

Investigation of Sport Team Evangelism (eFANGelism) Behaviors of Faculty of Sports Sciences Students

Nuran KANDAZ-GELEN¹, Yavuz ÖNTÜRK², Abdurrahman YARAŞ², Sinan Erdem SATILMIŞ², İbrahim ŞAHİN²

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38021asbid.1148591>

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

¹Sakarya University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Sakarya/Türkiye.

²Yalova University, Faculty of Sports Science, Yalova/Türkiye

Abstract

This research aimed to examine the sports team evangelism attitudes of undergraduate students studying at the Faculty of Sport Sciences at Universities in Turkey and to compare them in terms of some demographic variables. The sample group consists of 378 volunteer participants. The “Sports Team Evangelism (eFANGelism) Scale (STES)”, which was developed by Dwyer et al. (2015) and adapted into Turkish by Yüksekbilgili’s (2017) validity and reliability study, was used as a data collection tool, together with the form containing demographic information. The reliability level of the scale was determined by calculating the Cronbach’s Alpha internal consistency coefficient. Parametric test techniques were used in the analysis of the sample that showed a normal distribution. The findings showed that there was a significant difference in the total mean scores of STES in terms of gender, the team they supported, and the variables of the department they studied. On the other hand, there was no significant difference in the monthly income of the family and age variable. The result of this research revealed that the students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences were in high efangelistic behaviors. In addition, it was determined that male students showed more efangelistic behaviors than female students.

Keywords: Sports Clubs, Evangelism, Efangelism, Fans

Corresponding Author:
Nuran KANDAZ-GELEN
nkgelen@subu.edu.tr

Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Spor Takımı Evangelizmi (eFANGelizm) Davranışlarının İncelenmesi

Öz

Bu araştırmada Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi’nde öğrenimine devam eden lisans öğrencilerinin spor takımı evangelizmi tutumlarının incelenmesi ve ilgili bağımsız değişkenler açısından karşılaştırılması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma grubu, 164 kadın ve 214 erkek olmak üzere toplam 378 gönüllü katılımcıdan oluşmaktadır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak kişisel bilgi formunun yanı sıra Dwyer, Greenhalgh ve LeCrom (2015) tarafından geliştirilen, Türkçeye uyarlaması ve geçerlilik güvenilirlik çalışması Yüksekbilgili (2017) tarafından yapılan 12 madde, 4 faktör ve 5’li likert tipindeki “Spor Takımı Evangelizmi (eFANGelizm) Ölçeği” (STEÖ) kullanılmıştır. Ölçeğin güvenilirlik düzeyini belirlemek için Cronbach Alpha iç tutarlılık katsayısı hesaplanmıştır. Normal dağılıma uyum gösteren örneklem grubunun ölçümlerinde parametrik test teknikleri kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular sonucunda örneklem grubunun cinsiyeti, desteklediği takım ve okuduğu bölüm değişkenleri açısından STEÖ toplam ortalama puanlarının anlamlı farklılık gösterdiği tespit edilmiştir. Bulgular, aile aylık geliri ve yaş değişkeni açısından incelendiğinde ise anlamlı farklılık olmadığı görülmüştür. Sonuç olarak Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi’ndeki öğrencilerin yüksek evangelist davranış içerisinde olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca erkek öğrencilerin kadın öğrencilere kıyasla bu tip davranışları daha yoğun olarak gösterdiği tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Spor Kulüpleri, Evangelizm, Efangelizm, Taraftar

Received:
25.07.2022

Accepted:
22.09.2022

Online Publishing:
28.09.2022

Introduction

Sports clubs are defined as private organizations that meet the sports needs and expectations of society, offer activities in amateur or professional sports branches, provide viewing services to individuals, and have a legal infrastructure that enables individuals to become athletes (Altın et al., 2020). Sports clubs have a number of revenues, which are donations, licensed product sales, sponsorships, organization ticket revenues, broadcasting revenues, and revenues from various commercial activities. One of the important elements that sports clubs generate their income is the fans who buy the service, which are the customers. In sports, fans are committed to their team and that is almost impossible to change. This psychological bond formed in the mind can be associated with the values and preferences of the supporters. Sports clubs produce a bond through levels of commitment ranging from spectator to fan and from fan to fanatic. In addition, clubs strive to ensure the continuity of this bond (Şimşek and Akın, 2021). Individuals who watch and listen to the competitions of the club they support by being interested in sports are called spectators. Individuals who follow their club intensely, spend time during the day, and devote themselves to the team are called fans, and people who are passionately attached to their club are called fanatics (Erdoğan et al., 2021).

Evangelism, which means “believers educate and persuade non-believers” and whose roots date back to ancient times, emerged in the 300s BC. The concept of “evangelist”, which derives from the Greek word “evangelos”, means “the person who brings good news and gives good news”. This trend is called “evangelism” with the spread of the internet after the 1990s (Göktaş and Erdoğan-Tarakci, 2020). Evangelism is defined as making other people believe in himself, his ideas, products or services and influencing them. From another aspect, evangelism is also defined as selling one’s dreams to others with love, courage, effort, and enthusiasm (Küçükibiş and Yurtsuzoğlu, 2019). In marketing, brand evangelism involves constant interaction with the brand, including the purchase of goods or services. For this reason, brand evangelism includes buying the brand, giving positive directions about the brand, as well as making bad comments about opposite brands (Dwyer et al., 2015). In short, brand evangelists are defined as consumers who defend, promote, and spread the brand in order to influence the purchasing attitudes of others without any expectation. The fact that evangelists have these attitudes and behaviors shows that they have a high degree of loyalty between the consumer and the brand (Yüksekbilgili, 2017). The concept of the brand evangelist is also used in various meanings such as brand enthusiast, brand lover, brand advocate, brand spokesperson, brand admirer, and brand fan. This behavioral situation is more clearly understood with the three-step Brand Evangelism Pyramid. At the first step of the pyramid, there are “brand adopters” who have experience with the brand and guide normal users. In the second step, there are “brand fans” who like the brand and are extremely satisfied with the brand. In the third and last step of the pyramid, there are “brand

evangelists” who find the brand to be of high quality and show high admiration and loyalty to the brand, and most importantly, defend the brand against others and make speeches to make it popular (Göktaş and Erdoğan-Tarakci, 2020).

Nowadays, the rapidly growing sports industry forces sports clubs to act as commercial enterprises or companies. The revenues of sports clubs, especially football, exceed the revenues of many commercial enterprises. In this growing global economy, sports clubs are creating their own brands and transforming the goods and services they offer into brands. The fans who support their clubs turn into loyal customers who advertise their clubs, defend them against the public, and influence their surroundings so that the club will become a brand in this process of change and growth in the football industry (Küçükibiş and Yurtsuzoğlu, 2019). This loyalty of fans to sports clubs is measured by criteria such as participation in matches, purchasing licensed products, sharing on social media, and wearing clothes belonging to the team in daily life (Dwyer et al., 2015). Clubs strive to turn this loyalty of their fans into evangelism in order to capture them into a commercial opportunity. In this context, brand evangelism for sports clubs becomes an important concept both to generate economic income and to increase the image of the club. Dwyer et al. (2015) introduced the concept of eFANgelism by placing the word “FAN” in the word evangelism in order to reveal the evangelistic behaviors of sports fans. Thus, the concept of eFangelism has become a behavioral phenomenon that emerges when fans are passionately attached to the brands of their clubs, the value they attach to their brands increases, and they adapt their brands at a higher level. In this context, in order to contribute to the literature from another perspective, this study aims to determine and examine the evangelistic behaviors of the Faculty of Sport Sciences students towards the sports clubs they support.

Method

Research Model

In this study, descriptive survey model, one of the quantitative research designs, was applied. The descriptive survey model is a research approach that aims to reveal an existing situation in its current form (Karasar, 2016).

Universe and Sample

The population of the research consists of the students of Sports Sciences Faculties studying at universities in Turkey. The sample group of the study consists of 378 (214 male and 164 female) students selected by random sampling method from probability techniques.

Instrument

The data collection form consists of two parts. The first part consists of demographic information such as participants’ age, gender, monthly income of their families, department, and the team they support. In the second part, the “Sport Team eFANgelism Scale-STES” was used to measure the evangelistic attitudes of the participants towards their sports team.

Sport Team eFANgelism Scale

The Sport Team eFANgelism Scale (STES), developed by Dwyer et al. (2015), is intended to measure the evangelistic attitude of individuals towards any sports team. The scale consists of 14 items and four sub-dimensions (advocate, advertisement, provocation, and adopt). The original scale was adapted into Turkish by Yüksekbilgili (2017), two items were removed from the scale as a result of the validity and reliability analysis of the data obtained from the new sample group, and all the items were collected in one dimension. The statements in the scale were measured with a 5-point Likert-type scale as “1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree”. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the version of the Turkish scale was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha= 0.936$).

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using the statistical analysis program SPSS 22.0 software. The analyzes include descriptive statistics, arithmetic means, standard deviation, medians, quartiles, and percentages. The skewness and kurtosis values of the scale showed that the data indicated a homogeneous distribution. Therefore, Independent Sample T-Test and ANOVA from parametric tests were used to compare the differences between variables.

Findings

Findings related to the analyzes made are presented below.

Table 1

Distribution of Scores of the Scale

Dependent variable	Number of items	N	M	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach’s Alpha
STES	12	378	2.83	-.084	-.619	0.917

Table 1 indicates that the total average score of the participants of the STES is 2.83. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.917, which shows that the scale is highly reliable. The skewness and kurtosis values of the sample group revealed that the data exhibited a homogeneous distribution within the range of ± 1.5 (Tabachnik and Fidell, 2013).

Therefore, parametric test techniques used in homogeneous distributions were used in the analysis of the data.

Table 2
Demographic Features

Independent variables	Categories	Frequency	%	Total
Gender	Female	164	43.4	378
	Male	214	56.6	
Age	18-23 years	328	86.8	378
	24-29 years	38	10.1	
	30-35 years	12	3.2	
Monthly Income of the Family	Under 2825 TL	153	7.3	378
	2826-3825 TL	80	36.4	
	3826-4825 TL	51	12.5	
	4826-5825 TL	34	43.8	
	More than 5826 TL	60	15.9	
Department	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	120	31.7	378
	Sports Management	67	17.7	
	Sports Coaching	104	27.5	
	Recreation	87	23.0	
The Team You Support	Galatasaray	158	41.8	378
	Fenerbahçe	128	33.9	
	Beşiktaş	63	16.7	
	Trabzonspor	5	1.3	
	Other Teams	13	3.4	
	No Team	11	2.9	

Key. TL= Turkish Lira

Table 2 shows the analysis values of the demographic characteristics of the participants according to their categories. According to the majority in the percentage analysis, it was seen that 56.6% were men, 86.8% were between the ages of 18-23, and 43.8% had a family monthly income in the range of 4826-5825 TL. In addition, according to the department variable, 31.7% of the participants belonged to Physical Education and Sports Teaching, and the team supported by 41.8% was Galatasaray football club.

Table 3
Independent Sample T-Test Results for Gender Variable

Dependent variable	Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p
STES	Female	164	2.61	.841		-3.052	.002
	Male	214	2.90	.952			

Table 3 indicates that there is a significant difference in the total mean score of the STES in terms of the gender variable ($p=0.002 < 0.01$). This significant difference was in favor of male participants.

Table 4
ANOVA Test Results for Age Variable

Dependent variable	Age	N	M	SD	F	p
STES	18-23 years	328	2.77	.920	0.716	0.490
	24-29 years	38	2.87	.916		
	30-35 years	12	2.51	.818		

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference in terms of the STES total mean score according to the age variable of the participants [$F(2.375) = 0.716, p=0.490 > 0.05$].

Table 5
ANOVA Test Results for Monthly Income of the Family Variable

Dependent variable	Monthly Income of the Family	N	M	SD	F	p
STES	Under 2825 TL	153	2.80	.816	0.900	0.464
	2826-3825 TL	80	2.75	.990		
	3826-4825 TL	51	2.76	.827		
	4826-5825 TL	34	2.51	1.003		
	More than 5826 TL	60	2.86	1.03		

Table 5 indicates that there is no significant difference in terms of the STES total mean score according to the monthly income of the family variable of the participants [$F(4.3733) = 0.900, p=0.464 > 0.05$].

Table 6
ANOVA Test Results for Department Variable

Dependent variable	Department	N	M	SD	F	p
STES	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	120	2.59	.925	3.731	0.011

Sports Management	67	2.93	.910
Sports Coaching	104	2.94	.784
Recreation	87	2.69	1.004

Table 6 shows that the total mean score of the STES differs significantly according to the departments of the participants [$F(3.374) = 3.731, p=0.011 <0.05$]. As a further analysis, Tukey HSD test was used to determine between which subgroups there was a significant difference. The results of the multiple comparison test revealed that there is a significant difference between Physical Education and Sports Teaching and Sports Coaching, which are subgroups of the department variable.

Table 7
ANOVA Test Results for Supported Teams Variable

Dependent variable	Supported Teams	N	M	SD	F	p
STES	Galatasaray	158	2.72	.862	3.077	0.010
	Fenerbahçe	128	2.82	.897		
	Beşiktaş	63	2.92	1.002		
	Trabzonspor	5	2.81	.710		
	Other Teams	13	2.92	1.135		
	No Team	11	1.81	.683		

Table 7 indicates that the total mean score of STES differs significantly according to the supported teams of the participants [$F(5.372) = 3.077, p=0.010 <0.05$]. The results of the multiple comparison test showed that the significant difference was between the participants who did not support a team and the participants who supported Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray and other teams.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was carried out in order to measure the Sports Team Evangelism (eFANgelism) levels of the students studying in the Faculties of Sport Sciences in various Universities in Turkey and to examine them in terms of different variables. Before proceeding to further analysis, factor analysis of the STES was performed and it was seen that the scale was suitable for the sample group. Statistical analysis results of the scale collected in a single factor were carried out over the total average score.

According to the results of this study, it was seen that the students of the Faculty of Sport Sciences were in high efangelistic behavior. Altıngül and Karahüseyinoğlu (2017) examined university students' views on their football fans' levels of fanaticism in terms of various variables, and as a result of the study, they found that the sports team efangelism levels were moderate. Yaşar

and Turgut (2019) found the sports team eFangelism levels of sports fans to be moderate in their studies on loyalty and fanaticism. In another study conducted on football fans using the Sports Efangelism Scale, it was determined that the eFangelism levels of the fans had a high average (Park et al., 2021). In another study on the relationship between football fans and spectators, it was found that there was a significantly higher relationship (Erdoğan et al., 2021).

The findings of our study showed that there were significant differences between male students and female students. Accordingly, male students exhibited more eFangelism behaviors. Güven (2019) in his study examining the relationship between eFangelism and fanaticism among fans in sports revealed that men's eFangelism values are higher than women. There are similarities between the results of these two studies. Yıldız (2016) stated in his study that male participants belong to their teams at a higher level and are subjective in terms of supporting their teams. Therefore, it can be said that male students show this type of behavior more intensely than female students. This situation also supports the approach that men are more interested in football (Apaydın et al., 2016).

There was no significant difference in eFangelism behaviors according to the age variable of the participants. According to this result, it is seen that the variable between the ages of 24-29 (2.87 ± 0.916) has an average value. Eime et al. (2016), in their study examining the age profiles of sports participants, stated that the highest age of participation in sports is between the ages of 14-29. Belli et al. (2016) conducted a study examining the motivation of sports science faculty students as football fans, and the result of this study, in which the age parameter was evaluated, revealed that the motivation level of football decreased in all sub-dimensions with age. When other studies in parallel with our present findings were examined, it was seen that there was no significant relationship between the variable of eFangelism and age (Güven, 2019; Park et al., 2021). When the previous studies in the literature are examined, it is seen that there is a negative relationship between age and participation in sports, fanaticism, and eFangelism level. As the age of the individual increases, the change in his interests as a result of his family and business life and his orientation towards different purposes can be shown as the reason for this situation.

Results of the monthly income of the family of the participants did not show a significant difference. This result indicated that participants with an income of 5826 TL (2.86 ± 1.03) and participants with an income of 2825 TL (2.80 ± 0.816) had average values. Yasar and Turgut (2019), in a study they conducted, observed that the sports team eFangelism behavior average scores of the participants differed with the increase in their income levels, according to their income status. Grima and Thalassinou (2017), in their study, revealed that high-income levels of individuals have a positive effect on participation in sports activities. Strawinsk (2010) found in his study that low income has a negative effect on participation in sports activities and organizations. Park et al., (2021) used the Sports Efangelism Scale to classify football fans in South Korea and examine the differences between

the identified groups. The results of this study revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in terms of gender, age, marital status, and family income. Güven (2019) in his study on supporter groups revealed that there is no significant relationship between levels of efangelism and age, occupation, education, and income. Considering these results, it can be said that although there is no significant difference in the income status of individuals, high-income levels of individuals have a positive effect on their participation in sports activities.

Results of the analysis for the departments of the participants indicated that there was a significant difference in the departments of physical education and sports teaching and sports coaching. Belli et al., (2016) found a significant difference in favor of physical education and sports teaching department students in their study on sports sciences faculty students' football support. It can be said that the fans support their teams by buying tickets and licensed products to show their loyalty to their teams (Chiu et al., 2019). Dwyer et al. (2015) argue that fans committed to their team can serve as "efangelists" in actively participating in team-centered interactions and passionately spreading beliefs about the team to other people. The findings of our study, when evaluated for the supported teams, show that the efangelistic behavior levels of individuals who support Beşiktaş football team are higher than those who support other teams. Yaşar and Turgut (2019) evaluated the participants according to their team status and found a statistically significant difference in favor of Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, and Galatasaray groups compared to the other teams according to the average total scores obtained from the sports team efangelism scale. Demirel et al. (2007) examined the level of identification of university student sports fans with their teams and found that there was a positive relationship between the teams they support and the level of identification of the fans. Altın et al. (2020) found that the level of identification of the fans with the team positively and directly affects team loyalty. The efangelism approach can be used specifically as a tool to understand the outward behavior of fans in support of their favorite team. The literature supports the idea that it is important for the fans to be a fan of a popular team in order to satisfy the sense of belonging to a large social group (Maslow, 1943). Individuals who develop a sense of belonging to their team can share their knowledge, love and feelings about the team's identity with other fans.

The results of this study revealed that the efangelism levels of the participants did not differ significantly in terms of gender, the teams they supported, and the variables of the department they studied. In addition, this study revealed that the students of the Faculty of Sport Sciences are in high evangelistic behavior and that male students indicate this type of behavior more than female students. When evaluated specifically for the supported teams, the evangelistic behavior levels of the individuals who support the Beşiktaş team are higher than the individuals who support the other teams. It is thought that the sample group consists of students from the faculty of sports sciences within the university, the individual or team sports branches of the students, the ethnic structure of

the geography they live in and similar variables may be effective in exhibiting evangelistic behavior. These behaviors of individuals may change over time, therefore, it may be recommended to use longitudinal data in further research for an optimal assessment and to examine the transformation of participants' evangelistic behaviors. In addition, in order to better understand the evangelistic behaviors, the mood changes during the competition regarding the teams supported by the participants can be examined.

Conflicts of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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