

An Examination of the effects of Fan-Based Brand Associations of a Professional Soccer League on League Brand Equity

Serdar Turedi

Purdue University Northwest

Sinan Nardali

Izmir Katip Celebi University

Musa Pinar

Valparaiso University

Tulay Girard

Pennsylvania State University-Altoona

Sanem Alkibay

Gazi University

The main objectives of this study are to 1) identify the relevant dimensions of the fan-based brand associations (FBBA) of a sports league and develop a measurement scale for FBBA, and 2) investigate the relationship between brand equity and its components (brand associations and internalization). Data are collected from 227 soccer fans and a partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis is conducted. The results indicate that player, referee, head coach, stadium, team success, (team) management, and soccer federation are significant dimensions of the sports league FBBA and that the FBBA and internalization can be applied to investigate the brand equity of professional sports leagues. The findings also suggest that league managers can collaborate with other key members of the industry (e.g., players, head coaches, or team managers) to develop a strong professional sports league.

Keywords: Sports league, Sports brand equity, Branding, Soccer brand equity, Fan-based brand associations

Introduction

Due to increased competition and globalization, managers have given top priority to the branding efforts of their organizations (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004). Brands allow customers to efficiently

associate personal meaning to the products offered by organizations as brands sustain functional and symbolic information about goods, services, and experiences (Oh et al., 2020). Therefore, a strong brand refers to the consumers' association of specific positive attributes with the brand (Kunkel et al., 2014), and a strong brand is essential for creating positive perceptions among consumers (Kaynak et al., 2008; Kunkel et al., 2014). Realizing that a brand is one of the most valuable intangible assets of an organization, focusing on developing strong brands and brand equity has become a common practice between organizations. Developing brand equity, which is defined as 'the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of brand (Keller, 1993, p. 2), is considered the central construct in the strategic management of brands (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2011). Further, brand equity is related to positive financial and behavioral outcomes (Keller, 1993) that ultimately create value for customers (Tong & Hawley, 2009).

Brand equity has become particularly important in the sports management area as the fans develop an emotional connection with the sports teams that they support and the leagues that they follow (Biscaia et al., 2013). As the competition for fans across different sports, the proliferation of sports franchises, and new social media tools to reach the fans globally increased, teams and leagues have adopted a business-like approach to managing their brands (James et al., 2002). These trends and changes in the global sports field suggest that it has become essential to build strong sports brands to distinguish the leagues and teams from their competitors in the same sport and across different sports (Kaynak et al., 2008). Findings of the 2021 annual report on the most valuable (highest brand equity) football (aka soccer in the U.S.) brands present good evidence for the importance of branding strategy for teams and leagues because nine of the top ten teams in the most valuable and strongest brands' lists have been the same teams (Brand Finance, 2021a). Consequently, managing a team as a brand has become a growing paradigm in the sports industry (Ross, 2006) and the number of studies investigating sports team brand equity has increased (e.g., Bauer et al., 2005; Bauer et al., 2008; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Ross et al., 2006, Ross et al., 2008).

Prior literature on sports teams and leagues has operationalized brand equity as a multi-dimensional construct (e.g., Bauer et al., 2008; Biscaia et al., 2013; Kunkel et al., 2017; Ross et al., 2008). They use brand associations and brand awareness constructs to indirectly measure brand equity. Brand associations, which are defined as anything that is linked in memory to a brand (Aaker, 1991), are classified as brand attributes (product-related and non-product-related), brand benefits, and brand attitudes (Keller, 1993). However, prior studies on sports brand equity focus only on brand attributes (e.g., Biscaia et al., 2013; Kunkel et al., 2017) and reveal that sports brand associations provide a sound basis for explaining sports brand equity. In contrast, the literature that investigates the role of brand awareness, which is defined as familiarity with a brand (Aaker, 1991) on sports brand equity, has contradicting results. While some studies argue that brand awareness is not a relevant measure of sports brand equity since it would be typically high among the fans of a team or league (Bauer et al., 2008), others find that brand awareness, measured as the internalization of a brand, explains sports brand equity (Biscaia et al., 2013). Because brand awareness and internalization are two different constructs, this study uses the attributes-based brand associations and internalization constructs as the components of brand equity.

Despite the growing number of research on the team brand equity topic, to the best of the authors' knowledge, league brand equity has received limited attention (Ekebas-Turedi, Karaatli, & Turedi, 2020; Kunkel, 2013; Kunkel et al., 2014; Kunkel, 2017). This is surprising given that a league serves as an umbrella brand (master brand) over its teams (sub-brands). In a league-team brand architecture, leagues offer the participating teams a platform for their product (games/ matches) as a source of entertainment and excitement for fans and for developing their fan base (Kunkel et al., 2014). Furthermore, leagues function as a franchisor that supports their teams to ensure the team's success (Kunkel et al., 2014). This support involves the use of marketing and promotion activities to

build a brand (Pitt et al., 2003). For example, the Turkish Football Federation auctions the Turkish Super League's TV rights nationally and internationally on behalf of all of the teams and organizes Turkish Super Cup final games in stadiums outside Turkey to increase international viewership and build a stronger brand. In turn, fans' perceptions of individual teams positively influence their perceptions of the league (Kunkel et al., 2017). Therefore, in the league-team brand architecture, leagues and teams are mutually dependent on each other's brand-building strategies, such that one cannot exist without the other (Kunkel et al., 2014).

Moreover, neither team brand equity nor league brand equity literature has attempted to explore the relationship between sports brand equity and its components. Kunkel et al. (2014) state that it is important to understand not only the team brand equity but also the league brand equity and its relationship to its components. However, previous studies on sports brand equity have mainly focused on indirect measures of team brand equity and identifying the team brand association dimensions (e.g., Bauer et al., 2008; Biscaia et al., 2013; Ross et al., 2008). Most of the studies that investigated the components of league brand equity and dimensions of league brand associations also used an indirect measure approach and developed a single-item scale for league brand associations (Kunkel et al., 2013; Kunkel et al., 2014; Kunkel et al., 2017). These studies have not examined the relationship between brand equity and its components as indirect measures intend to identify the sources of brand equity. On the other hand, direct measures focus on the responses of customers to the marketing efforts of brands (Tong & Hawley, 2009). Therefore, studies that use direct measures with a multi-item scale to measure overall brand equity suggest a causal relationship between brand equity and its components (Girard et al., 2017). Hence, this study uses the direct measurement approach and examines the following three research questions to address the gap in the literature:

- (1) What are the fan-based brand associations of sports leagues?
- (2) How does fan-based brand associations of sports league affect sports league brand equity?
- (3) How does internalization affect sports league brand equity?

This study investigates these research questions by employing a sample of 227 Turkish soccer fans. This study answers the first research question by identifying from the literature the relevant fan-based brand association (FBBA) dimensions that contribute to a strong sports league brand and developing a multi-item measurement scale to measure them. To answer the second and third research questions, this study uses league brand equity as the dependent variable and two main components of brand equity (FBBA and internalization) as the independent variables. The empirical results of this research make two significant contributions to the literature. First, this study aims to extend the literature by developing the multi-item FBBA scale. Second, it attempts to shed light on the impact of FBBA and internalization on league brand equity. Furthermore, this research also discusses the managerial and theoretical implications of the results to developing a strong sports league. Given the interdependence of sports leagues and teams through the league-team brand architecture, the findings of this research will contribute to sports branding literature by offering a better understanding of the league brand associations dimensions and the relationships between a league's brand equity and its components.

Background

Brand Equity

Two different perspectives have been used to study brand equity: financial-based (e.g., Simon & Sullivan, 1993) and consumer-based (e.g., Keller, 1993). While, financial-based brand equity measures the financial value of a brand (Simon & Sullivan, 1993), consumer-based brand equity measures the value consumers attached to a brand (Keller, 1993). As Rosenbaum-Elliott et al. (2011, p. 90) emphasize, "In a very real sense, understanding brand equity must come from the consumer's point of view because that is what ultimately will affect brand success." Keller (2013) states that the

power of the brand lies within what customers learn, feel, and hear about the brand and how they respond over time, as brand equity is the value that consumers associate with a brand. Brand equity is built through the effective management of the brand promise and brand experience and serves as a key indicator of a brand's health (Keller, 1993).

From a consumer-based perspective, Aaker (1991, p.15) has conceptualized brand equity as “a multidimensional concept, consisting of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, all of which are important from the customer perspective”, however, he does not operationalize any scale to measure brand equity. Following that, Keller (1993) introduced the consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) model, which identifies brand awareness and brand image associations as essential components that represent the core of brand equity. Consistent with this conceptualization, previous studies have examined the relationship between brand equity and its components (e.g., Girard et al., 2017; Tong & Hawley, 2009). Nevertheless, there is still a lack of consensus on the exact definition of brand equity. Despite the lack of consensus on a definition, there is an agreement that successful brands develop a strong personal and emotional relationship with their consumers (Aaker, 1996). Such a relationship becomes more apparent in the sport context, as the emotional and personal relationship between fans and their favorite sports team tends to be strong (Biscaia et al., 2013).

Brand Equity in Sport Industry

There has been a growing interest in studying the role of brand equity in the sport context. Prior literature has investigated the sports team brand equity and developed frameworks for consumer-based brand equity of the sports teams (Bauer et al., 2005; Bauer et al., 2008; Biscaia et al., 2013; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Gladden et al., 1998; Ross, 2006; Ross et al., 2006; Ross et al., 2008). For example, Gladden et al. (1998) offer a conceptual framework to show the multidimensional nature of sports brand equity. Their framework, which is developed for assessing brand equity in Division I college athletics, includes four brand equity components: (1) brand associations, (2) brand awareness, (3) perceived quality and (4) brand loyalty. Further, it includes three groups of brand equity antecedents (team-related, organizational-related, and market-related attributes) and three group of consequences in the marketplace (national media exposure, corporate sponsorship, and merchandise sales). Later, Gladden and Milne (1999) add two antecedents (logo design and stadium) to Gladden et al. (1998)'s framework to expand it to a sports brand equity context.

However, neither study provides a scale to measure their models. Bauer et al. (2005), is the first study to propose a measurement scale for brand equity in the context of team sport and develop the Brand Equity in a Team Sport (BETS) scale and operationalize brand equity using fourteen indicators and two components: 1) brand awareness and 2) brand (image) associations. Bauer et al. (2005) suggest that their model would hold over leagues as well as countries and encourage conducting further research utilizing it. Yet, the model is criticized for not considering consumer experience with the brand (Biscaia et al., 2013). To address this problem, Ross (2006) develops the Spectator-Based Brand Equity (SBBE) model by considering consumer experience. The SBBE model also employs brand associations and brand awareness as the team's brand equity components. Finally, Biscaia et al. (2013) assess the validity of the SBBE model in the European soccer league. They represent brand awareness using identification and internalization. However, these two constructs are grouped into a single dimension and renamed internalization by the authors. Since the fans are already aware of the team brand that they support (Bauer et al. 2005), this study uses brand associations and internalization to study league brand equity.

Sports Brand Associations

Several studies have explored brand associations in the sport context. Table 1 summarizes the key studies that examine the brand association dimensions for sports teams and sports leagues, and lists the dimensions used for measuring brand associations. The studies related to sports teams' branding have provided a good understanding of team brand association dimensions.

Table 1 - Summary of Key Research on Sports Brand Associations

Factor	Dimension	Gladden and Funk (2002)	Ross et al. (2006)	Bauer et al. (2008)	Ross et al. (2008)	Biscaia et al. (2013)	Kunkel et al. (2014)
Product-related	Head coach	x		x		x	
	Management	x				x	x
	Non-player personnel		x		x		
	Star player	x		x			x
	Rivalry / Competition		x		x		x
	(Team) Success	x	x	x	x	x	
	Team (member)			x			
Non-product-related	Team performance / Team play		x	x	x		x
	Concessions		x		x	x	
	Club history and tradition	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Fans			x			
	Brand Mark / Logo	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Product delivery	x					x
Brand benefits	Stadium (atmosphere)	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Education						x
	Emotions			x			
	Entertainment / Excitement			x			x
	Escape / Diversion	x		x			x
	Identification	x		x			
	Nostalgia	x		x			x
	Peer-group acceptance	x		x			
	Player development						x
Pride in place	x					x	
Brand attitudes	Socialization		x	x	x	x	
	Affect	x		x			
	Importance	x					
	Knowledge	x					
	Commitment		x		x	x	
	Organizational attributes		x		x	x	
	Specific team						x

Gladden and Funk (2002) develop the Team Association Model (TAM) to enhance the understanding of team brand associations. The TAM categorized team brand associations into four factors: 1) product-related attributes, 2) non-product-related attributes, 3) brand benefits and 4) brand attitudes. Following a four-step procedure, they determined 16 brand associations and offered a measurement scale.

Ross et al. (2006) develop Team Brand Association Scale (TBAS) and identify 11 sports teams' brand associations. However, they do not empirically examine the relationships between brand associations and their dimensions. Bauer et al. (2008) develop a framework to measure brand (image)

associations and investigate their importance for fan loyalty in the team sports industry in Germany. The model includes product-related attributes, non-product-related brands, multifaceted perceived brand benefits, and brand loyalty measured as behavioral loyalty. Bauer et al. (2008) reveal that a club's brand associations play a major role in fostering loyal fan behavior, and the influence of non-product-related attributes is almost tripled those of product-related attributes. This is a surprising result as the authors state that product-related attributes are expected to be of greater importance to fans. Based on these results, they suggest that neither competitive success nor the team itself is a central driver of a fan's utility perception. Thus, Bauer et al. (2008) argue that there should be a special focus on non-product-related attributes.

Ross et al. (2008) criticize the previous models for being derived from the perspectives of manufactured goods and are not addressing the importance of the consumer's actual experience. They state that addressing actual experience is critical due to the experiential nature of spectator sport. Ross et al. (2008) empirically test Ross (2006)'s SBBE model, which includes dimensions for brand associations and brand awareness in line with Keller (1993)'s CBBE model. The results of Ross et al. (2008) show that brand awareness and brand associations are relevant constructs for their SBBE model for a sports team. Moreover, Ross et al. (2008) find that success and team characteristics constructs are the strongest two dimensions of the sports team brand associations. Ross et al. (2008) conclude that their model is a reliable tool to measure brand equity in sports.

Biscaia et al. (2013) empirically test Ross et al. (2008)'s SBBE model on the Portuguese soccer league. Their final model includes ten brand association dimensions. Results of the multi-group analysis reveal that the SBBE model is a valid tool for assessing the brand equity of soccer teams in Europe. Their results also indicate that all ten dimensions of brand associations showed statistically significant relationships with the second-order construct of brand associations. The strongest dimension of brand associations is team success.

Kunkel et al. (2013) is the first study to explore the role of branding in the sports league context. They test different driver roles of the league and team brands on consumer loyalty. They find that a co-dominant brand relationship exists between professional sports leagues and their affiliated teams, which is the prevalent perceived brand relationship. Despite these results, a few studies have further explored this co-dominant relationship. In a different study, Kunkel et al. (2014) modified and integrated Gladden and Funk (2002)'s and Ross et al. (2008)'s team-based brand associations frameworks to measure league brand associations. They indicate that brand associations for a professional sports league represent attributes, benefits, and attitudes linked in consumer's mind with that league. This is the first study to examine league brand associations from consumers' perspectives and their results reveal that existing team brand equity literature can be applied to explore consumer-based league brand associations of sports leagues. Kunkel et al. (2014) conclude that team brand associations used in previous research (Bauer et al., 2008; Gladden & Funk 2002; Ross et al., 2006; Ross et al., 2008) are relevant for sports leagues.

Kunkel et al. (2017) have integrated brand architecture and brand associations literature to examine the role of league brand on the relationship between the team brand and team-related behavior. They state that while sports leagues and teams represent unique entities, team brands can influence the league brand and the league brand can influence team-related behavior. Thus, teams affiliated with a strong league brand benefit from the positive league brand associations that consumers form.

However, the studies that focus on sports team brand associations and brand equity do not address the league brand associations or brand equity (Bauer et al., 2008; Gladden & Funk 2002; Ross et al., 2006; Ross et al., 2008). Prior studies that cover sports leagues (Kunkel et al., 2013; Kunkel et al., 2014) provide some insights about the league brand associations (Kunkel et al., 2014), the role of league brand on the relationship between the team brand and team-related behavior (Kunkel et al.,

2017) and the driver roles of leagues and teams (Kunkel et al., 2013). However, these studies use single-item scales to measure each brand association dimension and do not provide multi-item scales for sports league brand association dimensions. They also do not examine the relationships among the brand association dimensions as they use formative models. Further, they have never linked the league brand associations to league brand equity, nor do they offer measures for league brand equity. Hence, it is essential to examine the sports leagues' brand associations, which could help to create a strong league brand equity. This study intends to fill this gap in the literature by examining the FBBA of a sport (soccer) league – measured with a multi-item scale. Further, drawing from the previous sports branding literature, this study proposes that:

H1. A positive relationship exists between fan-based brand associations and league brand equity

Internalization

Brand awareness is another important component of brand equity. It represents a consumer's ability of brand recognition and brand recall (Aaker, 1996), and it is related to the strength of the brand in memory, reflecting consumers' ability to identify the brand under different situations (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). Brand recognition is consumers' ability to correctly identify a product or service based on a brand name, logo, or other indicators (Keller, 1993). For example, fans can recognize a soccer game on TV as an English Premier League game or La Liga (Spanish Soccer League) game by the logo on the screen without looking at the details of the game. On the other hand, brand recall is the likelihood of a consumer's instant recollection of the brand name when prompted with a product or service (Keller, 1993). For example, most fans automatically think of the English Premier League or La Liga when they talk about soccer. Thus, brand awareness can be an indicator of product or service quality or consumers' commitment to that brand (Aaker, 1991). It affects consumers' decision-making process regarding a product or service and has a direct effect on brand equity (Tong & Hawley, 2009).

Brand awareness also received attention in the sports brand equity literature. Bauer et al. (2005) is the first study to explore the role of brand awareness on sports team brand equity. They measure brand recall through the enumeration of known brands (teams) in professional German soccer, and brand recognition through the recognition of certain teams in professional German soccer and familiarity with these teams. Bauer et al, (2005) conclude that brand awareness may not be a factor that adds a lot of value to understanding the sports team brand equity because the amount of variance explained by it is too small. They stated that the use of brand awareness in the sports brand equity context might be problematic because the brands in professional sports are well known among fans. Thus, Bauer et al. (2005) suggest that brand awareness only adds value to the understanding of brand equity when there is a high variance in consumers' knowledge and diversity in their product category expertise.

Ross et al. (2008) measure team brand awareness using identification – belongingness to a brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003) – and internalization – taking in brand values as one's own (Deci & Ryan, 1985). They state that although there are more direct measures of brand awareness, they use psychological commitment to a team as the measure since these two dimensions serve as a gauge for recognition and recall and may influence the sports team's brand equity. Biscaia et al. (2013) test Ross et al. (2008)'s model on the Portuguese soccer league. Brand awareness is initially measured by eight items representing identification and internalization in their model. These constructs are grouped into a single dimension which is renamed internalization and measured by three items. In addition, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) point out that research has failed to differentiate the aspects of identification from internalization. Further, to the best of the authors' knowledge, none of the sports

league brand equity studies have addressed the importance of internalization on sports league brand equity. Hence, drawing from the previous sports branding literature this study proposes that:

H2. A positive relationship exists between internalization and league brand equity

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual model for FBBA for a sports league, which includes the dimensions of league brand associations, internalization, and league brand equity. The studies, from which the item scales are developed, along with the measurement items of the multi-item scale of the final model are presented in Table 2.

Figure 1 - Proposed Model – Measuring Brand Associations for League Brand Equity

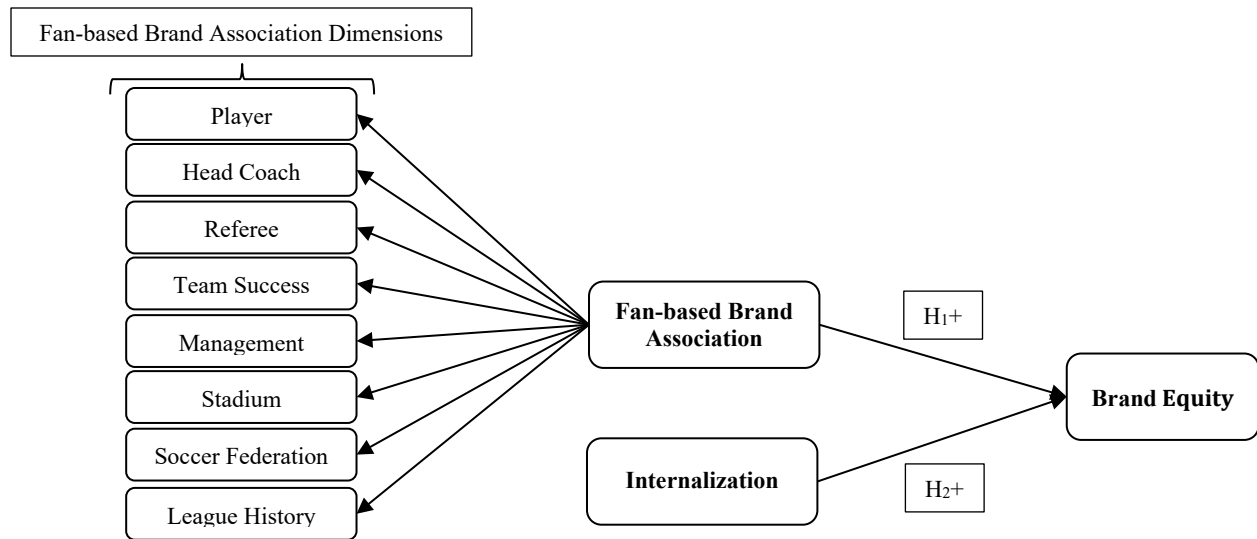


Table 2 - Final Measurement Scale: Means and Standard Deviations

Constructs (Source)	Item ID	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
Player (Gladden & Funk 2002)	p13	Star players in Super League always perform at the highest level.	5.36	1.76
	p15	Foreign star players in the league improve the quality of their teams.	5.48	1.58
Head Coach (Gladden & Funk 2002)	hc2	Successful teams have the same head coaches for a long time.	5.35	1.63
	hc3	Head coaches in the league maintain discipline for their team's success.	5.44	1.63
Stadium (Ross et al., 2008)	sta3	League stadiums are designed for fans to enjoy the game.	5.48	1.55
	sta4	Restrooms and all other facilities at the league stadiums are of the best quality.	5.32	1.55
	sta5	Outside of the league stadiums offer places for the fans to have a good time before the game.	5.43	1.50
	ref2	League referees are consistent in their decisions.	5.60	1.52

Referees (developed by the authors)	ref4	Referees' decisions are fair and consistent with the rules of the game.	5.60	1.63
Team Success (Ross et al., 2008)	team1	Teams in the league play well in every game.	5.64	1.38
	team2	Teams in the league have star players who would help win the games.	5.52	1.57
Management (Gladden & Funk 2002)	man3	Team managers do not make negative comments about the other/opposing teams.	5.42	1.57
	man4	Team managers' priority is to build a strong league brand.	5.37	1.54
Soccer Federation (developed by the authors)	sf1	The League commissioner treats every team the same.	5.67	1.54
	sf9	The League commissioner does not discriminate among teams.	5.58	1.58
Internalization (Ross et al., 2008)	int1	I feel like I am a member of the Super League.	5.56	1.58
	int2	Being a fan of the Super League is a large part of who I am.	5.25	1.79
	int3	Fans "live and breathe" league.	5.57	1.55
Brand Equity (Tong & Hawley, 2009)	be2	Even though there are other sports activities equally fun, Super League games are preferred.	5.44	1.53
	be3	The quality of Super League games is worth the price fans pay.	5.30	1.72

Methodology¹

Research Context

According to the statistics published by Plunkett Research (2016), the sports industry is one of the top 20 global industries, with a \$1.5 trillion market value, of which advertising makes the most significant contribution with \$34.9 billion in annual spending. The most recent annual report of the world's most valuable 50 football (soccer) brands (Brand Finance, 2021a) shows that despite the effects of Covid-19, there is a growing interest in branding and creating valuable brands in the sport. The report indicates that the Premier League of England has the highest brand value with €7,485,189 billion in 2021. Although the Turkish Super League was not evaluated in the 2021 annual report, according to the 2016 Brand Finance Football 50 report, the Turkish Super League has ranked the sixth biggest brand among European soccer leagues with a brand value of \$211 million (Brand Finance, 2016). Also, the brand values of the top three Turkish soccer teams (Galatasaray with \$49 million, Fenerbahce with \$48 million, and Besiktas with \$35 million) (Brand Finance, 2021b) validate the importance of the Turkish Super League among European leagues. Hence, the Turkish Super League provides a compelling research context to examine the relationship proposed in Figure 1.

Scale Development

The current research implements Malhotra and Groves (1998)'s measurement scale development framework to achieve the study objectives. First, the constructs of the study have been identified. The current research chooses brand associations and internalization constructs as the independent variables since the extant literature mainly uses them as the determinants of sports brand equity (e.g., Bauer et al., 2005; Biscaia et al., 2013; Keller, 1993; Ross et al., 2008). Further, following the models tested in previous non-sport brand equity research (e.g., Girard et al., 2017; Tong &

¹ This paper is based on a survey that was designed to provide data for more than one study; hence, the methodology presented in this paper is similar to the methodological discussions presented in Pinar et al. (2017).

Hawley, 2009; Yoo et al., 2000), the overall league brand equity construct is used as the dependent variable.

The brand associations measures are compiled from previous sports branding literature (Bauer et al., 2008; Biscaia et al. 2013; Gladden et al., 1998; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Ross, 2006; Ross et al., 2006; Ross et al., 2008) and modified to reflect the league brand associations. Even though brand associations consist of attributes, benefits, and attitudes (Keller, 1993), prior sports branding literature does not integrate attitudes into brand association models because attributes and benefits determine attitudes (Bauer et al., 2005; Gladden & Funk, 2002). Attributes define descriptive characteristics of a product or service, whereas benefits represent personal value that customers attach to the same product or service (Keller, 1993; Kunkel et al., 2014). Hence, this study focuses on the attributes dimension of brand associations to examine the proposed model. Gladden and Funk (2002), identify eight main attributes in the team context. These attributes are: 1) star player, 2) success, 3) head coach, 4) management, 5) stadium/arena, 6) tradition, 7) logo design and 8) product delivery. This study uses players (5 items), team success (4 items), head coaches (5 items), team management (5 items), stadium (5 items), and league history (3 items) to measure the first six attributes respectively.

This study does not include logo design in the proposed model because the Turkish Soccer League is well known among Turkish soccer fans, and logo design may not make any significant difference concerning soccer league attributes. Kunkel et al. (2017) confirm this assumption because they find logo has no significant effect on consumers' perception of the league brand. This study also does not include product delivery as it is not applicable in the context of the soccer league for Turkey. Instead, this study adds two additional brand associations – soccer federation (9 items) and referees (5 items) because the soccer federation serves as a franchisor and league's governing body by establishing game rules and implementing these rules via referees. These two dimensions are relevant because the soccer federation, as a governing body, develops the game rules to guarantee that each team is equally and fairly treated, and promotes the league brand, while the referees are in charge of making sure that the game rules are developed by soccer federations are fairly and consistently implemented for all games to assure the improvement of the overall quality of the games (Kunkel et al., 2017).

The measures for internalization are adopted from Biscaia et al. (2013) and modified to reflect the sports league. Finally, the league brand equity measurements are compiled from the non-sport team branding literature (e.g., Girard et al., 2017; Tong & Hawley, 2009; Sirianni et al., 2013; Yoo et al., 2000) and modified to reflect the sports league from the fans' perspectives because there have been no prior scales for measuring sports league brand equity. This is because prior studies focusing on sports teams' brand equity examine the dimensions of brand associations and brand awareness. However, those studies do not link brand associations and internalization to sports team brand equity. This study uses an importance scale to determine how important the brand association dimensions and internalization are in creating a strong league brand equity. Each item is measured on a seven-point scale (1 = very unimportant to 7 = very important).

The survey instrument was originally developed in English using the measurement scale items from the aforementioned literature. Following the recommendation of Ball et al., (2002), the survey was translated into Turkish and then translated into English by different experts to avoid translation errors and maintain the intended meanings of the questions. The original and translated versions of the survey were compared until there were no differences. All of the scale items, as explained below, were pretested to improve their meaning and ease of comprehension.

Once the initial survey instrument was developed, the next step was to conduct several pre-tests to improve the quality of scale items. First, a panel of 3 academics, who are experts on branding and scale development, were asked to provide feedback on the survey. Based on the feedback of the panel, the survey was revised. The first pre-test was conducted in Izmir (the third largest city with a

population of over 2.5 million), Turkey, with 113 soccer fans, who followed and/or attended soccer matches. The respondents were asked to indicate the importance level of each item in the survey in creating a strong soccer league brand. To minimize possible bias, the instructions of the survey disclosed that the Turkish Soccer League did not sponsor the research. Based on the results of exploratory factor analyses, the authors modified the survey and eliminated items that have poor factor loadings and/or are loaded on multiple factors. After that, the authors conducted the second pre-test in Izmir and Ankara (the second largest city with a population of over 4 million), Turkey. The authors administered the survey to 60 respondents in each city which produced 120 valid surveys. As this study is designed to examine the brand associations and internalization in soccer leagues, the authors purposefully used a convenience sample of respondents who were interested in soccer.

The authors conducted exploratory factor and reliability analyses that provided useful input for improving the measurement scale and establishing the face validity of the constructs (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2005; Narver & Slater, 1990). After the modifications, the final survey instrument resulted in a total of 31 items, out of which were 25 scale items for the dimensions of brand associations. Each of the eight brand association dimensions initially had three items, except for the soccer federation, which had four items. In line with Biscaia et al. (2013), internalization also initially had three items. Finally, the overall league brand equity initially has three items. The survey also included demographic questions.

Sampling Plan

The target population for this study project was soccer fans in Turkey, who were 18 years old or older. The survey was administered with the help of a market research company, Xsights located in Istanbul, Turkey, to reach the target population. Identifying an adequate sample size is important to ensure the statistical power of the test for the proposed model. Prior literature offers two different approaches for determining the minimum sample size required for a powerful analysis: (1) power analysis (Cohen, 1988) or (2) a 10-times rule of thumb (Hair et al., 2014). The 10-times rule of thumb specifies that the minimum sample size needs to be equal to the larger of: (1) 10-times the largest number of formative indicators used to measure a single construct, or (2) 10-times the largest number of structural paths directed at a construct in the structural model. On the other hand, power analysis recommends using 0.15 for effect size, a level of 5% for an alpha, and a minimum of 80% power (Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2014). Accordingly, power analysis suggests a minimum sample of 139, whereas the 10-times rule of thumb recommends a minimum sample of 150 for this study. Xsights administered the survey to a randomly selected 350 soccer fans from their national panel of over 68,000 members. The respondents were qualified with a screening question to guarantee they were soccer fans. Soccer is mostly followed by male fans in Turkey. The sample selection has considered this fact. Furthermore, since most soccer teams are in major metropolitan areas, the sample consisted of respondents from metropolitan areas. A total of 227 out of 350 surveys were deemed complete and usable (64.9% effective response rate) after detailed data screening, cleaning, and omitting outliers. Similar to studies of Biscaia et al. (2013) and Kunkel et al. (2017) that used a panel of respondents for their survey, a response rate could not be reported. Nevertheless, the effective response rate of the research is similar to the effective response rates of similar studies (Biscaia et al., 2013: 62.6%, Kunkel et al., 2017: 55%).

The 227 respondent profiles in Table 3 show that 78% of the respondents were male and 22% were female, more than half of the respondents (52%) were between 18 and 31 years old, and 69% of them earned monthly income between 2,000 TL and 3,000 TL (\$675-\$1,000 at the time of the data collection). The respondents were asked how they usually followed most of the games in the Turkish Super League in a given season. A majority (70%) of the respondents indicated that they followed most of the soccer games on TV, whereas 10% followed from social media, and 5% followed from

newspapers and/or did not follow at all. 15% of the respondents indicated that they regularly attended the games. In addition, when the respondents were asked how frequently they went to the games of the teams that they supported in a regular season, 38% of the respondents indicated that they usually attended 1-3 games, 15% attended 4-6 games, 10% attended 7-10 games, only 8% attended more than 10 games in a regular season, while 29% of the respondents stated that they did not attend games at all. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that almost half (46%) of the respondents preferred to have both a strong league and team brand, whereas 42% preferred to have a strong team brand, and 12% preferred to have a strong league brand.

Table 3 - Selective Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Gender	n	Percent	Age	n	Percent
Female	50	22	18-24	54	24
Male	177	78	25-31	64	28
Total	227	100	32-38	52	23
Income	n	Percent	39-45	57	25
Less than 1,000 TL	4	2	Total	227	100
1,001-2,000 TL	22	10	Attending Games	n	Percent
2,0001-3,000 TL	158	69	Never	65	29
3,001-4500 TL	27	12	1-3 Games	87	38
More than 4,500 TL	16	7	4-6 Games	33	15
Total	227	100	7-10 Games	24	10
Following Games	n	Percent	More than 10 games	18	8
From TV	159	70	Total	227	100
Attending Games	34	15	Brand Preference	n	Percent
Social Media	24	10	League Brand	28	12
Newspaper	4	2	Team Brand	94	42
Not Follow	6	3	Both team & League	105	46
Total	227	100	Total	227	100

Results

Assessing Reliability and Validity — Testing Measurement Model

Smart-PLS 3.2.1 was used to run PLS-SEM for assessing the measurement and path models. The path model was designed to be in line with the existing literature. That is, the head coach, soccer federation, referee, player, stadium, team success, (team) management, and league history were treated as sub-dimensions of brand associations construct (low order constructs – LOCs), and brand associations were treated as high order construct (HOC) (Biscaia et al., 2013). All LOCs were modeled to be reflective in the measurement since the authors intend to establish a common league brand associations factor (Hair et al., 2017). The reliability and validity of each construct as well as their measures were assessed before testing the hypothesized relationships in Figure 1.

First, outer loadings were examined to test the indicator reliability. Eight items (player4, head coach5, referee5, team4, management5, soccer federation2, 8, and be1) were removed from the measurement model because of low loadings (below .70). As a result, some of the constructs left with only two items. Yet, as Hair et al., (2011) indicate this is not an issue for PLS-SEM. In addition, the league history construct was excluded from the model as its items did not load onto the HOC. The remaining seven LOCs with a total of 15 items (for details see Table 2) were used as brand association dimensions in the final model. Internalization was measured with three items and brand equity was

measured with two items in the final model. Figure 2 illustrates the results of the PLS structure model. Furthermore, measurement reliability was tested using the composite reliability scores and all scores were above the threshold (.70), indicating no reliability problem (Hair et al., 2014). To test the convergent validity, the Analysis of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used. The highest AVE was 0.886, and the smallest AVE was 0.736. Therefore, the result of the analysis revealed that all AVE values were higher than the threshold (0.50), which confirmed the convergent validity of all brand association dimensions as well as internalization and brand equity constructs. These results indicate that the eight items dropped from the model to improve indicator reliability do not affect the robustness of the measurement scale. The scores of construct reliability and validity are illustrated in Table 4.

Figure 2 - Results of the PLS Structure Model

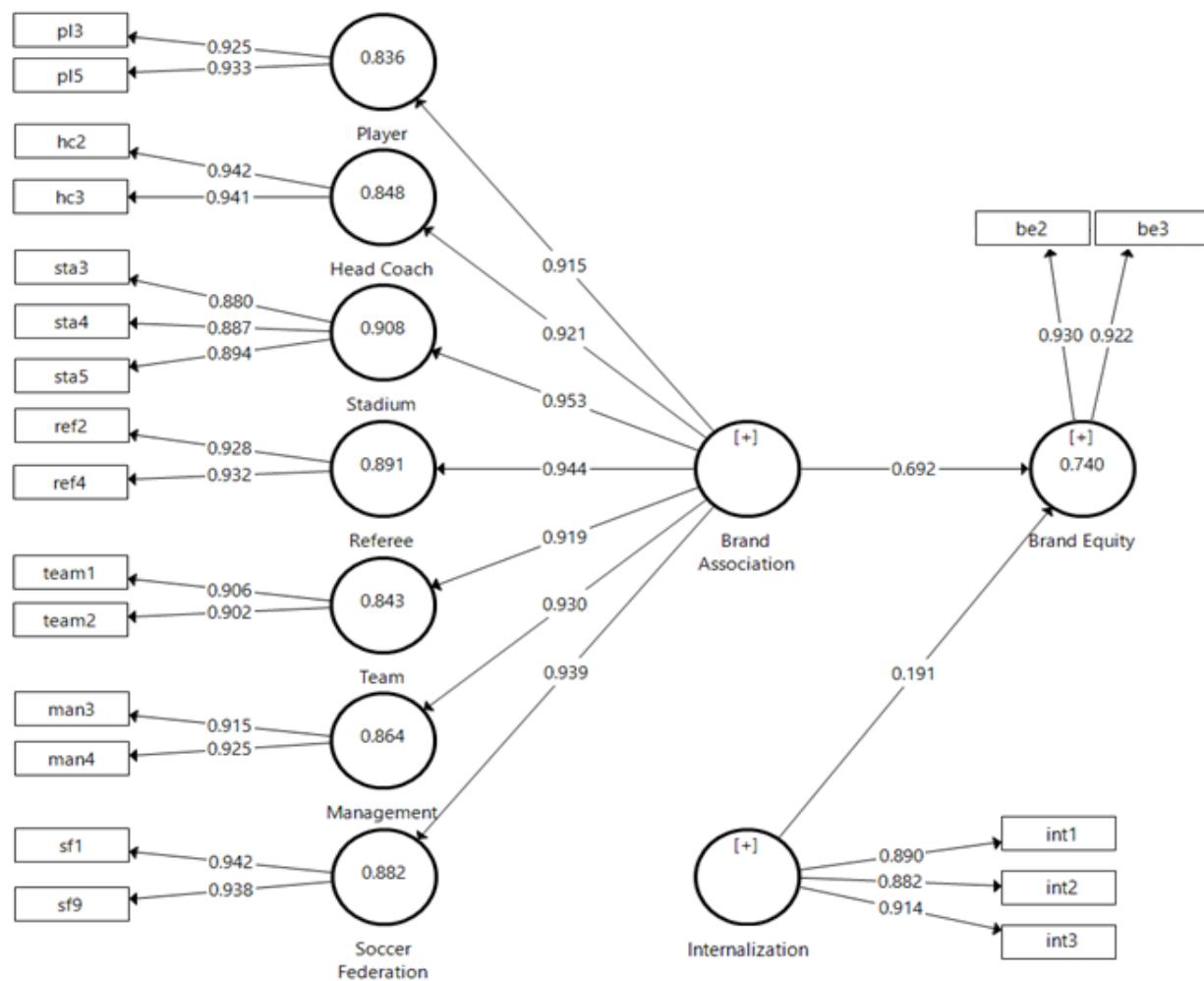


Table 4 - Construct Reliability and Validity Scores

Constructs	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Head Coach	0.94	0.89
Brand Associations	0.98	0.74
Internalization	0.92	0.80

Brand Equity	0.92	0.86
Soccer Federation	0.94	0.88
Referee	0.93	0.87
Player	0.93	0.86
Management	0.92	0.85
Team	0.90	0.82
Stadium	0.92	0.79

The discriminant validity was examined using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) internal consistency measure. As Hair et al. (2014) suggest, the discriminant validity between the HOC and the LOCs, as well as within the LOCs was ignored because of the high correlations among these constructs. A detailed examination of Fornell and Larcker (1981)'s internal consistency measures for HOC and brand equity showed that the square root of AVE value for each HOC or latent variable (brand associations = 0.858, internalization = 0.895 and brand equity = 0.926) was greater than its highest correlation with any other HOC or latent variable. This provides support for the discriminant validity among HOC and latent variables. The results of the internal consistency test are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 - Fornell and Larcker's Internal Consistency of Constructs

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Head Coach (1)	0.94									
Brand Associations (2)	0.92	0.86								
Internalization (3)	0.80	0.86	0.90							
Brand Equity (4)	0.78	0.86	0.79	0.93						
Soccer Federation (5)	0.87	0.94	0.82	0.81	0.94					
Referee (6)	0.88	0.94	0.80	0.79	0.91	0.93				
Player (7)	0.80	0.92	0.76	0.80	0.83	0.82	0.93			
Stadium (8)	0.84	0.95	0.83	0.83	0.87	0.86	0.86	0.89		
Team (9)	0.78	0.92	0.77	0.78	0.82	0.85	0.85	0.88	0.90	
Management (10)	0.84	0.93	0.80	0.78	0.84	0.86	0.83	0.88	0.83	0.92

Testing the Structural Model

The findings of testing the path model in Figure 2 suggested that the effects of brand associations ($\beta = 0.692$, $t = 68.327$, $p = 0.00$) and brand internalization on brand equity ($\beta = 0.191$, $t = 2.238$, $p = 0.025$) were positive and significant, which supported both H_1 and H_2 . Results of this study also showed that the brand association dimensions of player ($\beta = 0.915$, $t = 52.964$, $p = 0.00$), head coach ($\beta = 0.921$, $t = 57.539$, $p = 0.00$), stadium ($\beta = 0.953$, $t = 109.213$, $p = 0.00$), referee ($\beta = 0.944$, $t = 100.972$, $p = 0.00$), team success ($\beta = 0.919$, $t = 64.936$, $p = 0.00$), management ($\beta = 0.930$, $t = 68.327$, $p = 0.00$), and soccer federation ($\beta = 0.939$, $t = 99.332$, $p = 0.00$) were subcategories of sport league brand associations (Figure 2).

After the measurement model was identified to be within the acceptable level in terms of reliability and construct validity, the collinearity issue of the structural model had to be checked before interpreting the results. The variance inflation factors (VIFs) were used to evaluate the collinearity. The highest VIF value was 3.800, which was lower than the recommended threshold score of five (Hair et al., 2014). This indicates no collinearity issue. In addition, full collinearity VIF values were investigated to test common method variance. As Kock (2015) recommends, all of the full collinearity VIF values were below 3.3, which indicated no common method variance issue. Next, the significance level of the path coefficients in the structural model was evaluated by running the bootstrapping option to obtain the t-values for all path coefficients (Hair et al., 2014). The direct effect of brand

associations and internalization on league brand equity was tested as part of the overall structural model. As path coefficients with standardized values above 0.20 are usually significant (Hair et al., 2014), initial screening of the path coefficients indicated both brand associations ($\beta=0.692$, $t=8.82$, $p<0.01$) and internalization ($\beta=0.191$, $t=2.23$, $p<0.05$) had a significant influence on league brand equity.

Additionally, the adjusted R^2 value was analyzed to evaluate the explained variance of an endogenous variable (brand equity) by all of the exogenous variables (brand associations and internalization). The R^2 value of 0.25 for an endogenous variable was considered weak, while 0.50 was considered moderate and 0.75 was considered substantial (Hair et al., 2011). The R^2 value for brand equity was 0.74, which can be considered substantial. In addition, the effect sizes of the significant path coefficients were used to assess the relative importance of each exogenous variable as an antecedent of its related endogenous variables. The thresholds to assess f^2 values were 0.02 for a small effect, 0.15 for a medium effect, and 0.35 for a large effect (Hair et al., 2014). Based on these thresholds, the findings of this study indicate that the effect of brand associations on brand equity is large ($f^2 = 0.493$) and the effect of internalization on brand equity is small ($f^2 = 0.038$).

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

This study makes several contributions to the sports league brand equity literature by enhancing the understanding of the sports league equity concept. One of the main goals of this research is to identify fan-based brand associations of a sports league. To address the first research question, the authors developed a multi-item measurement scale for an FBBA for sports leagues. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study that develops a multi-item scale for the sports league FBBA. Even though the literature offers several team brand association models and multi-item scales, there is no robust multi-item measurement scale for league brand associations. The multi-item FBBA scale contributes to the theoretical understanding of sports league brand associations. Hence, the results of each specific dimension of the league brand association should be evaluated carefully. For example, although the stadium is not one of the strongest dimensions of the prior team brand associations research (e.g., Biscaia et al., 2013), the findings reveal that it is the strongest dimension of league brand associations, which means that the stadium is an important measure for league brand associations. One possible explanation is that stadiums are places for capturing the feelings and emotions of fans of all teams in the league, not just one team. Given the experiential and entertainment nature of the sport, stadiums offer a visual representation of the league, teams, and matches (Underwood et al., 2001). Therefore, the atmosphere surrounding a match is one of the most important motives for fans to attend games (Koenigstorfer et al., 2010). This result shows that stadiums with a great atmosphere can contribute to the experiential and hedonic needs of fans (Biscaia et al., 2013).

In addition, the high loadings of (team) management, head coach, team, and player show the importance of the teams as sub-brands for the league brand associations. These dimensions are consistent with findings of the previous team brand associations studies (e.g., Bauer et al., 2008; Biscaia et al., 2013; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Gladden et al., 1998; Ross, 2006; Ross et al., 2006; Ross et al., 2008). The results indicate that team management as a decision maker has the authority to hire coaches and recruit players to form a strong team and provide high-quality and entertaining games. The relatively high mean values for the team management items suggest that fans expect team managers not to make any negative comments about opposing teams (man3) and to have priority for building a strong league brand (man4). This finding is an indication of fans' understanding of the importance of

a strong league brand. Similarly, team and player are product-related dimensions and are the producers of the game and competition as entertainment.

Further, none of the previous team brand equity studies included league federation and referee dimensions, due to their irrelevance to team brand associations. The measurement scales for those two dimensions are developed and included in this study based on expert suggestions and pre-tests. Results of this study indicate that these two new constructs (soccer federation and referee) are important dimensions of league brand associations, suggesting that these dimensions should be included as valid measures of league brand equity. These two dimensions are relevant for measuring league brand equity because the soccer federation serves as governing authority of the league, whereas a league serves as a foundation for competitive matches offered to fans as sports entertainment (Kunkel et al., 2014). Moreover, referees implement the rules and regulations set by the league during the matches, therefore their decisions can have a significant impact not only on the quality but also on the outcome of the matches. This indicates that the referees can have a direct effect on the entertainment value of the matches, and ultimately on the satisfaction of the sports fans with the matches. The highest mean values of the perceived importance of the Turkish Soccer Federation and referee (for details, see Table 2) indicate that these two factors must be managed well to create a strong sports league brand. The soccer federation can play a key role in developing strategies by coordinating marketing activities to promote the league matches that will build a strong league (Pitt et al., 2003). Hence, the findings confirm the importance of the sports league as a master brand (Kunkel et al., 2013; Kunkel et al., 2014) for the success of the teams by not only offering a platform for the teams to display their matches, but also providing the rules, regulations and standards for the matches that are implemented by referees, as well as marketing support for the teams. The importance of soccer federation and referees constructs is also confirmed by their high loadings.

Another goal of this study is to examine the role of brand associations and internalization on sports league brand equity. Although previous sports team brand equity studies emphasized the value of team and league brand equity (e.g., Ross et al., 2008; Kunkel et al., 2013), they have not included a measure for the overall league brand equity construct in linking the brand associations and internalization to brand equity. To address the second and third research questions, this study employs the overall league brand equity construct and FBBA dimensions to examine the relationship between league brand associations, internalization, and league brand equity. The results confirm that the brand associations and internalization significantly and positively impact league brand equity. This positive impact indicates that brand associations and internalization are antecedents of league brand equity. This means that positive league brand associations and internalization lead to stronger league brand equity. This is a vital contribution to the sports brand equity literature, as well as the sports branding literature. Since a sports league serves as the master brand and provides a platform for its teams, brand association dimensions identified in the study can help to develop branding strategies for creating a strong league brand, which in turn, contribute to creating strong team brands. Furthermore, given that 46% of the respondents prefer to see both strong team and league brands, the results support the co-dominant relationship between a sports league and the teams in a master brand and sub-brand framework (Kunkel et al., 2013).

Managerial Implications

This study also has several managerial implications for leagues as well as team brands. First, the FBBA framework can help league managers to understand the expectations of the fans and guide them in developing the right brand associations to attract new fans and retain existing fans. For example, stadiums are one of the most important league brand associations for fans. Therefore, league managers can incentivize team managers to invest in their stadium facilities to attract new fans to stadiums. Consequently, teams can positively influence fans' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors

by emphasizing the aesthetic characteristics of stadiums (Kerr & Gladden, 2008). As a result, attending the games provides a memorable experience to satisfy the fans' hedonic consumption (Bauer et al., 2008). While each team could have the aesthetic appeal of their stadium, it is desirable to have some uniformity and/or consistency among all stadiums of the league to reflect and/or support the league's brand image because consistency is important for creating a strong brand (Keller, 2013). Moreover, because the only thing fans (consumers) take away from a game day is the memories (Gladden et al., 1998), the managers of the league and teams should do everything to provide fans with an exceptional experience at the stadiums before, during, and after each game. The importance of this holistic entertainment approach to attending sports games is observed in most sports events in the United States at the professional and college level.

Second, the positive effect of league brand associations on league brand equity indicates that league managers should collaborate with other key members of the industry, such as team managers, players, and head coaches, to create positive associations. The effective management of the league brand associations will allow league managers to improve the league brand equity and develop a stronger brand for the league. Similarly, the positive influence of internationalization on league brand equity reveals that league managers should attempt to develop a psychological commitment to the league brand and encourage fans to incorporate the league into their personal identity. When the level of commitment increases, a greater internalization of the league can be developed. Consequently, fans can be better equipped to recognize and recall the league brand.

Finally, five of the seven league brand associations identified in the final model of this study are in parallel with team brand associations of previous studies (e.g., Biscaia et al., 2013; Gladden & Funk, 2002). Given the interconnected and mutually dependent relationship between a league and its teams (Kunkel et al., 2013), league managers should collaborate with managers of the teams to improve common brand associations and develop stronger league brand equity that could have a significant financial contribution to the leagues and their teams. The English Premier League is great evidence for this assertion. It is one of the most watched leagues in the world (Curley & Roeder, 2016) with a 5.3 billion Euro brand value during the 2016-2017 season (Deloitte, 2018). The Premier League's TV deals have generated \$8 billion from local contracts and \$5 billion from international contracts for the 2016-2019 period (Curley & Roeder, 2016).

Limitations and Future Research

As the first study to examine the league brand equity using multidimensional FBBA using multiple items, the findings of the study provide some insights into the relationships among the FBBA dimensions and internalization in creating a strong league brand equity. However, the findings must be interpreted with some caution due to the limitations of the study. First, this is the first study measuring the FBBA of a sports league using data from a European soccer league. Therefore, future research may benefit from including and comparing other soccer or sports leagues outside Europe to capture the cross-cultural differences and cross-validate the findings. Second, current research is conducted in one country. Future research could benefit from conducting similar studies in multiple countries for cross-country validation of the findings. Third, while a sample size of 227 sports fans may be sufficient for an exploratory study, a larger sample size could help to validate the findings of this study more accurately. Further, using a convenience sample may limit the generalizability of the results. Fourth, this study focuses on only two brand equity components -- brand associations and internalization. Future studies could investigate the role of other brand equity components like perceived quality on sports league brand equity. Fifth, some of the brand association dimensions were measured using only two items. Even though Hair et al. (2011) state this is not an issue for PLS-SEM, future research should develop additional items to improve the reliability of the scale. Sixth, future studies could use an agreement scale (i.e., beliefs) rather than an importance scale to determine the

performance of the brand equity components as well as to compare the findings with the corresponding importance measures (i.e., value curve analysis or gap analysis). Hence, the authors believe that the importance scale used in this study serves as the first step for future research.

References

- Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Manage brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Aaker, D.A. (1996). *Building strong brands*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Ailawadi, K. L., & Keller, K. L. (2004). Understanding retail branding: conceptual insights and research priorities. *Journal of Retailing*, 80(4), 331-342.
- Ball, D.A., McCulloch Jr., W.H., Frantz, P.L., Geringer, J.M., & Minor, M.S. (2002). *International business: The challenge of global competition*, New York: NY, McGraw-Hill.
- Bauer, H. H., Sauer, N. E., & Schmitt, P. (2005). Customer-based brand equity in the team sports industry: Operationalization and impact on the economic success of sports teams. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(5/6), 496-513.
- Bauer, H. H., Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., & Exler, S. (2008). Brand image and fan loyalty in professional team sport: A refined model and empirical assessment. *Journal of Sport Management*, 22(2), 205-226.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2003). Consumer-company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. *Journal of Marketing*, 67, 76-88.
- Biscaia, R., Correia, A., Ross, S., Rosado, A. F., & Maroco, J. (2013). Spectator-based brand equity in professional soccer. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 22(1), 20-32.
- Brand Finance (2016). *Football 50 2016*. Retrieved February 20, 2022, from https://brandirectory.com/download-report/football_50_report_for_print.pdf
- Brand Finance (2021a). *Football 50 2021*. Retrieved February 20, 2022, from <https://brandirectory.com/download-report/brand-finance-football-50-2021-preview.pdf>
- Brand Finance (2021b). *Turkey 100 2017*. Retrieved February 20, 2022, from <https://brandirectory.com/download-report/brand-finance-turkey-100-2021-full-report.pdf>
- Churchill, G.A. & Iacobucci, D. (2005). *Marketing research: Methodological foundation*, (9th ed.). Boston: MA, South-Western Cengage Learning.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*, (2nd Ed.). Hillsdale: NJ, Routledge.
- Curley, J. and Roeder, O. (2016). English soccer's mysterious worldwide popularity, *Contexts*, 15(1), pp. 78-81.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.
- Deloitte (2018). *Annual review of football finance 2018*, Sport Business Group. Retrieved 15 April 10, 2022, from <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/sports-business-group/deloitte-uk-sbg-annual-review-of-football-finance-2018.PDF>.
- Ekebas-Turedi, C., Karaatli, G., & Turedi, S. (2020). The relationship among fan-based league brand associations, brand equity, and behavioral intentions. *Marketing Management Journal*, 30(1), 17-37.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50.
- Girard, T., Trapp, P., Pinar, M., Gulsoy, T., & Boyt, T. E. (2017). Consumer-based brand equity of a private-label brand: Measuring and examining determinants. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 25(1), 39-56.

- Gladden, J. M., & Funk, D. C. (2002). Developing an understanding of brand associations in team sport: Empirical evidence from consumers of professional sport. *Journal of Sport Management, 16*(1), 54-81.
- Gladden, J. M., & Milne, G. R. (1999). Examining the importance of brand equity in professional sports. *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 8*(1), 21-30.
- Gladden, J. M., Milne, G. R., & Sutton, W. A. (1998). A conceptual framework for assessing brand equity in Division I college athletics. *Journal of Sport Management, 12*(1), 1-19.
- Hair, J.F., Hult, G.T.M., Ringle, C.M., & Sarstedt, M. (2014). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*, Los Angeles: CA, Sage.
- Hair, J. F., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2011). PLS-SEM: Indeed a silver bullet. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 19*(2), 139-152.
- James, J. D., Kolbe, R. H., & Trail, G. T. (2002). Psychological connection to a new sport team: Building or maintaining the consumer base? *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 11*(4), 215-225.
- Kaynak, E., Salman, G. G., & Tatoglu, E. (2008). An integrative framework linking brand associations and brand loyalty in professional sports. *Journal of Brand Management, 15*(5), 336-357.
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing, 57*(1) 1-22.
- Keller, K.L. (2013). *Strategic brand management: Building, measuring, and managing brand equity*, (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Kerr, A. K., & Gladden, J. M. (2008). Extending the understanding of professional team brand equity to the global marketplace. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing, 3*(1-2), 58-77.
- Kock, N. (2015). Common method bias in PLS-SEM: A full collinearity assessment approach. *International Journal of e-Collaboration, 11*(4), 1-10.
- Koenigstorfer, J., Groeppel-Klein, A., & Kunkel, T. (2010). The attractiveness of national and international football leagues: Perspectives of fans of “star clubs” and “underdogs”. *European Sport Management Quarterly, 10*(2), 127-163.
- Kunkel, T., Funk, D., & Hill, B. (2013). Brand architecture, drivers of consumer involvement, and brand loyalty with professional sport leagues and teams. *Journal of Sport Management, 27*(3), 177-192.
- Kunkel, T., Funk, D., & King, C. (2014). Developing a conceptual understanding of consumer-based league brand associations. *Journal of Sport Management, 28*(1), 49-67.
- Kunkel, T., Funk, D., & Lock, D. (2017). The effect of league brand on the relationship between the team brand and behavioral intentions: A formative approach examining brand associations and brand relationships. *Journal of Sport Management, 31*(4), 317-332.
- Malhotra, M. K., & Grover, V. (1998). An assessment of survey research in POM: from constructs to theory. *Journal of Operations Management, 16*(4), 407-425.
- Narver, J. C., & Slater, S. F. (1990). The effect of a market orientation on business profitability. *Journal of Marketing, 54*(4), 20-35.
- Oh, T. T., Keller, K. L., Neslin, S. A., Reibstein, D. J., & Lehmann, D. R. (2020). The past, present, and future of brand research. *Marketing Letters, 31*(2), 151-162.
- Pinar, M., Nardali, S., Alkibay, S., & Girard, T. (2017). Türkiye Süper Ligi'nin Marka Değerini Etkileyen Faktörlerin Öneminin ve Performansının Değerlendirilmesi. *Pazarlama ve Pazarlama Araştırmaları Dergisi, 10*(19), 103-122.
- Pitt, L., Napoli, J., & Van Der Merwe, R. (2003). Managing the franchised brand: The franchisees' perspective. *Journal of Brand Management, 10*(6), 411-420.

- Plunkelt Research (2016). *Sports industry statistics and market size overview*. Retrieved September 10, 2016, from <https://www.plunkeltresearch.com/statistics/sports-industry>.
- Rosenbaum-Elliott, R., Percy, L., & Pervan S. (2011). *Strategic brand management*, (2nd ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Ross, S. D. (2006). A conceptual framework for understanding spectator-based brand equity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 20(1), 22-38.
- Ross, S. D., James, J. D., & Vargas, P. (2006). Development of a scale to measure team brand associations in professional sport. *Journal of sport management*, 20(2), 260-279.
- Ross, S. D., Russell, K. C., & Bang, H. (2008). An empirical assessment of spectator-based brand equity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 22(3), 322-337.
- Rossiter, J.R., & Percy, L. (1987). *Advertising and promotion management*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Simon, C. J., & Sullivan, M. W. (1993). The measurement and determinants of brand equity: A financial approach. *Marketing science*, 12(1), 28-52.
- Sirianni, N. J., Bitner, M. J., Brown, S. W., & Mandel, N. (2013). Branded service encounters: Strategically aligning employee behavior with the brand positioning. *Journal of Marketing*, 77(6), 108-123.
- Sood, S., & Keller, K. L. (2012). The effects of brand name structure on brand extension evaluations and parent brand dilution. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(3), 373-382.
- Tong, X., & Hawley, J. M. (2009). Measuring customer-based brand equity: empirical evidence from the sportswear market in China. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 18(4), 262-271.
- Underwood, R., Bond, E., & Baer, R. (2001). Building service brands via social identity: Lessons from the sports marketplace. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 9(1), 1-13.
- Yoo, B., & Donthu, N. (2001). Developing and validating a multidimensional consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of Business Research*, 52(1), 1-14.
- Yoo, B., Donthu, N., & Lee, S. (2000). An examination of selected marketing mix elements and brand equity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(2), 195-211.