



# The Effect of CSR Activities of the Citizens Professional Football Club on Regional Attachment and Expansion of Fans: Focused on Seongnam Football Club, Korea\*

Sam Kwon JUNG\*\*, Ki Hyun KWON\*\*\*, Hyuk Jin LEE\*\*\*\*

Received: December 22, 2021 Revised: December 27, 2021 Accepted: December 30, 2021

## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to empirically analyze fans' responses to the types of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities implemented by the citizens professional football club and seek strategic measures for the continuous growth of the club and the formation of long-term relationships with fans. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between regional attachment and expansion of fans according to the type of CSR activities of the club, and to examine influencing relationships among the types of CSR activities, regional attachment, and expansion of fans. **Research design, data, and methodology:** To achieve the purpose of the study, the survey was conducted on 150 home spectators of Seongnam Football Club, and the analysis of the data was conducted using SPSS Window Version 21.0. Correlation analysis, simple regression analysis, and multiple regression analysis were conducted to analyze the relationship between regional attachment and expansion of fans according to the types of CSR activities performed by the Seongnam Citizens Football Club. **Results:** As a result of the analysis, it was found that CSR activities had a statistically significant effect on regional attachment. In addition, CSR activities were found to have a statistically significant effect on expansion of fans. Finally, it was found that regional attachment had a statistically significant effect on the expansion of fans. **Conclusions:** Based on these results, CSR activities of the professional football club are considered an opportunity to build regional attachment. In addition, it is thought that the expansion of fans can be achieved through CSR activities.

**Keywords:** Citizens Football Club, CSR Activity, Regional Attachment, Expansion of Fans

**JEL Classification Code:** A13, D12, L83, M14, M31

## 1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) encourages companies to be more aware of their impact on society. In Korea, CSR including professional sports industry has been continuously emphasized. Professional football clubs have become more diverse in ways to return to society based on low cost and high efficiency (Salguero & Rivera-Camino, 2016). Not only the players but also the club itself has been preparing various social contribution activities plans. Each club has provided an opportunity to get closer to home fans through plans such as PR, talent donation, and volunteer activities (Chen & Lin, 2020; Lacey & Kennett-Hensel, 2016). As a result, through these activities, clubs and fans can communicate efficiently, and this relationship has a positive impact on the professional sports industry (Lacey & Kennett-Hensel, 2016; Walzel, Robertson, & Anagnostopoulos, 2018).

Recently, several studies related to of CSR activities have been proposed. Lacey & Kennett-Hensel (2016)

\*This study was supported by the research grant of the KODISA Scholarship Foundation in 2021.

\*\* First-Author, Visiting Lecturer, Division of Airline and Hotel Cuisine, Gimcheon University, South Korea. Email: jung3kwon@hotmail.com

\*\*\* Second-Author, Graduate student, Department of Sport Convergence, Eulji University, South Korea.

\*\*\*\* Corresponding Author, Professor, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Eulji University, South Korea. Email: hyuk2jin@eulji.ac.kr

studied the effect of expectations and perceptions of corporate social responsibility on NBA fan relationships. They found that NBA used CSR activities as part of their marketing and PR strategies, and the quality of the relationship between the team and the fans improved when the NBA club carried out CSR activities that fans expected. Decrop and Derbaix (2010) confirmed that sports fans' team pride had a positive effect on attachment.

Attachment is defined as the affective bond of a person to a particular environment (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). Studies on regional attachment have been conducted in various academic fields. Attachment has been an interesting subject of research in sports management and is measured by 'venue attachment (attachment to a stadium where a sporting game is held)' and community attachment (Lee, Jung, & Seong, 2019). But there are only a few studies dealing with the relationship between fan's team pride and attachment. (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Chen & Lin, 2020; Lacey & Kennett-Hensel, 2016). From perspective of managing professional sports clubs, it is very important to secure many fans with high attachment. This is because groups with a higher level of attachment to the region react more actively to the club's activities. In professional sports clubs related studies, it was confirmed that there was an influence relationship among team pride, regional attachment, and expansion of fans.

Securing fans is a key factor for clubs to realize not only qualitative profits but also quantitative corporate profits. Therefore, from a corporate perspective, securing more fans is the most important task. Fans are directly or indirectly related to all club sources of income (Cox, 2018; Lacey & Kennett-Hensel, 2016). Korean professional football League has grown based on the regional association system so far. In view of this, as previous studies have shown, the geographical location of the stadium has been treated as a factor influencing fans' direct viewing decision-making (Loannou & Bakirtzoglou, 2016). In view of this, residents' attachment to the community is a very important factor in making local residents as fans. (Babiak & Kihl, 2018; Walzel, Robertson, & Anagnostopoulos, 2018). The stronger the residents' attachment to the community, the higher the residents' participation in community activities. Also, attachment to the professional football club based in the region can be strengthened (Babiak & Kihl, 2018).

The study aimed to analyze home fans' responses to the types of CSR activities implemented by the professional soccer club, and to find strategic directions for the continuous growth of the club and the formation of long-term relationships with fans. Also, the purpose of the study is to investigate the relationships among regional attachment and expansion of fans according to the type of CSR activities of the Professional Football Club.

## 2. Research Method

### 2.1 Sample and Data Collection

This study was conducted on home spectators who visited the stadium to watch the Seongnam Citizen Professional Football club (FC) match. The survey was conducted on April 21st in 2020 when Seongnam FC's home game was held. On the day of the survey, a total of 180 survey papers were distributed to the spectators by four surveyors. In total, 160 questionnaires were collected at the stadium, but a total of 150 copies were used for the data analysis. 10 surveys could not be used as data due to insincere responses or some missing items. statistical package. Demographic characteristics of participants were presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Division	Contents	Number of People (Person)	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	108	72
	Female	42	28
Age	20's	37	24.7
	30's	43	28.7
	40's	37	24.7
	50's	33	22.0
Job	Office/technical worker	62	41.3
	University student	11	7.3
	Sales/sales service position.	11	7.3
	Self-employment	10	6.7
	Professional job	22	14.7
	Functional/working position.	9	6.0
	Housewife	7	4.7
	Management	12	8.0
	Not employed	4	2.7
	Graduate student	2	1.3

## 2.2. Measurement Method

In this study, questionnaire was used to find out the effect of CSR activities of the professional football club on regional attachment and expansion of fans and was prepared through a self-administration method. Measurement items were adapted and slightly revised from the existing literature (Jang & Won, 2016; Korea Professional Sports Association, 2017; Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2012).

All data were analyzed using the SPSS 21.0. Frequency analysis was performed to analyze the general characteristics of responses. In addition, reliability analysis using Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was conducted to verify the reliability of the questionnaire and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to verify the validity of the composition of the questionnaire. Correlation analysis, simple regression analysis, and multiple regression analysis were conducted to analyze the relationships among CSR activities of the professional football club, regional attachment, and expansion of fans.

For the fundamental data of the paper, demographic variables were measured using nominal scale. But the derived items including CSR, regional attachment, and expansion of fans were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, anchored from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Survey items were presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Survey items

Components	Contents	Questions
Demographics	Gender, Age, Number of views, Job	4
CSR Type	Campaign activities such as promotion to revitalize the local economy Participation in campaign activities and events for the vulnerable and underprivileged in the region Volunteer work to help with hard work Volunteer activities to encourage the vulnerable and underprivileged, such as visiting welfare facilities Activities to sponsor items such as quarantine supplies and soccer supplies Activities to deliver donations for the purpose of sponsoring vulnerable and marginalized groups Operate programs such as soccer classes and sports coaching for local residents Operation of career education related to soccer and sports for local residents Hosting and sponsoring sports (male and female) soccer competitions	9
Regional Attachment	It is important that I am from the city where Seongnam FC is located. I think I am a native of the city where Seongnam FC is located. I want to be born again in the city where Seongnam FC is located. I am proud to be a resident of the city where Seongnam FC is located. I feel proud when I tell others that I am a local resident the city where Seongnam FC is located.	5
Expansion of Fans	If I conduct my preferred social contribution activities, I will be attached to Seongnam FC. If I conduct my preferred social contribution activities, I will visit the Seongnam FC game in person and watch it. If I conduct my preferred social contribution activities, I will try to watch more Seongnam FC games. If I conduct my preferred social contribution activities, I will recommend my family and friends to watch Seongnam FC games. If I carry out my preferred social contribution activities, I will recommend my family and friends to support Seongnam FC game.	5

## 2.3 Verification of the Reliability and Validity

To verify the validity of the composition of the questionnaire, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted with the items using principal component analysis extraction and Varimax orthogonal rotation, determining the number of factors with an eigenvalue of 1.0 or higher, and factor loadings of 0.5 or higher (Seo, Lee & Kim, 2018). The KMO value was used as a coefficient that verifies the suitability of the sample size, and it was .901, which is included between 0.5 and 1. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  as an internal consistency estimate of the reliability of test score was = .792 to .972, which was higher than the standard value of .70 suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The results are shown in table 3.

**Table 3.** Factor Analysis of CSR Types

	Factor	1	2	3	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Volunteer Activity	Volunteer work to help with hard work	.775			.934
	Volunteer activities to encourage the vulnerable and underprivileged, such as visiting welfare facilities	.842			

	Activities to sponsor items such as quarantine supplies and soccer supplies	.854				
	Activities to deliver donations for the purpose of sponsoring vulnerable and marginalized groups	.833				
Education for Donation	Operate programs such as soccer classes and sports coaching for local residents	.806				
	Operation of career education related to soccer and sports for local residents	.815			.884	
	Hosting and sponsoring sports (male and female) soccer competitions	.828				
Community	Campaign activities such as promotion to revitalize the local economy	.829			.792	
	Participation in campaign activities and events for the vulnerable and underprivileged in the region	.801				
Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy: 901 Eigenvalue		5.767	.982	.730	Explained Total	
Barlett's Test of Sphericity significance at p=.000		Extracted Variance %	64.08	10.91	8.11	Variance %
		Rotated Variance %	35.64	27.28	20.18	83.097

\* Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis  
 \* Rotation Method: Varimax. with Kaiser Normalization Rotation Converged in 5 iterations.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Correlation Analysis

Pearson's Correlation Analysis was conducted to find out the relevance among major variables. The results are shown Table 4. When looking at the correlation in detail, all sub-dimensions of CSR types showed positive (+) correlation. The discriminant validity between the variables was significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4.** Correlations among variables

Division	1	2	3	4	5
Community	1				
Volunteer Activity	.658**	1			
Education for Donation	.606**	.650**	1		
Regional Attachment	.621**	.666**	.784**	1	
Expansion of Fans	.812**	.779**	.800**	.688**	1

\*\* Correlation coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

#### 3.2. The Impact of CRS Types on Regional Attachment

To verify the effect of CSR types on regional attachment, the multiple regression analysis was performed as shown in Table 5. As a result of verifying the regression model, it was found that the regression equation was appropriate with F=97.998 (p< .001). The result shows that the R<sup>2</sup> is .668. This implies that 4 independent variables explained about 66.8% of the variance in the dependent variable of attachment. Since VIF (variance inflation factor) value of the variables did not exceed 10, it was judged that there was no collinearity between the variables. As a result of verifying the significance of the regression coefficient, it was found that the CSR types had a positive effect on regional attachment. The stronger the various activities in the CSR types, the higher the degree of attachment to the place. community (t= 2.173, p= .031< .05), volunteer activity (t=.2.918, p= .004< .01), education for donation (t=8.554, p= .000< .001) have a significant effect on attachment.

**Table 5.** Effect of CSR Types on Place Attachment

Variables	B	Std. Error	Std. beta	T	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	.988	.135		7.323	.000	
Community	.107	.049	.145	2.173*	.031	1.953
Volunteer Activity	.154	.053	.203	2.918**	.004	2.139

Education for Donation	.369	.043	.565	8.554***	.000	1.917
------------------------	------	------	------	----------	------	-------

R-Square=.668, Adjusted R-Square=.661, F=97.998, Sig=.000  
a = Dependent Variable = attachment, \*: p<.05, \*\*: p<.01, \*\*\*: p<.001

### 3.3. The Impact of CRS Types on Expansion of fans

To verify the effect of CSR types on expansion of fans, the multiple regression analysis was performed as shown in Table 6. As a result of verifying the regression model, it was found that the regression equation was appropriate with F=257.099 (p< .001). The result shows that the R<sup>2</sup> is .841. This implies that 4 independent variables explained about 84.1% of the variance in the dependent variable of Expansion of fans. Since VIF (variance inflation factor) value of the variables did not exceed 10, it was judged that there was no collinearity between the variables. As a result of verifying the significance of the regression coefficient, it was found that the CSR types had a positive effect on expansion of fans. The stronger the various activities in the CSR types, the higher the degree of expansion of fans. community (t= 8.822, p= .000< .001), volunteer activity (t=.5.454, p=.000< .001), education for donation (t=8.352, p= .000< .001) have a significant effect on expansion of fans.

**Table 6.** Effect of CSR Types on Expansion of Fans

Variables	β	Std. Error	Std. beta	T	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	.638	.104		6.150	.000	
Community	.333	.038	.407	8.822***	.000	1.953
Volunteer Activity	.222	.041	.263	5.454***	.000	2.139
Education for Donation	.277	.033	.382	8.352***	.000	1.917

R-Square=.841, Adjusted R-Square=.838, F=257.099, Sig=.000  
a = Dependent Variable = expansion of fans, \*: p<.05, \*\*: p<.01, \*\*\*: p<.001

### 3.4. The Impact of Regional Attachment on Expansion of Fans

To verify the effect of regional attachment on Expansion of fans, the simple regression analysis was performed as shown in Table 7. As a result of verifying the regression model, it was found that the regression equation was appropriate with F=133.131 (p< .001). The result shows that the R<sup>2</sup> is .474. This implies that independent variable explained about 47.4% of the variance in the dependent variable of Expansion of fans. Since VIF (variance inflation factor) value of the variables did not exceed 10, it was judged that there was no collinearity between the variables. As a result of verifying the significance of the regression coefficient, it was found that regional attachment had a positive effect on expansion of fans (t=11.538, p = .000< .001).

**Table 7.** Effect of Regional Attachment on Expansion of Fans

Variables	β	Std. Error	Std. beta	T	Sig.	VIF
(constant)	1.041	.211		4.927	.000	
Regional Attachment	.764	.066	.688	11.538***	.000	1.000

R-Square=.474, Adjusted R-Square=.470, F=133.131, Sig=.000  
a = Dependent Variable = expansion of fans, \*: p<.05, \*\*: p<.01, \*\*\*: p<.001

## 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of CSR types of the citizens professional football club on regional attachment and expansion of fans. For this purpose, CSR types were divided into three categories: community, volunteer activity, and educational for donation. The findings of this paper are summarized as follows.

First, CSR Types (community, volunteer activity, and educational for donation) have a significant impact on place attachment. These findings support prior studies suggesting the relationship between the fidelity of corporate social responsibility and the degree of the consumer's attachment (Du, Bhattachary, & Sen, 2010, Lin & Lin, 2008). As shown in the results of this study, the professional citizens football club should strengthen its opportunities to build regional attachment, that is, hometown attachment, according to CSR activities.

Second, CSR types (community, volunteer activity, and educational for donation) have a significant impact on expansion of fans. These findings support prior studies suggesting effect of the professional baseball team's CSR activity on fan behavioral intention (Park & park, 2014). As shown in the results of the previous studies, CSR activities affect the club's image and also fans' behavioral intentions such as word of mouth (WOM) and recommendation intention (Kim, 2012; Park & Chang, 2010).

The growth and development of most professional clubs are related to their hometowns, and in sports events, the club or players often represent or symbolize the region (Kim, & Lee, 2020). To expand the number of fans of professional football clubs, there must be various factors, including improving their performance to win. Above all, the football club should carry out CSR activities so that citizens can have a positive image of the club. The establishment of a region-friendly CSR activities could lead to the continuous expansion of sports fans.

However, this study has the following several limitations. First, the surveys were given to home fans of one specific citizens club and to spectators of Korean football sports. Second, although questionnaires were used as the research method, the number of samples (150 copies) was somewhat small. These results can be difficult to generalize extensively. Thus, in future studies, it is necessary to expand the scope of the survey to diverse professional sports.

## References

- Babiak, K., & Kihl, L. A. (2018). A case study of stakeholder dialogue in professional sport: An example of CSR engagement. *Business and society review*, 123(1), 119-149.
- Bristow, D. N., & Sebastian, R. J. (2001). Holy cow! Wait 'til next year! A closer look at the brand loyalty of Chicago Cubs baseball fans. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 18(3), 256-275.
- Chen, C-Y & Lin, Y-H. (2020). Persuasion effect of corporate social responsibility initiatives in professional sport franchise: Moderating effect analysis. *PLoS ONE*, 15(12), 1-21.
- Cox, A. (2018). Spectator demand, uncertainty of results, and public interest: Evidence from the English Premier League. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 19(1), 3-30.
- Decrop, A., & Derbaix, C. (2010). Pride in contemporary sport consumption: a marketing perspective. *Journal of Academy Marketing Science*, 38, 586-603.
- Du, S., Bhattacharya, & Sen, S. (2010). Maximizing business returns to corporate social responsibility (CSR): The role of CSR communication. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 12(1), 8-19.
- Hidalgo, M. C., & Hernandez, B. (2001). Place attachment: conceptual and empirical questions. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(3), 273-281.
- Ioannou, P., & Bakirtzoglou, P. (2016). The relationship between stadium factors on spectators' satisfaction in Greek Soccer Super League. *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*, 11(4), 437-443.
- Jang, W. Y., & Won, D. Y. (2016). The study of spectating decision factors of professional soccer games. *Korean Society of Sport Management*, 21(2), 69-86.
- Kim, H. Y., & Lee, H. J. (2020). Sports and geography: Exploration for spatial approach. *Journal of Sport and Applied Science*, 4(2), 11-17.
- Kim, Y. M., Kim, A. R., & Kim, K. H. (2012). Relationship among pro-football spectators' attitude toward spectating, spectating satisfaction, team trust, team identification, sponsor identification, sponsor image, purchase intention and word-of-mouth. *Korean Society of Sport Management*, 17(4), 13-30.
- Lacey, R., & Kennett-Hensel, P. (2016). How expectations and perceptions of corporate social responsibility impact NBA fan relationships. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 25(1), 21-33.
- Lee, H. J., Jung, S. K., & Seong, M. H. (2019). The effect of professional sport spectator's experience economy factors on satisfaction: Focused on mediating effects of attachment and a sense of community. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 6(3), 269-282.
- Lin, Y., & Lin, C. (2008). Factors influencing brand loyalty in professional sports fans. *Global Journal of Business Research*, 2(1), 69-84.
- Park, K. D., & Park, J. J. (2014). The effects of corporate social responsibility in professional baseball teams on team pride, loyalty, and fan expansion. *Journal of Sport and Leisure Studies*, 58(1), 269-282.
- Park, S. Y., & Chang, K. R. (2010). A study of the fit perceptions of corporate social responsibility by professional sport teams on sport fan attitudes and behavioral intentions. *Korean Journal of Sport Science*, 21(3), 1417-1430.
- Salguero, J. Q., & Rivera-Camino, J. (2016). CSR serves to compete in the sport industry? An exploratory research in the football sector in Peru. *Corporate Ownership & Control*, 13(3), 60-71.
- Seo, W. J., Lee, S. M., & Kim, J. J. (2018). Current status and suggestions of exploratory factor analysis research. *Journal of Institute for Social Sciences*, 29(1), 177-193.
- Walzel, S., Robertson, J., & Anagnostopoulos, C. (2018). Corporate social responsibility in professional team sports organizations: An integrative review. *Journal of Sport Management*, 32(6), 511-530.