletes' loyalty through the mediating role of satisfaction and the value of this effect is 17.75. Generally, based on the final output of the PLS software and its fitness indicators, it was revealed that the proposed model are in line with the data obtained from the study and its fitness is confirmed. Also, it was revealed that social responsibility in sports positively affects the loyalty of sports complexes customers in Urmia city on one hand and on the other hand, it indirectly affects their

loyalty through the mediating role of satisfaction. In other words, the sports complexes customer loyalty antecedents can be traced back, to a large extent, in the social responsibility and customer satisfaction.



**Figure 2:** the ultimate output of PLS in significance state

#### IV. Discussion and Conclusion

Nowadays, people have gradually realized that the organizations proceedings can lead to profit and loss for the society. Therefore, abundant attention has been paid to focus the net result of organizations on the society. In other words, society expects higher net interest received from organizations and expects these benefits to be fairly distributed. In today's highly competitive environment, the companies and organizations take social responsibility as a business strategy that adds to their credibility and increase their market shares (Salehi, 2010). Sport is a phenomenon that has great influence in modern society. At the international level sport ranks eleventh among several major industries and due to this fact, each of the sports organizations should find a philosophy based on the social responsibility and Ethics in order to show a logical behavior when treating the complex proceedings of marketing and human resource management. According to Schaum et al (2008), there is a direct relationship between social responsibility and customers' satisfaction. Also, the results obtained from other studies in today's organizations are indicative of consideration for the social responsibility as an important factor in job satisfaction and customers' loyalty. These results are confirmed by those of Wolf and Batkowski (2012), Perez (2015), and Shin (2015). The reason behind it is that sports complexes are faced with a consuming society of which majority of them are young people who get increasingly aware of the social aspects of the organization's activities. On the other hand, based on the principle of customer orientation, organizations that want to be leaders must create sustainable value for the customer and act beyond his expectations and know that customers are the final arbiter of products and services quality, whether to the customers or services for their communities. Therefore, the sports complexes should, by taking measures in line with organizational responsibility, attract the customers' satisfaction in order to finally make them remain loyal to the organization. The results of the current study indicated that the social responsibility both directly and indirectly affects the complexes' customer loyalty through the mediating role of satisfaction which is in line with Honari (2010) results. Generally, according to the results obtained from the current study, it can be said that there are four types of responsibility for the sports clubs as economic, social, humanitarian, and legal responsibility implementation of which can directly affect their job satisfaction and customers' loyalty. In fact, the managers of sports complexes, by paying attention to their organization social responsibility and provision of sustainable and responsible services for the customers besides compliance with ethical charters, provide the athletes satisfaction and focus on the effect of these responsibilities on their loyalty, the key to attracting customers is to improve their attitude to the organization and the services provided by it.

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