Factors Affecting the Branding of Sports Goods and its Relationship with the Purchase of Sports Goods in Schools

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The general purpose of this study is to investigate the factors affecting the branding of sports goods and its relationship with the purchase of sports goods in schools. Practical elements in product branding effectively create a competitive and sustainable position in the market.

Methodology: The present study is a descriptive-survey study and, in terms of the purpose of applied research and time, is performed cross-sectionally. The statistical population of this research is all consumers of school sports products (students) in Tabriz. According to the mentioned population, the statistical sample size is selected using the Morgan table equal to 384. Also, the sampling method based on a simple random process is. Data collection in this study was done using a questionnaire of factors affecting the branding method with a questionnaire of the brand's dimensions (tangible and intangible) by Dehdashti et al. (2012) and the purchase amount questionnaire. The reliability of this questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient (0.84). In this research, the method of structural equations and preferably Amos software has been used to investigate the relationships between research variables.

Findings: The research findings indicate that the brand's intangible and tangible dimensions have a significant relationship with the number of sports goods purchased in schools.

Originality: So far, two tangible and intangible dimensions of the brand have not been addressed explicitly in school sports goods.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, the sport has a much more complicated and essential role than in the past from different points of view- it has become not only a way of everyday life but represents a source of positive energy and contributes to a healthier life. Also a symbol of the power of the nation's themselves and a kind of business industry that has substantial implications on different aspects of social development (Jankovic & Jaksic-Stojanovic, 2019). Sports, as an industry, is a highly profitable business (Sarlab et al., 2020). Today's sports organizations operate their business efficiently and invest huge amounts of money in sports marketing and branding (Jankovic & Jaksic-Stojanovic, 2019). In the increasingly monopolistic competitive business environment, consumers have more information on products, accessibility to more products, creating more product choices, and, as a result, have higher expectations than ever. The result of this for marketers and firms is to generate more product differentiation to avoid their products being seen as commodities. To cope with this increasing demand, firms and marketers have intensified the branding of their products to be unique from their competitors (Peppiatt et al., 2001).

When they hear branding or branding, most people think about logos, but branding is much more than that. A brand has DNA, personality, identity, and so on. The brand is the essence of the product, and the logo is a small part of this complex set of elements (Răzvan & Cătălin, 2018). Branding is generally understood as a strategy for establishing a trademark the public associates exclusively with an entity (Arai et al., 2014). A sports entity's most valuable asset is its brand (Kunkel & Biscaia, 2020). Brand Commercialization creates a competitive advantage because the brand reflects the quality and commitment to the buyer and encourages consumers to buy products/services and brand values. Brands are at the heart of marketing and business strategy, and brand value or strong positioning is one of the most critical factors for the success of a business (Singh & Pattanayak, 2014).

From an academic perspective, branding is often discussed in developing, building, managing, and measuring brand equity (Ross, 2006). The brand identity includes a combination of the name, logo, slogan, design, color, brand performance, etc., which aim to achieve stimulation reliability to provoke positive feelings and emotions of closeness (Clow et al., 2012). A brand is how a product, service, or company is seen in the minds of consumers (Răzvan & Cătălin, 2018). Brand equity is often defined as the added value attached to the brand name or other brand elements (Aaker, 2012) and includes both financial and customer-based perspectives of value (Gladden et al., 1998). Once successfully established, a brand cannot be duplicated by its competitors. A significant contribution to branding theory was made by Keller (1993, 2001) introducing the concept of customer-based brand equity (CBBE) or brand resonance model (Keller, 2001) and brand hierarchy (Keller, 1993; Khanna et al., 2019).

Branding represents a unique idea and concept that enables sports organizations to enter into the consciousness of sports consumers. A sports brand, as a holistic sum of many different elements, represents a unique and identifiable symbol of a sports organization which makes it different from its competitors. The value of the sports brand is intensely used to increase the revenue of the sports organization. The brand leads to a customer or

consumer loyalty, and loyalty alone can encourage readiness to pay a higher price for a product or service, from 20 to 25% (Kottler & Keller, 2014). The position of the brands in the industry determines their profit generation. Creating and maintaining a proper position among competitors depends on the firm's ability to maintain a competitive advantage in the market. One of the critical factors in obtaining a competitive advantage and ensuring the long-term survival of companies is creating a strong brand (Sarlab et al., 2020).

By examining a wide variety of theoretical knowledge, we come across definitions that are based on the views of the world's leading marketing experts, who point out that the essential function of marketing is brand building (Bačevac et al., 2020). It is generally known that the decisional process regarding choosing or not choosing a brand is determined by anecdotal evidence. Having a great product without a strong identification is not enough. If a potential customer can relate to previous experience with a brand's identity, he surely developed a brand image and is likelier to prefer that specific brand (Mindrut et al., 2015). Over the last decade, researchers have developed and refined techniques and scales that illustrate the various association's consumers' link to their preferred sports teams (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018). Today, sports goods companies have taken an approach to influence the customer through their brands (Javani & Aghajani, 2022).

Additionally, research on sports brands and their relationship with other brands has mainly focused on consumers' perceptions, attitudes, intentions, or self-reported behaviors (Kunkel & Biscaia, 2020). A critical part of the branding process is also the logo itself. The role of the logo as part of an integrated communication system of a company or organization is to symbolize its modes of operation and project the unique credibility of the entity it represents. Among sports brands, Nike is in second place by brand value. With the breakthrough in the Asian market, Nike has found excellent growth potential. Nike is the name of the Greek goddess of victory, while the logo of this company symbolizes her flight. Its creator is a student at the Faculty of Design, Carolyn Davidson, who received $ 35 for the design of this logo, so Nike's founder, thanks to the massive increase in popularity of this brand and gratitude, donated 500 shares of Nike Company (Jankovic & Jaksic-Stojanovic, 2019). The sports industry is one of the leading industries in developed countries and has tremendous effects on the national economy of countries (Sarlab et al., 2019). And the sports goods industry is one of the most profitable industries in this field. Khabiri et al. (2020) showed that human resources, capital, technology, and materials affect production, marketing and branding, national media, the person responsible for buying, and foreign goods jeopardize the sale of Iranian sports goods and Iranian sovereign bodies, directly and indirectly, have important implications for all of these categories (Khabiri et al., 2020). Baugh and Davis (1989) investigated the effect of store and brand image on consumers' perception of the brand in the women's clothing market. They concluded that these factors impact the choice, product purchase, and customer loyalty to that brand (Baugh & Davis, 1989). Su and Tong (2015) Results revealed that the personality of sportswear brands can be described in seven dimensions and 53 personality traits: competence, attractiveness, sincerity, innovation, activity, excitement, and ruggedness. The study identified four dimensions among all the seven personality dimensions, namely, competence, beauty, sincerity, and innovation, which are

the positive and significant contributing factors to the creation and enhancement of sportswear brand equity (Su & Tong, 2015). Also, The results of the analysis showed that the brand experience with all its components has a positive and significant effect on the selection of sports goods brands (Javani & Aghajani, 2022).

In the Iranian market, the problem originates from the fact that the necessity of branding knowledge as an influential factor in promoting and expanding the position of a company has been neglected, and investment and value creation for the brand have been overlooked as a factor influencing customer choice behavior (Karamian et al., 2015). Limited (consumer-based) tools for evaluating brand equity in the Iranian market exist. Considering that brand equity originates from customers' perceptions, managers need to be able to measure and assess this equity at the customer level. Assigning human personality features to brands is one of the main subjects' researchers have focused on in recent decades. On the other hand, the congruency of brand personality with customers` nature is a concept that could affect brand equity (Azizi et al., 2013). Generally, according to the level of perception of brand characteristics, a brand has two dimensions: tangible and intangible (Ghasemy Yaghin & Sadeghi, 2019). In this research paper, the tangible dimension of the brand includes the name, logo and sign, packaging and labeling, product design, point of purchase design, and product capabilities (Wigley et al., 2013). And some intangible dimension Behavior among consumers, in the way that consumers prefer to make their future purchases from intangible brand components, including brand image, brand identity, brand heritage, marketplace, and social position. Finally, both affect customer reactions (Samiei Nasr et al., 2011). Hasanzadeh et al. (2022) argued that, the factors that have the most significant impact on the purchase of domestic brand sports products include products quality, products price, appearance and packaging, domestic brand loyalty, fashion and variety of products, social factors, brand awareness and accessible to products access (Hasanzadeh et al., 2022).Today, sports goods production companies are trying to gain more market share and increase the sales of their products by designing and producing new sports equipment and using various promotional tools. Still, some of these tools can persuade consumers to buy, especially if they do not have the final decision-making stages. To buy a product or service, the consumer performs a set of actions under the name of the consumer decision process. After identifying his needs, he collects information, and based on this information, he evaluates purchase options and decides (Keller, 2013). The affection to a brand had a significant impact, while the attitude strength component had the most negligible influential effect on the popularity of a brand (Saatchian et al., 2021). Building a strong brand with significant equity provides a host of firms. So, practical marketing has a significant effect on the brand equity (Bahrami et al., 2021). They understand the sources and outcomes of brand equity and provide managers with information on how and where brands add value. According to the stated contents, this research seeks to answer this central question: What factors influence the way of branding sports goods and their relationship with the amount of buying sports goods in schools? It is hoped that the present results can help develop and increase sales of school sports goods.

2. Methodology

The present study is a descriptive-survey study and, in terms of the purpose of applied research and time, is performed cross-sectionally. The statistical population of this research is all the students who used school sports products. In other words, consumers are considered sports goods brands in Tabriz. According to the mentioned population, the statistical sample size is selected using the Morgan table equal to 384. Also, the sampling method based on a simple random method is. Data collection in this study was done using a questionnaire of factors affecting the branding method, a questionnaire of the brand's dimensions (tangible and intangible) by (Dehdashti et al., 2012), and a purchase amount questionnaire. Dehdashti et al. (2012) questionnaire included 30 five-choice questions, and the scoring method of this questionnaire is based on a five-point Likert scale, the options of which are rated from 1 disagree to 5 agree so that the score of 1 indicates the least amount and the narrator's score of 5 is the highest. And the purchase amount questionnaire that it had two mixed dimensions of marketing and situational factors. The reliability of this questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient (0.84). In the inferential statistics section, skewness and kurtosis tests were used to determine the normality of the statistical population; considering the normality of the data, Structural equations were also used to investigate the influencing factors on the branding of sports goods and their relationship with the amount of purchase of sports goods in schools. In this research, Amos version 20 and Excel 20 software were used.

3. Results

The descriptive results of the research showed that 84% of the sample were male and 16% were female. Also, 6% of people who participated in this research were less than 12 years old, more than 34% were between 12 and 15 years old, and more than 60% were over 15 years old. Finally, it turned out that more than 20% of the people who participated in this research had at least a middle school diploma, 22% had a middle school degree, and the rest, about 58%, were studying in high school.

The data's normality was first tested to test the research hypotheses. To check the normal distribution of the data, we used the skewness test and kurtosis. The results showed that all the variables are in the range (2, -2), so the data distribution was normal. To test the general research hypothesis, path analysis was used. The standardized coefficients between the independent and dependent variables show that the independent variable explains the percentage of changes in the dependent variable. Table 1 shows the impact and significance. Figures 1 and 2 show the standardized path coefficients for each of the variables in both dimensions of the tangible and intangible of the brand):
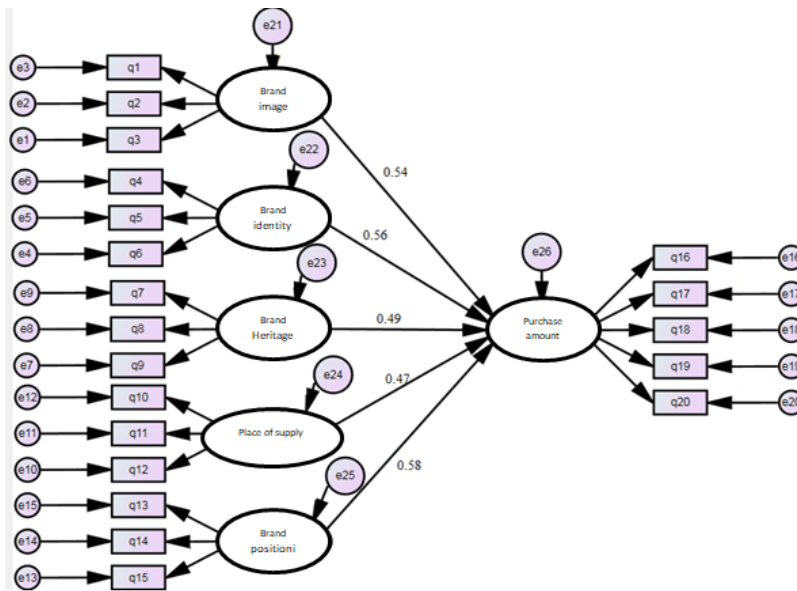
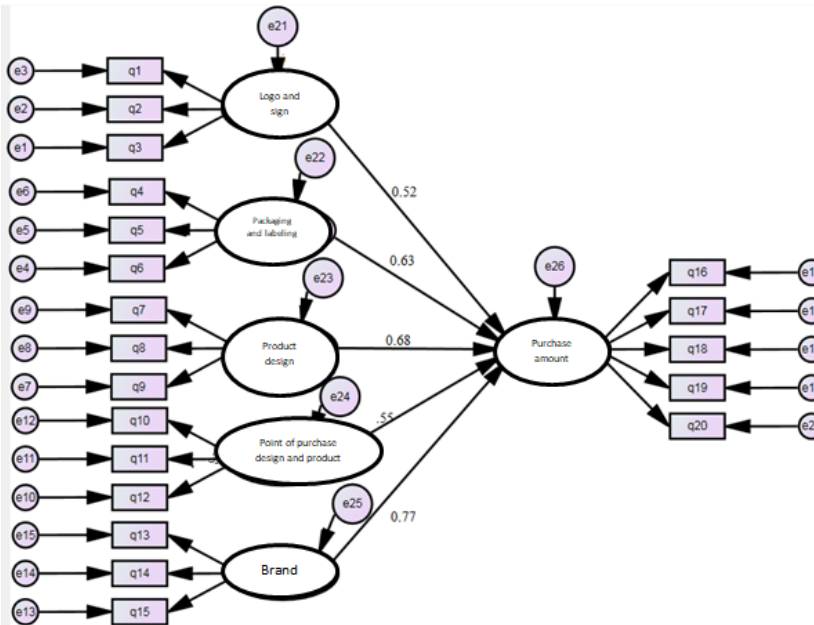**Figure 1.** Test model (tangible brand dimension).

Figure 2. Test model (intangible brand dimension).

Table 1. Significance test of relationships between research variables.

			Coefficients	Standard deviation	T
Purchase amount	<---	Brand image	0.54	0.018	12.41
Purchase amount	<---	Brand Identity	0.56	0.013	17.01
Purchase amount	<---	The heritage and past of the brand	0.49	0.012	15.26
Purchase amount	<---	Place of supply in the market	0.47	0.011	14.23
Purchase amount	<---	Social position of the brand	0.58	0.011	17.03
			Coefficients	standard deviation	T
Purchase amount	<---	Social position of the brand	0.77	0,014	14.41
Purchase amount	<---	Logo and sign	0.52	0.014	14.41
Purchase amount	<---	Packaging and labeling	0.63	0.012	14.54
Purchase amount	<---	product design	0.685	0.014	17.23
Purchase amount	<---	Point of purchase design and product capabilities	0.55	0.011	12.56

According to Table 1, the level of common and standard error for examining relationships is 0.01, and the confidence level is 99.9. At the 1% error level, the critical points in the normal curve are 1.96 and -1.96. Of course, according to the above table, since the T-value is more significant than 1.96, then at the 1% error level, the zero hypotheses are rejected, and the one hypothesis is confirmed. Therefore, the second research hypothesis is confirmed.

Based on the results shown in Table 1, the relationship between the tangible and intangible dimensions of the brand and the amount of purchase of sports goods in schools is significant. It can be said that the tangible dimensions of the brand have a substantial relationship with the purchase of sports goods in schools. Also, the results of the research model show that the dimension of the brand name with a coefficient of 0.77 has the most significant impact and the dimension of the logo and sign has the most negligible effect on the willingness to buy among students. Concerning the intangible dimensions of the brand, the intangible dimensions of the brand have a significant relationship with the purchase of sports goods in schools. Also, the results of the research model show that the dimension of the social position of the brand has the most significant effect, with a coefficient of 0.58, and the dimension of the place of supply in the market has a minor impact on the willingness to buy among students.

Regarding the results of the Goodness of fit index of the model (for the intangible dimension) (Table 2), besides estimating the coefficients and errors of the model, the Amos software provides a series of fit indices; by using these indices, the researcher can test the model's completeness and its fit. The fit indices of the model indicate that the model is in good condition in terms of fit indices; Because the ratio of chi-square to the

degree of freedom ($\chi 2/df$) is equal to 1.99, which is less than the allowed value of 3, and the RMSEA value is also equal to 0.041, which is less than the permitted value of 0.8. Therefore, it does not need many reforms. P-value is also 0.000, which is less than 0.05. And all the significant numbers related to the parameters of the model are more excellent than 1.96 and are significant. GFI, AGFI, and NFI indices are equal to 0.98, 1.25, and 1.02, respectively, which indicate a perfect fit.

Table 2. Goodness of fit index of the research model (intangible dimension).

Value	Standard value	Index
1.99	3<	χ^2/df
0.041	0.1<	RMSEA
0.98	0.8>	AGFI
1.25	0.9>	GFI
1.02	0.9>	NFI

Regarding the results of the Goodness of fit index of the model (The tangible dimension of the brand or the second hypothesis) (Table 3), in addition to estimating the coefficients and errors of the model, Amos software provides a series of fit indices, by using these indices the researcher can test the completeness of the model and its fit. The fit indices of the model indicate that the model is in good condition in terms of fit indices. Because the ratio of chi-square to the degree of freedom ($\chi 2/df$) is equal to 1.79, which is less than the allowed value of 3, and the RMSEA value is also equal to 0.034, which is less than the permitted value of 0.8. Therefore, it does not need many reforms. P-value is also 0.000, which is less than 0.05. And all the significant numbers related to the model's parameters are more excellent than 1.96 and are significant. GFI, AGFI, and NFI indices are equal to 0.89, 1, and 1, respectively, which indicate a perfect fit.

Table 3. Goodness of fit index of the research model (tangible dimension)

Value	Standard value	Index
1.79	3<	χ^2/df
0.034	0.1<	RMSEA
0.89	0.8>	AGFI
1	0.9>	GFI
1	0.9>	NFI

4. Discussion and conclusion

Nowadays, sports activities' marketing approach and branding have a more critical role than ever. Sports branding is a strategic process of exercises to create a strong brand identity and make its recognizable image on the market (Jankovic & Jaksic-Stojanovic, 2019). Practical elements in product branding help create a competitive and sustainable position in the market (Ghasemy Yaghin & Sadeghi, 2019). Tangible and intangible factors play a role in the formation and credibility of a brand. Attention to these factors, and if you notice it, will cause the rise or fall of a brand in the eyes of customers and the

sales market. This research showed that each factor has a different effect on a brand, which should be prioritized according to its effectiveness.

The results of the first hypothesis showed that the tangible dimensions of the brand have a significant relationship with the purchase of sports goods in schools. This research finding is in line with the research of (Karamian et al., 2015), (Askarian et al., 2017) and (Ranjbarian & Berari, 2010). Their research showed that brand equity has a positive effect on brand attachment, product involvement, and purchase intention, and has an indirect impact on purchase intention through brand attachment and product involvement. The components of the tangible dimension are the components of the intangible dimension of the brand, which ultimately both affect the customer's reaction. The tangible component of the brand represents the type of service, product, and features and is often visual.

The results of the second hypothesis showed that the intangible dimensions of the brand have a significant relationship with the purchase of sports goods in schools. This research finding is in line with the research of (Karamian et al., 2015), (Askarian et al., 2017) and (Ranjbarian & Berari, 2010). In the explanation of this result, it can be stated that people, in addition to paying attention to the tangible dimensions of the brand, which show themselves in appearance and affects the desire of people to buy, the intangible dimensions can also influence the unconscious mind of the customers. Customers' purchases have a direct impact. Research Results Su and Tong (2015) confirmed that consumers associate particular brand personality dimensions with sportswear brands, and specific dimensions of brand personality directly impact brand equity (Su & Tong, 2015). Customers often humanize brands by giving them character, and marketers often create or reinforce these perceptions through positioning (Azizi et al., 2013). The personality characteristics of the brand and the customer can make trust and a sense of belonging to the brand, which in turn leads to repeat purchases and, in other words, customer loyalty to the brand, and ultimately the result of this loyalty and trust in the brand is the creation of exceptional brand value. Brand equity comes from the high confidence that customers have in the brand and then in its competitors. This confidence is expressed in the form of customer loyalty and their willingness to pay for the brand.

Clothing and sports equipment are goods that the brand heavily influences. The intense competition between sports manufacturers and the expansion of products forces markets to differentiate their products from other companies and create value for their buyers. Mere innovation in goods and services does not produce long-term competitive advantage because these operational advantages are usually quickly imitated and copied and thus have a short-term effect. In such markets where products and services are modeled more and more daily, an index brand may be the only characteristic differentiating the offered product or service from competitors. In such conditions, it is essential to get the proper position in the consumer's mind so that he is loyal to the company. Nowadays, there is another way to advertise marketers' products, and that is supporting sports festivals. Becoming a sponsor is one of the ways for a company to put itself and its products in the focus of consumers' attention. Another one of these solutions is environmental activities, which, in addition to being economical for companies, introduce them as environmentally friendly companies and pursue bio-compatible marketing goals in this way. This is important; they strengthen the credibility of organizations.

According to the research results, it is suggested that managers use names and logos to arouse customers' emotions and encourage them to enjoy and want to buy more. Also, managers can increase satisfaction by asking customers for their opinions on product design. According to the obtained results, the brand name is significant in the willingness of customers to buy, so managers should pay due attention in choosing the brand name of school sports goods. Owners of manufacturing industries should try to increase the willingness of customers to buy by creating a favorable social position for their product brand. One of these methods is advertising in sports environments and stadiums. Managers can also use psychologists to learn about the menus and demands of customers. Since this research answered the research hypotheses through a questionnaire and by young age groups, therefore, some answers may be unrealistic. It is suggested that this issue be done in other ages and a different statistical population. Future researchers can also examine components such as family's economic, social, and cultural conditions as mediating variables. This research has been done in a cross-sectional manner.

For this reason, it makes it challenging to conclude causality. And it is recommended to conduct a longitudinal study for better results. Also, the results of the present study cannot be generalized to other age groups. In case of the need to generalize to different ages, it should be done with caution and sufficient knowledge.

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عوامل مؤثر بر برندسازی کالاهای ورزشی و ارتباط آن با میزان خرید کالاهای ورزشی در مدارس

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چکیده

هدف: عناصر موثر در برندسازی محصول برای ایجاد موقعیت رقابتی و پایدار در بازار مؤثر است. لذا، هدف اختصاصی تحقیق حاضر بررسی عوامل موثر بر برندسازی کالاهای ورزشی و ارتباط آن با خرید کالاهای ورزشی در مدارس می‌باشد.

روش: جامعه آماری این تحقیق شامل کلیه مصرف‌کنندگان محصولات ورزشی مدارس (دانش‌آموزان) در شهر تبریز می‌باشد. نمونه آماری ۳۸۴ نفر از دانش‌آموزان مدارس بودند که بصورت تصادفی ساده انتخاب گردیدند. ابزار تحقیق پرسشنامه ابعاد (ملموس و ناملموس) نام تجاری دهدشتی (۱۳۹۱) و پرسشنامه میزان خرید می‌باشد. پایایی پرسشنامه‌ها با استفاده از ضریب پایایی آلفای کرونباخ (۰/۸۴) مورد تائید قرار گرفت. جهت بررسی روابط بین متغیرهای حاضر در این تحقیق از روش معادلات ساختاری و با کمک نرم افزار آموس استفاده شد .

یافته‌ها: یافته‌های پژوهش نشان داد که بین ابعاد ملموس و ناملموس برند بر میزان خرید کالاهای ورزشی در مدارس شهر تبریز ارتباط معنی‌داری وجود دارند.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: تاکنون به دو بعد ملموس و ناملموس برند به صورت اختصاصی در حوزه کالاهای ورزشی مدارس پرداخته نشده است.

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