
The Formulation Strategic Plan of Sepahan sport Club: Fans Management Approach

Rasool Nazari¹, Saeid Tabesh^{2*}

¹Assistant professor, Department of Sport Science, Isfahan [Khorasgan] Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran., ²Assistant professor, Department of Sport Science, University of Mazandaran, Babolsar, Iran.

Received: 19th Jan 2017, Accepted: 25th Jan 2017, Published: 15th March 2017

Abstract

The aim of this study was to develop a strategic plan and Landscape Management Fans for Club Sport Sepahan for a period of five years, from 2015 until 2019. The present study was Quantitative and qualitative study. The sample consisted of 100 members, managers, analysts, strategists, leads the field were supporters club Sepahan. To collect the information required on the quantitative section of the questionnaire, confirmed the validity of the experts in the qualitative interviews were used. To analyze the data needed to evaluate the situation and act strategically in a matrix (SPACE) and Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) was used. Qualitative methods were used in logical induction. The findings showed that the supporters club Sepahan areas 5 and 5 grand strategy is a long term goal. While the position of the supporters club based strategy and strategic actions in the evaluation matrix position was attacked. Finally, it can be concluded that perspective, goals and strategic themes outlined supporters club Sepahan has the ability to execute strategic areas.

Key Words: Fans, Football, Management, Sport Club, Strategic Planning

Introduction

In the third millennium, sports organizations like other organizations and institutions of other areas changed into the strategy-based organization for survival and permanency in the international competition, so that many sports organizations of different countries provided the necessary strategy in terms of their mission and achieved some good success by its implementation (1). By domination of such thought, some sports organizations have formulated their own organizational strategy to succeed in their mission. With such thought, these organizations have a strategic plan and a clear vision. In addition, they try to have a successful attendance in the national and international arenas and hope to achieve the specified goals by using minimum energy and resources. Thus, the formulation of a strategy to help the management in planning is to achieve the organizational long-term goals (2). Strategic planning is the process of providing resources of an organization and unifying its efforts to achieve long-term goals and mission according to the facilities and internal and external limitations of each organization. In this process,

internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats are identified and long-term goals are formulated with respect to the organization's mission. And to achieve these goals, strategies are selected from among the strategic options (3). Use strategic planning in sports organizations results in exercising more effective and efficient responsibilities, developing principles and goals, more principled growth of championship and professional sports and also taking better place in the national and international arenas. Since a sports club is an organization in which athletes of one or multiple sports participate to do a professional sport activity in exchange for receiving money or financial rewards (4), therefore sports clubs can also be perceived as sports organizations. Moreover, sports organizations like non-sports organizations are subject to environmental and global changes and face numerous challenges, including the increase of costs, the increase of demand for staff and volunteers. Accordingly, they have to find a way to deal with these changes. In this process, many sports organizations have turned to the use of management and strategic planning.

Holding every sports match always consists of two main groups of players and spectators. Nowadays football is the most popular sport in most countries of the world. Being interested in following and watching football matches is to the extent that there's no scientific, political, economic, social and cultural event to be supposed that a community wants to follow its occurrence to this extent. Exulting, regretting and expressing feeling is not confined to the spectators attended in a stadium while a football team is playing, winning or losing, but the mass media audience don't sit quietly and express their feeling to one of the teams with different motives willy-nilly (5). In this regard, fans tend to spend money on the team and be loyal to their favorite team (6). Therefore, fans' management takes all actions related to planning, organizing, leadership and control that are relevant to fans and spectators (7). Hamill et al. (2001) acknowledged that spectators and fans of sports industry shouldn't be only viewed as customers. A customer may buy his or her necessities from a particular store, but he or she doesn't have devotion or emotional attachment to it, whereas the main fans of a club have a special bias towards it and remain as its clients for a long time (8). On the other hand, Tojari and Tork-far (2010) stated that, due to the deep

cultural context of the society, factors such as family and friendly relationships at different age groups play a major role in attracting spectators in Iran, so a comprehensive planning is needed to attract them to the matches. The factor of social proudest that has a minor role in attracting spectators in Iran should be also reinforced due to the importance of participation of individuals in sports matches (9). Moreover, Mirzaei et al. (2013) proposed that socializing is an important factor for the participation in football matches because sports tourists think that they have this opportunity to meet new people by attending sports events (10). Alidoost and Ahmadi (2011) stated that there's a relationship between access to services, security, design and attraction of stadium's atmosphere and spectators' satisfaction (11). In this regard According to Tojari and Tork-far (2008), different Factors affect the number of spectators, including attraction of the match, economic factors, competitive factors, demographic factors, stadium's factors, and community perception of value of a particular sport, sport devotion and fan identification (12). Athanasopoulou et al, (2012) mentioned that design of facilities, staff, maintenance of facilities and easy and fast access are important reasons for fan loyalty (13). Cralg (2013) also stated that increasing fan's social motivation increases fan's customer commitment, and increasing a National Football League (NFL) fan's customer commitment increases fan's attitudinal loyalty (14). In order to develop Carolina club's fan program in strategic plan (2011), some of the club's economic, social, cultural and sport components in attracting spectators have been identified (15).

Nowadays due to increasing risk of errors, high cost of mistakes and adverse economic situation, organizations have a strong tendency to use strategic planning models to be able to preserve the competitive position of the organization in a turbulent and endangered environment. Factors such as friends and friendly relationships with respect to having a young society, communitarians, advertising related to match, regular holding of matches, avoidance of violence, launching free transportation, discount of ticket, creating special places in stadium for families, holding matches with awards at half-time, inviting families to visit the club, using the TV media, the cooperation of the club with elementary and secondary schools, creating football clinic, sports tours and giving speech in schools all indicate why we should have a strategic planning for fans (16,17,18). Since the decrease of people's affordability caused by problems such as the national per capita income and high inflation directly have a negative effect on fans' shopping behavior, economic problems not only decrease demand for watching matches but also decrease demand for buying other products of football clubs such as products with club logo, paying subscription

and the possibility of buying shares of the club. Economic factor, attraction factor and planning factor has relation with tendency to spectators' attendance. Lack of management and suitable procedures, attraction, protection and expansion of fans have been identified as known obstacles to develop professional football club industry in Iran, hence having a strategic plan for fans results in solving such problems. Concerning use of the formulation of fan strategic plan for the club, it can be referred to the capacity of strategic plan for solving inter-organizational problems such as vague goals, poorly defined roles and responsibilities, lack of necessary unity within activities and the need for a clear definition of priorities (19). Thus, by developing a strategic plan, sports club improves its own capacities in things such as improving public image, increasing membership and number of participants, attracting sponsors and cooperating with financial partners. Sepahan football club is the most honorable football team in the history of Iran's Premier League. Although this club has achieved some success in the recent years, it doesn't have a strategic plan for the fans' management. It also faces some problems, including the problem of analyzing fans because Foolad-Shahr stadium is far from Isfahan and Naghshe-Jahan stadium is not ready to be used, high cost of transportation for fans, young fans and expensive ticket, non-standard physical environment of the stadium and its seasonal problems, moral and cultural conditions and unwillingness of parents to let their children come to the stadium. Hence development of strategic plan and its implementation is essential for a sports club's fans. According to what was said, management specialists have proposed special tools that organizations can formulate, implement and evaluate their own strategic plan by using them. One of the models of formulating strategic plan for different organizations is Fred. R. David's model of strategic planning. In this model, after formulating vision, mission and statement of mission, and core values, relevant strategies are extracted by analyzing the existing condition according to Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Treats Matrix (SWOT). Aligned strategies are then aggregated and analyzed by using Evaluation Matrix of Internal and External Position of internal and external situation of related organization. After that the position of strategies of related organization is drawn by using the Strategic Position and Action Evaluation Matrix (SPACE), and then in order to move to a favorable situation, the extracted strategies are prioritized by using Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) which is an analytical technique for recognizing strategy with higher desirability. In this regard, the researcher attempts to design and develop a strategic plan for Sepahan club's football fans by using strategic planning process and models and common scientific methods of it. The researcher

aims to answer these questions: How is the status quo of Foolad Mobarakeh Cultural-Athletic club's fans in terms of indexes related to strategic plan? What favorable situation is expected for this area? And how can this situation be achieved? Therefore, with respect to the foregoing and success of enjoying strategic plan and formulating strategic plan in different areas, this study intends to dispel managers' and officials' concerns of Sepahan club by formulating strategic themes of fan area of Sepaha club. The researcher hopes that the results of this study can help more productivity and promotion of the national and international status of the club and in general helps the growth and development of the club.

Methodology

The present study was conducted quantitatively and qualitatively. In order to achieve strategic perspectives of Sepahan club's fan in Isfahan, a researcher-made questionnaire that the experts confirmed its validity was used. The sample of this study consisted of 100 senior, middle and operational managers as well as experts of Sepahan Club. In order to collect required information in quantitative part, a researcher-made questionnaire was applied. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by the experts. In qualitative part, interview was used. It should be noted that library studies, investigation of documents, resources and also interview with authorities and elite who were aware of the subject were used to examine existing situation. The collected information in quantitative part was used to analyze data of matrixes including: the Internal Factor Evaluation matrix (IFE), the External Factor Evaluation matrix (EFE), Competitive Profile Matrix (CPM), Internal and External Matrix (IE) and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Matrix (SWOT). Furthermore, Strategic Position and Action Evaluation Matrix (SPACE) was used to describe the position of organization's strategies and they were then analyzed by Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM). In qualitative part, logical induction method for conceptualizing was used to analyze data. The procedure of analyzing data was as follows: implementing and editing interviews, coding comments, classifying comments in the same conceptual groups, interpreting concepts derived from research, combining concepts and conclusion. Moreover, in order to identify causal relationships in strategic plan, experts' comments and scientific analysis of data collected from interviews were employed. After extracting and classifying collected information, SPSS/22 software was used. To present descriptive information, indexes of frequency, percentage, charts and tables were used.

Findings

Mission:the existence philosophy of fans is spiritual and material fan of all processes and activities of the club in all sports especially football.

Table 1: Strengths and weaknesses of area of Sepahan Club's fan

Strengths	weaknesses
Appropriate services for transportation, accommodation and food for fans at away matches	The inappropriateness of the amenities of the club when hosting
Appropriate services and transportation for fans to obtain tickets in the domestic tournaments	Not Having a strategic plan for advocacy in the field of marketing
Proper training staff behavior and interaction with the fans	Lack of systematic feedback process in the field of the fans club
Easy meeting fans with players and managers (particularly in celebrations and ceremonies)	Inappropriate media programs at the club
Social and cultural groups during the Championships	Chain stores are inappropriate and symbols drawn from club
There are coaches and players involved in football	Inadequate welfare services to fans
Attractive colors, symbols and hymns chosen for the club	Inadequate in informing the fans
Systematic management with the stability and integrity in relation to the supporters club	Coagulation and media-billion contracts with players
The effectiveness of the history and past successes Sepahan (in attracting fans)	
The effectiveness of the club's role in social, cultural and political	

According to the table (1), ten strengths and 8 weaknesses were considered in total after analyzing the internal environment in mission areas of Sepahan Club's fan.

Table 2: Opportunities and threats of area of Sepahan Club's fan

Opportunities	Threats
Tournament ticket cost	Inflation in society advocates increased costs
Right-hours event	Foolad Shahr Stadium proportion of facilities in the stadiums International Index

	(health facilities, safety, parking, kiosks and service support services to disabled fans)
Competitions in weekend	Sepahan Foolad Shahr Stadium for fans distance
The event at Foolad Shahr Stadium at night	Competitions during the work week
Sepahan direct broadcast matches of different network IRIB	Justify the lack of TV in the close-up of the audience
Appropriate behavior of personnel Foolad Shahr Stadium with the fans	Inappropriate behavior of police officers deployed at the stadium with fans
Despite the large number of personnel (staff and workers and families) Sepahan	Advertising and measures on the reduction of competing teams support
Persian language, literature and religion of the society circuit	Some of the spectators and fans at the stadium chanting unethical

According to the table (2), ultimately, after analyzing the external environment of Sepahan club's fan and by considering economic, cultural, social and political factors, eight opportunities and eight threats were described for this club.

Table 3: Major goals of area of Sepahan Club's fan

1	Sepahan industrial clubs over competitors, in terms of number of fans is the top clubs.
2	Sepahan in terms of diversity of services to be at the top clubs in the country.
3	Sepahan in terms of service quality to be at the top clubs in the country.
4	Sepahan brand awareness among national and international supporters geographically increases.
5	Having maximum stability arise among fans.

Table (3) shows the interpretation of vision of Sepahan Club's fan area in five major goals. 1. In comparison to rival industrial clubs, Sepahan club will be placed at the top among all clubs in terms of the number of fans. 2. It will be placed at the top of all clubs in terms of variety in services. 3. It will be placed at the top of all clubs in terms of quality of services. 4. Awareness of Sepahan club's brand will increase among geographically national and international fans. 5. Sepahan club will have maximum stability among fans in 2020. It means that in the end of five-year-period of strategic plan, the intended vision will be achieved if these goals are achieved.

According to figure 1, based on the analysis obtained from strengths, weaknesses, opportunities

and threats, fan area is in the position of developing services. It means that this club should develop type and influence of its own sport services in internal and surrounding environment in accordance with its mission.

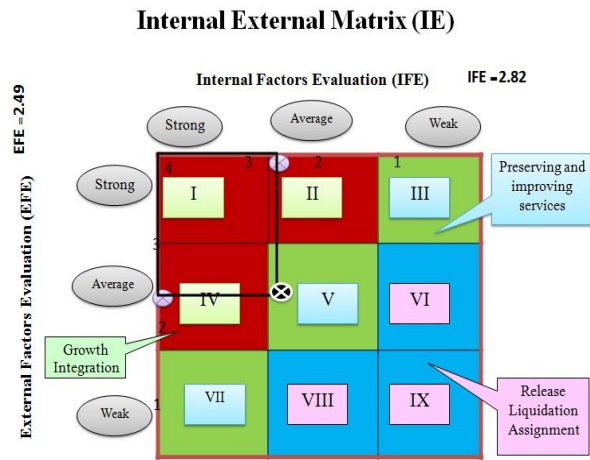


Figure 1: Internal and external matrix (IE) of area of Sepahan Club's fan

As figure 2 shows, according to strengths of Sepahan club's fan area and opportunities around it, its strategies was obtained in the position of aggressive strategies. It means that most strategies obtained from the SWOT Matrix are in the form of aggressive strategies. Area of Sepahan club's fan attacks surrounding opportunities in terms of its strengths to use the opportunities for its own goals or it uses surrounding opportunities to improve its weaknesses and to overtake other competitors.

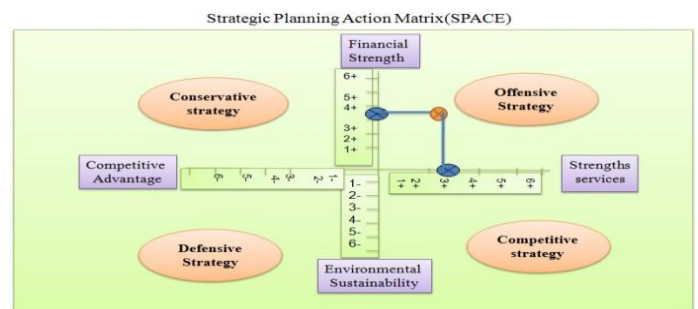


Figure 2: Strategic position and action evaluation matrix of area of Sepahan club's fan

Table 4: Prioritization of strategies of Sepahan club's fan Strategies

Priority	Score	Strategies
First	2.47	Focus on providing a variety of services and quality to enthusiasts, fans strategic geographical areas
Second	2.44	The emphasis on extension of popularity with max in the cultural, social political
Third	2.41	Capacity of the media in promoting the use of symbols, slogans and songs among fans of club members' socio-cultural
Fourth	2.39	The club established maximum interaction with law enforcement agents police training exercise
Fifth	2.35	Emphasis on practical training and the use of trained Iranian-Islamic val

In table 4, prioritizing of the strategies of fan area, from the first to the fifth strategy, has been specified. According to the obtained results, managers of the club can target at major goals of fan area and provide conditions to achieve the intended vision.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the early third millennium, one of the major concerns of strategy-based organizations is non-implementation of formulated strategies. Management scholars especially strategic management introduced strategic planning to the managing area of organizations to remove these concerns and by using it organizations can change subjective formulated strategies into objective ones. To describe steps and implementation process of organizational strategies, Dived, Kaplan and Norton, Bryson and other scientists of management innovated strategic plan that managers, beneficiaries and staff of organizations use to see causal relationships between perspectives and identified goals. In addition, they use it to perceive the achievement way to the organizational strategy and take appropriate measures if they deviate from the way leading to the vision and strategies. To formulate strategic plan, first strategic themes and perspectives should be formulated and then vision and goals should be considered, therefore according to the findings, the vision of area of Sepahan club’s fan was considered as a leading club in terms of fan in 2020. According to this vision, the statement of it can be interpreted as: athletic-cultural club of Sepahan, based on designed indexes by Iran’s football federation and premier league, will be placed at the top of all clubs in terms of quality and variety of services. Very important strategic themes in the area of Sepahan club’s fan can be analyzed and interpreted in mission content. As mentioned in findings, the mission of fan area of Sepahan club was considered as spiritual and material support of all club’s processes and activities in all sports especially football. Based on it, by paying special attention to Islamic-Iranian values and high position of Isfahan as the capital of Islamic culture and civilization, Sepahan’s fans intend to be politely and honestly committed to the club and to be supporter

of the club in all affairs. In order to protect and respect the Islamic-Iranian values in fan area, core values of honesty, politeness, empathy and commitment were considered as reliable values of fan community of the club. The important point in selecting core values of fan area is that by some studying in fan area especially fan area of football, social values, politeness, empathy, commitment and honesty among fans, players, managers and staff of the club are counted as important elements of the club’s success, but it seems that promotion of mentioned values haven’t been paid much attention by these elements, therefore being core values of Sepahan club, these values can be a model for other clubs. It is certain that rule of legalism, moralization and protection of human dignity of individuals should be given special attention as main policies in the area of fan. Thus, based on the results of this study, these key words of “rule of legalism, moralization and human dignity” were considered as major policies of strategic plan of fan area.

In general, it can be concluded from the analysis of the internal factors (2.8) and external factors (2.4) that Sepahan club should place its reliance on the internal environment to achieve desired conditions because most factors especially in the form of threats are due to legal environment which are out of control and manipulation of managers of Sepahan club’s fan. To develop strategic themes, it is first necessary to identify perspectives and goals of the organization. Therefore, as shown in table 3, major goals of fan area with respect to intended vision are:

1. In comparison to rival industrial clubs, Sepahan club will be placed at the top of all clubs in terms of the number of fans.
2. It will be placed at the top of all clubs in terms of variety in services.
3. It will be placed at the top of all clubs in terms of quality of services.
4. Awareness of Sepahan club’s brand will increase among geographically national and international fans.
5. Sepahan club will have maximum stability among fans

In fact, these goals make it possible to correctly interpret strategies of fan area in the form of formulated perspectives and then strategic and long-term goals, measures, quantitative goals, annual goals and executive actions are designed to pave the way for correct implementation of formulated strategies. It should be noted that SPACE matrix is obtained from the resultant of financial strength, service or industry strength, environmental stability and competitive advantages. Based on the existing position, it analyzes adopting of necessary strategies in terms of aggressive strategies, conservative strategies, competitive strategies and defensive strategies and identifies the approach of organizational strategies. According to the area of

fan, Sepahan club's strategies are in the area of aggressive strategies. It indicates that very distinctive strengths and very important opportunities are prepared inside and outside of the Sepahan club in terms of fan. Therefore, by adopting aggressive strategies, taking maximum opportunities with exploitation of distinctive strengths should be placed on the agenda.

It should be noted that since the area of fan is considered as one of the most complicated parts in the management of professional clubs, only the priorities of strategies are sufficient in this section. The prioritized strategies obtained indicate the importance of the cultural and social area of fans and educational parts, however the other parts are presented in the other proposed strategies that will make the managers of the area of club's fan use them in place and time requirements. By examining five priorities of the strategies, it should be acknowledged that three strategies are related to strategies of SO and two strategies are related to ST strategies that shows there are very indicative and important strengths in the club in terms of fan and it guides managers of the club through the further improvement of these strengths to use opportunities maximally and control surrounding threats.

Generally, it can be acknowledged that the causal relationship in the strategic plan of fan area develops a causal relationship between different perspectives. In addition, the causal relationships between different goals of different perspectives of strategic plan in the area of fans of Sepahan club represent the club's achievement in taking strategies. It seems that Sepahan club, regarding human capitals and different operations of governmental and non-governmental revenues and appropriate position of Sepahan in Iran's sport area, will be successful in implementing the organization strategies. Therefore, using these capabilities, Sepahan club can act well to achieve the intended vision. Since the internal environment of Sepahan club is superior to the external environment in terms of the area of fan and also most strategies taken from the matrix for determining strategies are the approach of aggressive and competitive strategies, it seems that Sepahan club has the ability to confront the threats of surrounding environment and to use the opportunities maximally.

Overall, the formulation of perspectives and the area of Sepahan club's fan pave the way for implementing Strategic plan of fan area and the obtained strategic plan also provides a clear picture for managers and staff by using long-term goals and causal relationships. Thus, adopting such approach in the implementation of strategies with having vision to major goals, strategic goals, quantitative goals, annual goals and executive actions in the infrastructural affairs and cultural area seems unparalleled. Finally, providing strategic plan of the area of Sepahan club's fan will be subject to the new

thoughts of the area of software, hardware, and human-ware infrastructures. On the other hand, such approach that Sepahan club has needed for a long time for the fan area will propel the strategic area of fan into an appropriate position in the club's structure and also Sepahan position among the other clubs of the country will be upgraded as one of the most important successful model of club area. It is hoped that the ground of growth and development of the club will be prepared by implementing strategic plan of fan area and by promoting national and international position of the club.

References

- 1- Keshavarz, Loghman (2010). Comments and develop a strategic plan with the card balance IOC, Olympic Magazine, No. 1 (row 53), spring 2010, pp. 7, 23.
- 2- Nazari, Rasool. Ehsani, Mohammad. Mehrzad, Hamidi. Salari, Mohsen. (2014). Sports General Directorate of Youth and Sport of the strategic perspectives of the model David. Journal of Sport Management. 1 (6), pp. 157-172.
- 3- Nazari, Rasool. Ehsani, Mohammad. Saket, Mohamadreza (2013). Strategic planning and management of sports organizations. Hades rah Eshg publisher. P.55.
- 4- Satchyan, V., Alizadeh, A., Dehghan, A, Elahi, AR. (2011). Prioritization and identification of factors affecting the relationship between motivation and support: provides a case study of Tehran, Journal of Research in Medical Sciences, Tehran. 2 (4), pp. 153-182.
- 5- Tork Far, Ahmed. (2009). Motivational factors, to attract fans to the Premier League football. Physical Education and Sport Sciences doctoral thesis (unpublished). Azad University of Tehran.
- 6- Azhdari Muhammad, Tork Far, Ahmed, Moghadasi, Mehrzad, Rustam Ali, G. (2010). The impact of the Premier League's top priority on attracting viewers. Sixth National Conference of Students of Physical Education and Sport Sciences. Tehran, 24 and Persian date Azar 25. Nemati, N. Tojari, F. Zarei, A. Gangoei, F. (2012). Test a theoretical model of the factors affecting the football fans in the Journal of Sport, 13, S122-107.
- 7- Kim Kyoum Yu, TrallGalen (2010). Constraints and Motivators: A New Model to Explain Sport Consumer Behavior. Journal of Sport Management. 24,190-210.
- 8- Hamil. S, Miche. J and Oughton. C(2001) ,A Game of two Halves: The business of football, Football Governance Research

- Center, Recognized Center of Birkbeck University of London,
- 9- Tojari, F., Tork Far, Ahmed (2010). Tasyrdvstan, social status and family on motivating students to absorb all Premier League football, sport management research and the science of motion, (2), pp88-79.
 - 10- Merzaei, A.Hemati Nejad, M. Rahmani Nia, F. (2013) Preventing factors Vsvq the sports tourism development and management of a sports season, No. 2, pp. 85-95.
 - 11- Alidost, Ebrahim, Ahmadi, Ali. (2011). The relationship between service quality and satisfaction of the spectators in the stadium hosting the Champions League, Journal of Sport Management, No. 14, pp. 47-31.
 - 12- Tojari, F. Nemati, N. Azarbaejani, M. Ghasemi, H. (2008). Analysis of the economic, social Vangyzshy football fans: A Case Study in league play and win professional independence, Exercise Science Quarterly, No. 3, S125-109.
 - 13- AthanasopoulouPinelopi, Skourtis George, Zefeirpoulou ,Simokos George, AssiourasIoannis(2012). Investigating the Importance of Sports Facilities &Staff for Football Fans. African Journal of Hospitality –vol. 2(1)
 - 14- Cralg, A. Martin. (2013). Investigating National Football League (NFL) Fan Loyalty. Journal of Marketing and Competiveness vol. 7(1)
 - 15- Carolina Golf Club Strategic Plan (2011). www.carolinagolfclub.memberstatements.com/Clubs/CSGCarolina.
 - 16- Fallahi, Ahmed, Hasan Asadi, Khabiri Muhammad. (2008) Factors influencing the audience .mqays·h occasional, regular Premier League football fanatic, travel journal, No. 2, S270-247.
 - 17- Garcia. J & Rodrigues. P. (2002), the determinants of football match attendance revisited: Empirical evidence from the Spanish football league, Journal of Sport Economics, 3(1), 18-38.
 - 18- Funk, D., Mahony, D., Nakazawa, M., & Hirakawa, S. (2000). “Spectator motives: Differentiating among objects of attraction in professional football”. European Journal for Sport Management, 7, pp: 51-67.
 - 19- Mueller,T. S, Sutherland,J. C(2010). Heroes and Vilians: Increasing Fan Involvement in Pursuit of the Elusive fan. Journal of Sport Administration &Supervision 2(1), 20-30.