

Full Length Research Paper

The league management based on competitive balance: A case study in Asian countries from 2009-2010 seasons

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Accepted 22 November, 2012

The purpose of this research was to compare and rank competitive balance of Football Super Leagues in Asian countries in 2009-2010 seasons. Super leagues of 19 Asian countries (11 Western leagues and 8 Eastern leagues) were examined. The data were secondary and collected from final football league table of selected countries. C5ICB was used to analyze the data and with the following results found: five most competitive balance leagues were from countries of Eastern and Southern Asia. Among Western Asian countries, Super Leagues of Iran and Pakistan had the most and least competitive balance, respectively. Among Eastern Asian countries, Super Leagues of Vietnam and Malaysia had the most and least competitive balance respectively. The means of C5ICB were 129.01 in Eastern Asia, 139.80 in Western Asia and 135.25 in the whole selected countries. Low mean of C5ICB in Eastern countries indicated more competitive balance which is more appealing compared to Western Asia and the whole selected countries. A more appealing competition results in more ticket selling, lots of investment on TV broadcast and better sponsorship. All mentioned advantages lead to the holding of league competitions with high quality. Organizations responsible for holding league must create conditions for increasing competition among teams of league to have more appealing benefit, spectators and ticket selling.

Key words: Competitive balance, football super league, index of concentration ratio, C5 index of competitive balance.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, football is the most popular sport in the world. TV broadcast has cost one billion dollar in England for 4 years (Koning, 2000). In most European countries, expenses devoted to TV broadcast of football competition are as prominent as expenses devoted to recreational activities. Most TV broadcasts belong to football league in

Europe. Some European leagues are broadcast all over the world (Halicioglu, 2008). Considering holding 2002 World Cup in Asia and 2010 World Cup in Africa, it is supposed people's attention and interest to football is increasing (Albert and Koning, 2008). Football industry has allocated approximately 3% of world trade and exchange to itself (Szymanski, 2001). Champion League and European FA Cup are competitions where European superior clubs achieve a lot of income by attending them annually. European Champion League distributed 33.9 million Euros among leagues in Europe in 2004 to 2005

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seasons. Gross budget was 560 million Euros before 2005 (Goossens, 2006). Unpredictability is one of the reasons for attracting people to watch a competition. Great teams tend to win all matches but sometimes are surprised by a weak team (Koning, 2000). Competitive balance indicates balance among capabilities of sport teams (Michie and Oughton, 2004). Specific rate of balance is essential to keep fan's interests. Low competitive balance decreases fans' interests who like beautiful game. Therefore, one of the goals in every league should be to determine rate of competitive balance to maximize league performances such as attracting spectators (Mizak et al., 2005).

There are several kinds of uncertainty or ambiguity of football results. Szymanski (2003) examines competitive balance based on 3 kinds; a) match uncertainty which refers to the uncertainty about the result of a special match (between two teams), b) season uncertainty which refers to uncertainty about the matches of a season, c) championship uncertainty which refers to the dominance of a limited number of teams over the league in consecutive seasons (Szymanski, 2003). Any attempt will not seem desirable to increase individuals' attention and attendance in order to increase competition for some clubs or fans especially if there are a lot of probabilities for them to succeed (Jenneth, 1984). Rate of demand in football is calculated by the number of spectators attending stadium and TV viewers watching football games and it has been recently increased. Football has changed into a main recreational industry (Koning, 2000). The more competitive balance is among teams comprising league, the harder predicting competitions, which is more appealing (Michie and Oughton, 2005). The more appealing a competition is the more tickets are sold. Therefore, TV broadcast is invests so much and better and more sponsors are attracted. On the whole, when the condition is fixed, more competitive balance leads to more appealing competitions (Goossens, 2006). There have been several researches in competitive balance. Goossens (2006) measured competitive balance in European leagues; competitive balance has been decreased in Belgium and England (relative increasing of linear graph), not considerably increased in Germany and France but increased in Portugal (Goossens, 2006). Michie and Oughton (2004) examined leagues of England, Italy, Germany, France and Spain. Competitive balance has been fixed in England for 40 years (1984-1987) but then decreased considerably. There is no clear trend in France but since 1992, it has increased. It has been declined considerably in series A of Italy since 1992. At the end of 2004, Italian League had the highest imbalance among 5 European superior general, decreased recently in 10 years (Michie and Oughton, 2005). It has increased lower in Germany but in Oughton, 2005).

Quirk and Fort (1992) examined football league in Netherland. Competitive balance has been decreased

considerably in second half of 60 s and increased in first half of 70 s. Then it had no clear approach. Moreover, they measured competitive balance in 5 American professional leagues: American League (AL), National League (NL) National Basketball American (NBA) National Hockey League (NHL) and National Football League (NFL). There was no considerable competitive balance among them (Quirk and Fort, 1992). Haan et al. (2007) found decrease of competitive balance in England. It was the same in Belgium and Netherland based on weak documents. Also, they found no clear approach in Germany, France, Italy and Spain (Haan et al., 2007). Eckard's studies (2001) show competitive balance has been declined in AL but increased in NL from 1999 to 1975 (Eckard, 2001). Mizak et al. (2007) showed competitive balance has been decreased considerably in Major League Baseball (MLB) especially in American league since 1990. The least competitive balance has been in Eastern Association of American league during 1998 to 2003 (Mizak et al., 2007). Zimbalist (2002) observed NBA was the highest imbalance among 5 American professional leagues. Moreover, competitive balance has been gradually developed in MLB during 1903 to 1950.

There are several researches of competitive balance about famous leagues in the world during different years. This study examined and ranked competitive balance of football super leagues in Asian countries in 2009-2010 season.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research was descriptive-analytic; the data were secondary and collected from football super league tables of Iran, Arabia, Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Oman, Bahrain, Jordan, Thailand, Emirates, Malaysia, Qatar, Uzbekistan, Lebanon, Syria and Pakistan in 2009-2010 season. The purpose of this research was to examine and rank competitive balance of football super leagues in Asian countries in 2009-2010. An economical index was used to analyze the data; the C5 of competitive balance (C5ICB). This model was used in many researches (Dejonghe, 2006; Novotny, 2006; Szymanski and Leach, 2006; Feddersen, 2006; Tenreiro, 2006; Brunelli, 2006; Gouget et al., 2006; Michie and Oughton, 2004, 2005). As these models were economic and mathematic index, it was not necessary to approve their validity and reliability.

In a perfectly balanced league, C5ICB equals 100. It is never lower than 100. The more C5ICB the less competitive balance league is. Increase of C5ICB means decrease of competitive balance (Michie and Oughton, 2004). The C5ICB is given as:

$$C5ICB = \frac{C5}{5/N} * 100$$

Where C5 is;

$$C5 = \frac{\text{Total points won by the top five clubs}}{\text{Total number of points won by all clubs}}$$

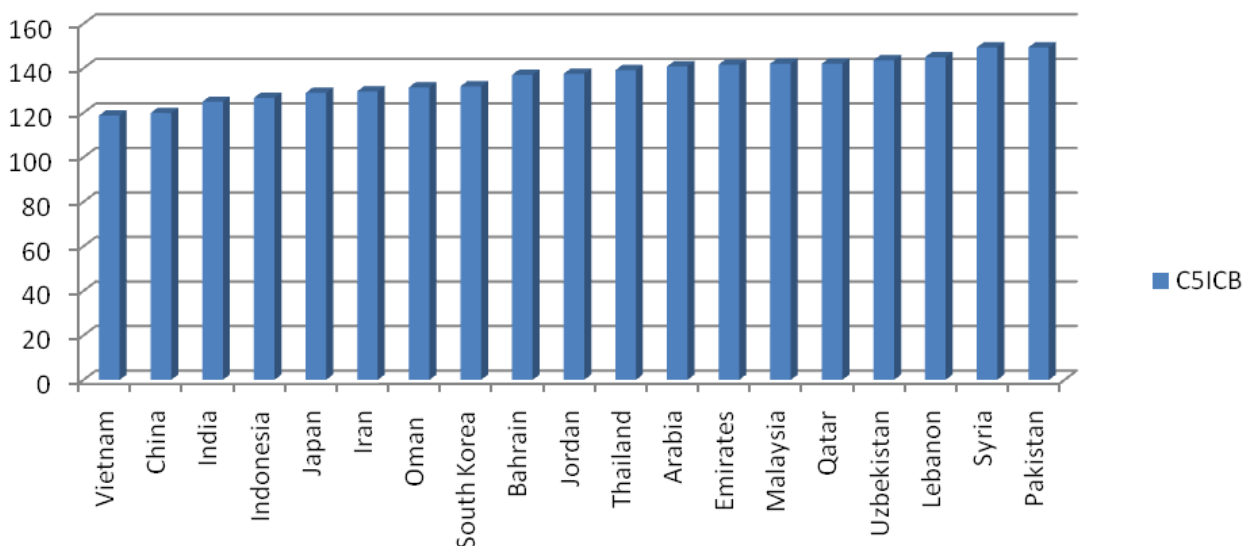


Figure 1. Amount of C5ICB in selected leagues.

Where N is the number of teams in the league. If the obtained C5 is more than the above scores, that league enjoys lower balance (Michie and Oughton, 2004).

RESULTS

Results show that from most to least competitive balanced leagues were as follows: Vietnam, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Iran, Oman, South Korea, Bahrain, Jordan, Thailand, Arabia, Emirates, Malaysia, Qatar, Uzbekistan, Lebanon, Syria and Pakistan (Figure 1).

The most and least competitive balances belong to Vietnam and Pakistan, respectively. Five leagues of East and East-south Asian countries have the most competitive balance and five leagues of Western Asian countries have the least competitive balance.

DISCUSSION

Findings showed that from most to least competitive balanced leagues were as follows: Vietnam (118.76), China (119.87), India (124.92), Indonesia (126.71), Japan (128.88), Iran (129.6), Oman (131.41), South Korea (131.83), Bahrain (137), Jordan (137.5), Thailand (139.1), Arabia (140.76), Emirates (141.58), Malaysia (142.01), Qatar (142.06), Uzbekistan (143.58), Lebanon (144.95), Syria (149.29) and Pakistan (149.3).

All five high balanced leagues belonged to East and East south part of Asia. Therefore, more competition was in these leagues. No team could easily overcome other teams. High competitive balance led to high quality leagues. All five low balanced leagues belonged to Western part of Asia. Low competitive balance led to low Quality leagues. Low competitive balance results in

predicting games more confidently. Predictability decreases appeal of league. Iran enjoyed most balanced league among Western Asian countries. In recent five seasons, 4 teams and in recent nine seasons, 6 teams could win championship of league in Iran. It confirms traditional, bipolar (Piroozi and Esteghlal) and Tehran-oriented conditions of Iranian football have changed and being developed in cities such as Isfahan, Kerman and Tabriz. The sport support of faculties and industrial sectors seems one of the reasons for increasing competitive balance in Iran. However, it is effective in short term; most clubs do not benefit from such financial supports so cannot compete with others and go bankrupt. Governmental sectors should not help directly specific clubs but make condition for income creation and financial independence. Pakistan and Syria had the least competitive balance among Western Asian countries. Among East Asian countries, Vietnam and China were the most balanced leagues and Malaysia and Thailand were the least balanced leagues. The means of C5ICB were 129.01 in Eastern Asia, 139.80 in Western Asia and 135.25 in the whole selected countries. The interesting point is there was higher C5ICBs of Thailand and Malaysia than mean of the whole Asia. All other East Asian countries enjoyed most balanced leagues in comparison with the whole Asian countries. Moreover, C5ICBs of Iran and Oman were less than mean of the whole Asia among western countries. Other teams had less balance than mean of the whole Asian countries. Less C5ICBs of East Asian countries showed more competitive balance leading to more appealing competition.

More appealing competition leads to more ticket selling, investment of TV broadcast and better sponsors. All above mentioned conditions provide a high quality league

league. A high quality league can better support national team. Participation of South Korea and Japan in 2010 South Africa of world cup confirms this claim. Generally, organizations holding leagues in East Asian countries could institute acceptable competitive balance among teams of leagues. Organizations holding leagues in Western Asian countries should also provide opportunity to increase competitive balance. It results in more appealing league, TV viewers and ticket selling.

Finally, it is essential to consider that more competitive balance does not assert more appealing and absolute superiority. Besides competitive balance, there are factors such as star players, quality of stadiums, quality of services before, during and after game, welfare services like parking and decrease of mental expenses like problems of ticket buying and going by round trip buses.

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