

In The

Name of

God



Sports Business Journal

**Scientific Semi-annual Journal
of Alzahra University**

Summer and Autumn 2022
Vol. 2, Issue. 2, Serial Number 4

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Alzahra University, North Sheikh Bahae St., Deh-e Vanak, Tehran, I. R. of Iran.

- Tel: (+9821)88041468
- Fax: (+9821)88090661
- P. Code: 1993893973
- University website address: <https://en.alzahra.ac.ir/>

Contact E-mail: Sportbj@alzahra.ac.ir
Alternate E-mail: Supportsbj@alzahra.ac.ir
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Sports Business Journal

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Book

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. SAGE Publications. <https://books.google.com/books?id=0TI8Ugvy2Z4C>

Book chapter

Blase, K., Van Dyke, M., Fixsen, D. L., & Bailey, F. (2012). Implementation science: Key concepts, themes, and evidence for practitioners in educational psychology. In *Handbook of Implementation Science for Psychology in Education* (pp. 13-34). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139013949.004>

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Schreiner, R., Daniel, J. o., Junginger , C., Hauser, T., & Hoener, O. (2017, 31 May-2 June). *Soccer coaches' education within the German tid program: perceptions of the quality and need for development*. World Conference on Science and Soccer - Rennes, France. https://wcss-rennes2017.sciencesconf.org/data/pages/Proceedings_WCSS_17.pdf

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Grohmann, K. (2014, July 14). Investment, youth planning are secret of Germany success. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-soccer-world-ger-success/investment-youth-planning-are-secret-of-germany-success-idUSKBN0FJ1K920140714>

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Chesler, D. (2013). *2001-2013 The Evolution of Youth Academy Programs* (Technical Director Course - International Academy Case Study, November, Issue. <http://resources.usoccer.com/n7v8b8j3/cds/Email/131106-TECHNICAL-SUMMARY-ICS-GERMANY-Chesler-v.1.pdf>

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Editor-in-Chief Lecture ---

We have many thanks to the merciful God for the spiritual, material, and continuous support of *Alzahra University*, as well as the scientific support of our colleagues in sports management for their referees and publishing specialized articles in business in sports. We are happy to have presented a relatively successful track record to the audience and sympathizers of the field.

In this Issue (Vol. 2, Issue. 2), the focus of researchers in submitting articles is on topics such as sports tourism, service quality, the role of elite sports in the development of business in sports, brand equity, and football academies and their role in developing women's sports. So, it includes a significant variety.

We hope that while maintaining the growing trust of sport management scientists, we can have more submitted papers on sports economics, sports sponsorship, sports rights, media, and social networks. We try to present high-quality articles for publication to the audience; also, we would like to thank the officials of the *Business Management Association of Iran* for cooperating in concluding the memorandum of collaboration.

We hope they continue their partnership more in participating in the editorial board, refereeing, and submitting their valuable articles. Here we promise that if the articles in our list of authors use reputable foreign authors they comply with the scope and other standards of the publication, their writing will be put in the fast-judging queue at the first opportunity. We also hope to use foreign authors' participation in the submitted papers in the next step to gain more visibility and obtain International Indexes. Also, we request that authors be more active in Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Publons, Academia, and more academic pages to reach more visibility.

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Iranian Sport Tourism Development Model

Mahdi Dastgerdi¹, Mahdi Salimi², Nader Ranjbar³, Rahim Khosromanesh^{4*}

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Imam Ali Safadasht Branch, Technical and Vocational University, Tehran, Iran.

² PhD in Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.

³ PhD in Sports Psychology, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

⁴ PhD in Sports Management, Faculty of Management and Accounting, Farabi campus, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The tourism industry is one of the most important industries of the new century, which is very dynamic and profitable. Sports tourism is an essential part of this industry. The research aimed to identify and categorize the sports attractions in Iran and to design a development model for the sports tourism industry.

Methodology: The research method was Grounded-Theory, with a systematic approach. The sampling method was theoretical sampling. In addition to studying literature, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 35 experts, including 19 faculty members of Iranian universities and 16 travel and tourism agency professionals, to achieve theoretical saturation.

Findings: In the first part of the research, the results showed that there are 11 types of sports attractions in Iran. The second part of the research showed that identifying and analyzing sports attractions, marketing, planning, and organizing to welcome tourists are the essential measures necessary for developing sports tourism. The development of sports tourism in section tourist welcoming is related to the development of the entire tourism industry and requires investment, planning, and organization. Marketing, providing necessary services, and creating distinct and exciting experiences for tourists and satisfying them are the key variables to success in the development of the industry. All these works require the cooperation and coordination of people and organizations in the sovereign, government, public and private sectors.

Originality: We have identified and categorized the types of sports attractions in Iran and presented a comprehensive development model for the development of the sports tourism industry.

Keywords

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Digital Marketing
Influencer Marketing
Tourists Welcoming
Viral Dissemination

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1. Introduction

The tourism industry is known as the sunrise industry in the 21st century. It will cultivate tourism as a strategic pillar industry that promotes the realization of better, faster, better, and more rapid economic and social development. And develop it to realize the prosperity of the people and alleviate poverty, and make the people more satisfied Modern service industry (Liang, 2020). There is a causal relationship running from tourism incomes to economic growth, which supports the premise that tourism benefits economic growth (Arslanturk, 2012) and then economic growth helps the development of the tourism sector, and the development of the tourism industry again helps the economic growth (Demiroz & Ongan, 2005). The tourism industry accounted for 10.3%, 5.3%, and 6.1% of the world's GDP in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively. This is while the share of the tourism industry in Iran's GDP was 5.8%, 3.1%, and 4.1%, in Turkey, it was 11.0%, 5.1%, and 7.3%, and in the United States, it was 8.8%, 4.8% and 5.5% (WTTC, 2022). According to this information, although Iran has many historical, natural, and cultural attractions, the tourism industry has not developed well. Therefore, it is necessary to look for a solution for the development of this industry in Iran.

Sports tourism is one of the fastest-growing market segments in the tourism industry and is receiving increased attention for its cultural, social, environmental, and economic impacts on destinations (Hritz & Ross, 2010). Sports tourism refers to travel away from home to play sport, watch sport, or visit a sport attraction, including both competitive and non-competitive activities (Delpy, 1998). Sport and tourism can play a significant role in the bringing together of communities. Sports tourism can create jobs for rural areas and prevent the increase in migration from rural areas to cities (Elahi et al., 2021; Jamieson, 2014). Ever since the field of sports tourism gained a lot of interest in the 1990s, there has been a consensus among scholars that there are two types of sports tourism: active and passive. In active sports tourism, the tourist physically participates in related activities or sports, such as rock climbing and adventure tourism. In stagnant or event sports tourism, the tourist is a spectator of the sports event, like the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup (Gibson et al., 2018). Sports events are a place-making tool in tourism (Ziakas, 2020). Although hosting sporting events has received considerable attention, the critical connection between sporting events and urban development has been highlighted. Also, most studies have focused on mega sporting events, and the controversy around the benefits of hosting mega sporting events is also increasing (Lu, 2021).

However, some cities and regions have been prosperous in leveraging sports events for tourism gain over time, and some have not (Sant et al., 2019). The social impacts of a large-scale sport tourism event can be economic benefits, community pride, community development, economic costs, traffic problems, and security risks (Kim et al., 2015). Even a small-scale sports event consistent with a community's infrastructure and human and cultural capital may be a viable form of sustainable tourism development (Gibson et al., 2012). Small-scale sporting events may have more positive consequences for the host community than large-scale events regarding economic and social impacts. The research results show that for each euro invested in Small-scale sporting events by the public administration, a financial return of €18 has been estimated (Duglio &

Beltramo, 2017). Research results show that active sports tourism is growing strongly. For example, sport heritage in the light of tourism has been developing dynamically (Malchrowicz-Mosko & Munsters, 2018). Surf tourism is a rapidly expanding market segment of the broader sports tourism industry (Martin & Assenov, 2012). Adventure tourism, including hiking, snorkeling (soft adventure), mountaineering, rock climbing, wilderness trekking (challenging experience), etc., are other types of active sports tourists (Janowski et al., 2021).

Holding sports events and creating different types of physical activities is the core of the sports industry (Khosromanesh, Khabiri, Khanifar, et al., 2019), which has additional trustees in Iran (Shariati et al., 2021). Many people, organizations, and companies also work in the supporting sector of this industry, which plays a vital role in its development (Alidoust Ghahfarokhi et al., 2021). The result of sports tourism requires multilateral cooperation between local officials, tourism agencies, and sports organizations (Wäsche, 2015). Therefore, sports organizations can maximize the tourism outcomes of significant events (Kennelly & Toohey, 2014). Excitement and safety are essential for sports event tourists (Uvinha et al., 2018). Holding exciting sports events requires sponsoring and financing, which is an important challenge for the organizers (Khosromanesh, Khabiri, Alidoust Ghahfarokhi, et al., 2019). Many people, organizations, and institutions play a role in cultural orientation (Khosromanesh et al., 2018) and culture can create constraints for the development of sports tourism (Hudson et al., 2010). All the socio-demographic characteristics significantly influence the sport-active tourist when choosing between a domestic and foreign tourism destination. This affects the type of accommodation chosen and the level of expenditure while traveling (Valek et al., 2014). The first touchpoint for potential tourists is the information shared by the destination. Although information search behavior is critical and reviewed from a general tourism perspective, less is known about sports tourism (Yamashita, 2022). Place images also influence the travel decisions of adventure tourists. For example, tourism marketers in places with high mountains should focus on adventure opportunities and place image dimensions that play a role in adventure tourism travel decisions (O'Reilly et al., 2022).

As mentioned above, there is a need to further define the epistemic boundaries of sports tourism for the 21st century (Van Rheenen et al., 2017). Most empirical research in sports tourism has been studied from an inductive perspective with a qualitative approach in Western countries. It has primarily focused on active sports tourism (Takata & Hallmann, 2021). Due to the shortage of sports tourism, not much theorizing has been done in this field (Gibson, 2017). Thus, substantial research gaps in sport tourism remain to be explored (Huggins, 2013). Overall, sports tourism is significant for job creation, alleviating poverty, and economic growth. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the types of sports attractions and provide a conceptual model for developing sports tourism. Using the Grounded Theory methodology (systematic approach), this work sought to identify the types of sports attractions in Iran and provide a conceptual model for the development of sports tourism in Iran. Our findings will introduce the sports attractions in Iran that can be a destination for international tourists. Also, a tourism development model in the sports industry will be presented, which can be used by researchers, managers, officials, and tourism agencies.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study Design

Considering that the research aimed to identify the types of sports attractions in Iran and provide a conceptual model for the development of sports tourism in Iran, the ground theory method used a systematic approach. In the systematic approach, which Corbin and Strauss support, there are three main stages of open coding: axial coding and selective coding. In the grounded theory method, everything can be considered data, including interviews, past papers, and observations. The sampling method in grounded theory is theoretical sampling. Data collection and analysis are done simultaneously until the researchers obtain theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). According to the instructions of Corbin and Strauss in this research, the emerging data determined the direction of the study, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with specialists in sport tourism, the tourism industry, sport management, and travel and tourism agencies. The initial questions were designed based on paradigm coding and according to the purpose of the research. By formulating the initial questions, we sought to identify causal conditions, central phenomenon, contextual conditions, and intervening constraints, action/interaction strategies, consequences, but at the same time, open and selective coding were also done.

2.2. Participants

In the research process, 19 faculty members of Iranian universities and 16 travel and tourism agency professionals were interviewed. The characteristics of the interviewees are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the interviewees.

| Specialty | Number | Education | | | Academic rank | | |
|---|--------|-----------|---------|-----|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| | | Bachelor | Masters | PhD | Assistant professor | Associate professor | Professor |
| Sport management | 8 | - | - | 8 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| Sport tourism | 6 | - | - | 6 | 6 | - | - |
| Tourism industry | 5 | - | - | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Travel and tourism agencies professionals | 16 | 7 | 5 | 4 | - | - | - |
| Total | 35 | 7 | 5 | 23 | 15 | 2 | 2 |

2.3. Materials and measures

Participants were briefed on the study and listened to an interview script read by the facilitator, which outlined the requirements of a successful discussion, such as staying on topic. The initial questions were informed by previous research and relevant evidence from personal experience. These initial questions were:

1. Why do tourists choose Iran's sports attractions as their destination? Or do not choose?
2. What capabilities are there in Iran to become a sports attraction?

3. What are the sports attractions of Iran?
4. What are the barriers to the development of sports tourism in Iran?
5. What are the roles of government, marketing, media, and culture in developing sports tourism?
6. What are the consequences of the development of the sports tourism industry?

A digital voice recorder (Lander PCM Recorder) was used to record interviews, and a compatible PC was required for data transference from the writer to the computer to enable data transcription.

2.4. Research procedure

We conducted semi-structured interviews with eight sports management specialists, five tourism industry specialists, six sports tourism specialists, and 16 travel and tourism agency professionals. Interviews were conducted with sports management and sports tourism specialists while reviewing past papers to identify different types of sports attractions in Iran. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with tourism industry specialists and travel and tourism agency professionals to design a development model for the sports tourism industry. First, preliminary coordination was done with them, and an interview was scheduled. The discussions took about three months. To better understand the conditions, 96 papers related to sports tourism in Iran were published in the magazines Sport Management Journal, Contemporary Studies on Sports Management, Sport Management and Development, Strategic Studies on Youth and Sports, Sports Business Journal, Research in Sport Management and Motor Behavior journal and Sport Management Studies were specially reviewed.

2.5. Data collection and analysis

By the grounded theory method, data collection and analysis are done for each interview, and this cycle continues until theoretical saturation is obtained. The data analysis method was constant comparisons. Comparisons were made at the concept level. To be more specific, data were broken down into manageable pieces. Each piece of datum was examined closely. If data in the new interview was conceptually like data from the past discussion, it was coded using the same conceptual name. Still, we were asking this: What else is being learned about this concept? This enabled us to elaborate on a concept in terms of its properties and dimensions, extending our understanding of the concept. In addition to making comparisons along conceptual lines, we continued to ask theoretically based questions that led to further theoretical sampling. The research was a continuous data collection process, followed by analysis and memo writing, leading to new questions and more data collection. In this approach, the original questions are modified repeatedly, considering what is being discovered during the analysis. While the initial question is vital in setting the study's parameters, it is not as important as the questions during the investigation intended to keep the analysis and the research moving forward. This entire data collection and analysis process was continued until we had satisfied that we had acquired sufficient data to describe each category or theme fully in terms of its properties.

And dimensions and that we had accounted for variation (what Corbin and Strauss named conceptual saturation) (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Analytical strategies of Strauss and Corbin were also used for data analysis, which are:

- Questioning
- Making comparisons
- Thinking about the various meanings of a word
- Using the flip-flop technique
- Making use of life experience
- Waving the red flag
- Looking at language
- Looking at emotions that are expressed
- Looking for words that indicate time
- Thinking in terms of metaphors and similes
- Looking for the negative case
- Using other analytical tools.

No software was employed in the analysis. The researchers carefully analyzed all the interviews and data according to the instructions of Corbin and Strauss.

2.6. Triangulation

Triangulation is one of the methods of better understanding qualitative data and a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study. Triangulation involves other parts of research. Data and investigator triangulation are two primary forms of triangulation in qualitative research: data triangulation for correlating people, time, and space, and investigator triangulation for connecting the findings from multiple researchers in a study (Denzin, 2017). There is a direct link between data triangulation and data saturation; the one (data triangulation) ensures the other (data saturation). In other words, data triangulation is a method to get to data saturation.

In this research, to data triangulation, experts in various fields of the sports industry, tourism industry, sports tourism, and travel and tourism agencies professionals were interviewed. Also, for investigator triangulation, after conducting each interview, data analysis was done by all the co-researchers. In addition, at different stages of the research, there associate Professors of sports management at the University of Tehran, Kharazmi University, and the University of Zanjan were asked to analyze the data (as secondary coders). All researchers and associate professors engaged and discussed coherence and transparency regarding the research process by describing critical elements and themes during data analysis. Finally, all assistant professors agreed with the pieces concluded and stated that the findings were sufficient and had reached the point of saturation. Therefore, triangulation has been done carefully, and the results have high reliability and validity.

3. Results

Considering that the purpose of the research was to identify and categorize the types of sports attractions in Iran and to design a development model for the development of the sports tourism industry, the findings are presented in different tables of open and selective coding, as well as the figure in which the designed model is shown.

Table 2. Open coding (types of sports attractions in Iran).

| Row | Themes | Subcategories | Concepts |
|-----|----------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Sports events | Mega sports event | Olympic and paralympic games, world cups (various sports), asian games, solidarity games of islamic countries, |
| | | International sports competitions | World leagues (example: volleyball world league), asian champions league, asian continental sports leagues, asian championship, world championship, grand prix competitions, commemorative sports competitions (such as the takhti cup), friendly international sports competitions |
| | | National championships | The national championship, student sports olympiads, national olympiads |
| | | National and provincial professional sports leagues | Persian Gulf league, azadegan league, basketball league, volleyball league, futsal league, wrestling league, |
| 2 | Visiting sports venues | Visiting sports complexes | Azadi sports complex, aftab enghelaba sports complex (athletics), samen sports complex of mashhad |
| | | Visiting football stadiums | Azadi football stadium in tehran, imam reza stadium in mashhad, naqshe jahan stadium in isfahan, ahvaz martyrs stadium, pars stadium in shiraz, yadgar imam stadium in tabriz |
| | | Visiting indoor stadiums | Azadi indoor stadium with 12,000 seats in tehran, pirizi indoor stadium in shiraz, shahid beheshti indoor stadium in mashhad, rezazadeh indoor stadium in ardabil, |
| 3 | Mountaineering and rock climbing | Mountaineering | Mount damavand, mount sabalan, mount sahand, oshtorankuh, kal-qedvis peak in dena mountains, ghashmasthan peak in dena mountains, hozdal peak in dena mountains, pazan pir peak in dena mountains, shirbad mountain, kuh-e shah, hazaran: a massif of the central iranian plateau, alam peak (iranian alps), shahankue mountain, neshaneh peak, mount taftan, stratovolcano, mount bazman, stratovolcano, martain and miniature mountains of nehbandan |
| | | Rock climbing | Rock climbing walls of abqad valley, the rock-climbing walls of the akhlamd valley, junqan rocks, tang-e darkesh varkesh rocks, samovar stone in alamkuh, bisoton wall, lajvar big wall, mount yafteh wall, tezerjan wall, pole khab wall, |
| 4 | Ski resorts | Snow ski resorts | Dizin ski resort, pooladkaf international ski resort in sepidan, tochal telecabin and resort, shemshak ski resort & complex, darband sar ski resort, abali ski resort, shirbad ski resort, fereydounshahr ski resort (the highest ski resort in iran), afus ski resort, khoshka ski resort in urmia, chelgard ski resort (kuhrang) in shahr-e kord, alvares ski resort in ardabil, kakan ski resort in yasouj, sahand ski resort in tabriz, tarik darreh ski resort in hamadan, papaei ski resort in zanzan, payam international ski resort in marand, khor ski resort in karaj, shazand ski resort, ski resort saqqez |

| Row | Themes | Subcategories | Concepts |
|-----|---------------------------|---|--|
| 5 | Riding | Grass ski resorts | Dizin grass ski resort, soffeh grass ski resort in isfahan, fandoqloo grass ski resort in ardabil |
| | | Car racing tracks | Speedway racing tracks, car rally tracks, hill car race & climb driving & slalom driving, motorsports relief fund tracks, karting tracks, |
| | | Motorcycle tracks | Motorcycle endurance race tracks, motorcycle road race tracks, speed motorbike racing tracks, rally motorcycle tracks, motocross tracks |
| | | Horse riding tracks | Equestrian complex of gonbad-e kavus, nowruzabad equestrian and polo complex, bam riding club, chitgar riding track, caspian equestrian club in kermanshah, stars hanging club in rasht, ferdowsi equestrian club in mashhad, sooran riding club in mashhad, |
| 6 | Water-based sports | Boating (kayak, canoe, canoe polo, dragoon boat, rowing, slalom, rafting) | Tehran's azadi lake, shourabil lake, balikhlou river in ardabil, soha lake in namin mountains in ardabil, germi gilarlu-lake-mughan in ardabil, chitgar lake (khalij-e fars) in tehran, anzali lagoon, sangachin championship base in anzali, zarivar lake in marivan, chaldarreh tourist complex in mashhad |
| | | Surfing and diving | Surfing on the beaches of chabahar, diving centers in kish, diving centers in qeshm, |
| | | Indoor recreational watersports | Mojhaye khorushan water park in mashhad, absar water complex in isfahan, bandar abbas water park, padideh-e shandiz water park in mashhad, water waves land in mashhad, aftab shore park in mashhad, |
| 7 | Training camps | Team sports training camps | Football camps, volleyball camps, basketball camps |
| | | Individual sports training camps | Athletics camps, wrestling camps (wrestling house), weightlifting camps, martial arts camps |
| | | Water-based sports camps | Jounoub recreational sports camp (bandar lengeh), babolsar beach-water sports camp, astara beach camp, bandar abbas beach camp, martian mountains camp of chabahar free-trade zone, |
| 8 | Sports medicine centers | National sports medicine centers | Iran football medical assessment and rehabilitation center (ifmarc) of iran football federation, national olympic academy assessment center |
| | | State sports medicine centers | Sports medicine research center in tehran university of medical sciences, sports physiology research center of baqiyatallah university of medical sciences, sports medicine research center of islamic azad university of najaf abad, sports medicine research center of hamadan university of medical sciences |
| | | Private sports medicine clinics | Iranmall medical assessment and rehabilitation center (ifmark), sports medicine department of ketab football academy, raspina sports medicine center, monali sports medicine clinic, rasa sports medicine group, say one sports medicine complex, west tehran sports medicine clinic, energy sports medicine clinic in megamall, fitfight club sports medicine clinic, afra sports medicine center |
| | | Academic centers | Research laboratories of faculty of physical education and sports sciences of the university of tehran, research laboratories of faculty of physical education and sports sciences of kharazmi university, research laboratories of sports sciences research institute |
| 9 | Scientific sports centers | Private sports scientific consulting centers | Movement behavior counseling centers, sports psychology counseling centers, physiology, and anthropometric counseling centers, correctional movement counseling centers |

| Row | Themes | Subcategories | Concepts |
|-----|----------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| 10 | Sports heritage | National sports museum of noc | Introducing the history of sports in Iran, the world, the Olympics, and Paralympics; submitting sports heroes and pioneers; displaying medals, trophies, and torches; displaying summer and winter sports, tools, equipment, sports clothes, etc. |
| | | Astan Quds Razavi Sports Museum | Medals donated to Astan Quds Razavi Museum, showcase of Pahlavani and Zoorkhaneh rituals |
| | | Private sports museums | Tabatabai Sports Museum |
| 11 | Sports goods and equipment | Sportswear | Selling all kinds of sports shoes, selling all types of sports clothes |
| | | Sports equipment | Selling all kinds of sports balls, selling bodybuilding equipment, |
| | | Sports supplements | Selling all kinds of sports supplements, |
| | | Sports medical equipment | Selling all kinds of sports medical equipment, selling all types of laboratory sports equipment |

Table 3. Open coding (influential factors in the development of sports tourism).

| | Themes | Subcategories | Concepts |
|---|--------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Sports attractions | Active sports tourism | Mountaineering and Rock climbing, Ski Resorts, Riding, Water-Based Sports, Training camps |
| | | Passive sports tourism | Sports events, Visiting Sports Venues, Sports Medicine Centers, Scientific sports centers, Sports Heritage, Sports goods, and equipment |
| 2 | Marketing | Identifying and analyzing sports attractions | Identifying existing sports attractions, identifying potential sports attractions, analyzing existing and possible interests, and determining the sports attractions needed by the target markets |
| | | Identifying and analyzing target markets | Identifying existing target markets, identifying potential target markets, Analyzing existing and potential target markets, Determination of target markets according to existing and potential sports attractions |
| | | Advertising | Direct advertising (Creating attractive content for advertising in different languages, Using Out-of-home advertising in the target market, Advertising on the national televisions of the target countries, using virtual platforms based on the presence of the target market on these platforms, using social media influencers of target markets, Attending international tourism exhibitions, etc.), Indirect advertising (Promoting sports attractions via induced-Films, inviting political figures to visit sports attractions, inviting famous athletes to visit sports attractions, inviting favorite artists to visit sports attractions) |
| | | Marketing research | Identifying the apparent needs of sports tourism in the target markets, Identifying the hidden needs of sports tourism of the target markets, Identifying the tendencies and interests of the target markets, Identifying and analyzing competitors in target markets, |
| | | Survey and evaluation | Surveying the experiences of previous tourists, to evaluate the level of satisfaction of earlier tourists about security, excitement, culture, attractiveness, costs, transportation |
| | | Branding | Planning to position Iran's sports tourism brand, intending to promote Iran's sports tourism brand, planning to develop Iran's sports tourism brand |
| | | Website of Iran's tourist attractions | Providing comprehensive information about Iran's tourist attractions in different languages, two-way interaction with foreign tourists, providing information about security, culture, religion, prices, and |

| Themes | Subcategories | Concepts |
|--|--|--|
| 3 Planning and organizing for welcoming sports tourists | | history to tourists before traveling to Iran, informing about betting capacities on horse riding, |
| | Security and safety | Coordinating with the police to ensure the life, financial, sexual, and psychological security of tourists; Allocation of a particular phone number for the police for foreign tourists (proficiency in different international languages), providing road security, having freedom and security in privacy, providing guidance and counseling to tourists, |
| | Accommodation | The existence of sufficient and suitable hotels, the presence of convenient inns, the fact of appropriate ecotourism places |
| | Transportation | The existence of appropriate national and international airports, the presence of subways in big cities, the existence of railways, the existence of safe roads, the presence of cruise ships on the beaches, the fact of enough airplanes, trains, trams, wagons, taxis, and buses |
| | Coordination with the ministry of health | Coordinating with the Ministry of Health to provide timely medical services to tourists, determining a particular contact number for answering and advising tourists |
| | Creating a culture of welcoming tourists | Using national media to promote the culture of welcoming tourists, Using the provincial media to promote the culture of accepting tourists, using tribal heads to promote the culture of welcoming tourists, using reference people to promote the culture of welcoming tourists |
| | Human resources training | Training the police to ensure the security of tourists, Training ambassadors and employees of Iranian embassies in target market countries, Training tourist guides, Training drivers of linear and non-linear taxis, Training managers and employees of hotels, guesthouses, and inns, and public training through the national media |
| | Enact special rules and regulations for the tourism industry | Passing the necessary criminal laws for those who disturb the security of tourists, approving laws facilitating the provision of services to tourists, approving protective laws required to ensure the safety of tourists, supporting laws encouraging investment in the tourism industry |
| | Differentiating sports attractions | increasing the quantity and quality of attractive sports events, using famous players from the target market countries in professional sports leagues of Iran, comprehensive media coverage of engaging sports events, increasing the quantity and quality of active sports tourism attractions |
| | Private sector development | Identifying and introducing sports tourism product packages with customers to investors, persuading capitalists (especially sports heroes) to invest in the sports tourism industry, Meaningful support for investors, increasing investment security in the tourism industry, providing tax and insurance discounts and significant facilities to start-up or small private units |
| 4 Creating attractive experiences | Using international relations | Using international agreements, Activating Iranian embassies in target market countries to promote tourism marketing programs, Removing international travel restrictions to Iran |
| | Feeling safe and secure | Police advise tourists, The existence of a direct telephone line between tourists and the exceptional tourist police, Immediate and effective presence of the police in case of tourists' need, support tourists by the general public, Support the tourists by culture |
| | Enjoying | Experiencing excitement, experiencing fun, experiencing entertainment, getting to know new information, a variety of entertainment experiences, having multiple choices of entertainment |

| Themes | Subcategories | Concepts | |
|--------|---|--|--|
| | Hospitable | Proper interaction of people with tourists, adequate interaction for government officials with tourists, appropriate interaction of tourism workers with tourists, | |
| | Receiving timely and appropriate services | Providing suitable banking services, providing travel services, providing convenient hotel services, providing communication services with the country of origin (Internet and telecommunications), proper transportation, helpful advice and guidance, providing appropriate medical services | |
| 5 | Viral dissemination of experiences by previous tourists | Direct dissemination of experiences | sharing travel pictures and clips in virtual space, expressing travel experiences in virtual space, expressing travel experiences with friends and family |
| | | Republishing experiences | Re-sharing travel pictures and clips in cyberspace, Re-expressing travel experiences in virtual space by others, Re-expressing experiences by people around and acquaintances to others, |
| 6 | Destination brand | Brand positioning | Awareness of Iran's sports attractions, the significant value of traveling to Iran, Distinctiveness of traveling to Iran |
| | | Brand promotion | The competency of Iran's sports attractions, increasing trust in Iranians, increasing the attractiveness and fun of Iran's sports attractions |
| | | Brand development | Increasing tourist attractions in the destination, improving services in the goal |
| 7 | Target markets | Current markets | Iraq, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Armenia, |
| | | Potential markets | Russia, China, Germany, the United States of America, CIS countries, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, France, Italy, India, Brazil, Argentina, Japan |

Table 4. Examples of selective coding.

| Example quotes | Open coding | Selective coding |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| “Security is an important issue. When tourists visit Iran, their security must be ensured in every way, especially ladies. With the bad propaganda against Iran at the international level, if someone in Iran harasses tourists, the tourist will soon associate negative propaganda against the Iranian people in his/her mind. The Iranian police should have a plan to ensure the security of tourists, consider a dedicated telephone line for tourists and respond to tourists in common international languages and give them advice.” P02 | Coordinating with the police | |
| “It is also imperative to have safe trips on the country's roads. If a few tourists are killed in road accidents, it will harm the destination's brand. Road trips within the country should be safe for tourists” P11 | Providing road security | |
| “It is necessary to have 5-star hotels in big cities to accommodate tourists from wealthy countries such as Russia, Germany, China, France, etc. We should have enough 5-star hotels, four-star, three-star, two-star, and one-star hotels, inns, and local rental houses in medium-sized, small cities, towns, and villages. It is not possible to take the tourist to the city of Si-Sakht for mountaineering but not have a place to stay” P22 | Accommodation | Planning and organizing for welcoming sports tourists |
| “If we want to host the Asian Nations Cup, we must have enough 5-star hotels in the host cities such as Tabriz, Mashhad, Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Ahvaz,” P01 | | |
| “Suppose we host the Asian Football Nations Cup and many people from Japan, Saudi Arabia, China, and other Asian countries entered Iran. Transportation is critical; coordination must be made beforehand, and a fair | Transportation | |

| Example quotes | Open coding | Selective coding |
|--|--|------------------|
| number of buses and taxis for transportation. Sports tourists should be considered," P04 | | |
| "Our most important weakness in developing the tourism industry is that we have not done proper marketing. We have not taken advantage of marketing science and new technologies." P08 | Marketing | |
| "First, we must know Iran's existing and potential sports attractions well, categorize and analyze them, analyze their capacity and attractiveness, then enter into other stages of marketing" P06 | Identifying and analyzing sports attractions | |
| "Current sports tourists should be surveyed to find our strengths and weaknesses, and this work should be done permanently. A permanent survey of former tourists is one of the basic marketing principles in the tourism industry." P19 | Survey of current sports tourists | |
| "The target markets should be identified and analyzed, now, the United States, Germany, Russia, and China are the biggest markets in the tourism industry, but we have a small share of this market, almost nothing! These markets should also be worked on. At least we should have a larger share of the tourism market of China and Russia because we have good diplomatic relations with these countries; currently, Iraq has become the biggest tourism market for us, but the same number of Iranians also travel to Turkey, but Turkey receives three times as many Iranians from Russia and one and a half times as many tourists from Germany, ... Analysis of target markets should be done well," P16 | Analysis of target markets Identifying and analyzing competitors in target markets, | Marketing |
| "The destination brand and the mentality that is formed in the target market about Iran's sports and tourism attractions will determine the number of future tourists in Iran, so special attention should be paid to the destination brand" P17 | Branding | |
| "Advertising is an important part of marketing efforts, although it is not all marketing. Social networks, websites, and creating attractive content should be used well in advertising" P18 | Advertising | |

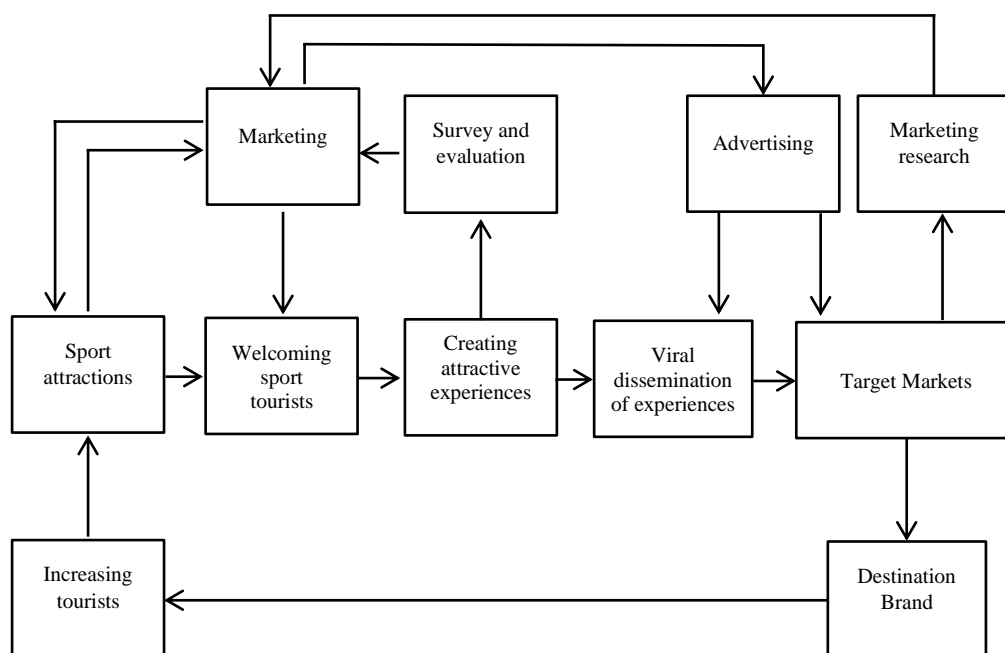


Figure 1. Development model of the sports tourism industry.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The research aimed to identify and categorize the sports attractions in Iran and to design a development model for the sports tourism industry. In the first part of the research, the findings showed that there are 11 types of sports attractions in Iran, which are: Sports events, Visiting Sports Venues, Mountaineering, Rock climbing, Ski Resorts, Riding, Water-Based Sports, Training camps, Sports Medicine Centers, Scientific sports centers, Sports Heritage, Sports goods, and equipment. There are many attractions for each of these sectors in Iran, examples of which are given in [Table 2](#), which can be considered as a brief introduction to the essential sports attractions in Iran. Identifying and introducing destination sports attractions to tourists is the starting point of sports tourism ([Yamashita, 2022](#)). Exploiting these tourist attractions requires planning, organization, and many continuous actions. As the findings showed, sports events are only one of the attractions of sports tourism. Domestic and international competitions and leagues in the fields of football, volleyball, futsal, basketball, and wrestling are among the most important sports events in Iran; of course, success in them requires the cooperation of many people, organizations, and institutions ([Seifpanahi Shabani et al., 2022](#)). The development of the sports goods and equipment industry ([Khabiri et al., 2020](#)), sports museums, sports medicine centers and laboratories, and sports camps are other sports attractions that have not yet reached sufficient maturity.

Also, in some sports attractions, Iran has strong competitors to attract tourists to the region. Still, in some cases, due to its geographical location, there is a very high capacity

to attract tourists, such as adventure sports attractions. Incidentally, adventure tourism has grown exponentially recently (Janowski et al., 2021). In general, Iran has excellent potential for developing active sports tourism, and even in the short term, it can grow significantly in this sector. Iran's high capacity in nature, historical, health, and adventure tourism can also help the development of sports tourism.

The second part of the research showed that identifying and analyzing sports attractions, marketing, planning, and organizing to welcome tourists are the most critical measures for developing sports tourism. Of course, marketing and preparations for welcoming tourists include many actions, summarized in Table 3 and Figure 1. In realizing the market needs of tourism, the critical role belongs to marketing, which through its activities, primarily through marketing mix, should identify and differentiate tourism products (compared to the competition) and thus implement its strategic objectives. Marketing in tourism has its characteristics that derive from the fact that the product in tourism is a service. Besides, the invisibility of a product gives even more importance to tourism marketing (Ciriković, 2014; Ganjkanloo et al., 2021). Tourism marketing seeks to make tourist destinations better places to live in and better places to visit (Font & McCabe, 2017). Marketing sports tourism requires sport and the host destination to be cross-leveraged to optimize the quality of experiences that the sports tourist obtains. Cross-leveraging sports and goals are facilitated when vertical and horizontal alliances are formed among sports and tourism providers (Harrison-Hill & Chalip, 2005). Destination marketers in adventure tourism settings should understand that the key to successful destination marketing is to develop destination loyalty among Non-decision makers by satisfying their expected destination attributes while at the same time providing extraordinary experiences that exceed the expectations of the decision maker (Sato et al., 2018).

Marketing research is an integral part of marketing. Knowing the profile and surveying the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of tourists is considered an essential part of tourism marketing. The shape of the adventure tourist will be beneficial for planning sustainable tourism (Rojo-Ramos et al., 2021). Most characteristics demonstrated in previous conceptualizations of the “adventure tourist” have changed. These changes are significant and should be considered in general discussions of the current state of adventure tourism, as well as in marketing and management strategies and the future development of adventure tourism operations (Giddy, 2018). Advertising is another essential part of marketing, and destination marketers must be aware of the importance of designing tailored advertising messages for different tourists (Fallah Kazemi & Atghia, 2021; Jiang et al., 2020). Digital marketing, viral marketing, and influencer marketing are new marketing methods that should be used well along with traditional methods. Digital media, content, and mobile advertising are among the trends in digital marketing and, thus, allow countries to market their attractions to tourists in this digital era (Mkwizu, 2019). Influencer marketing has also impacted all industries, including travel and tourism. Many destination management organizations leverage online personalities' influence for diverse purposes, including attracting visitors to their destinations (Femenia-Serra & Gretzel, 2020).

Tourism development is not only marketing and advertising; it should be prepared to welcome tourists with proper planning and organization to create extraordinary experiences by providing appropriate service packages. The tourism industry is highly dynamic, and while it can grow explosively and become the number one industry in any country, it can also disappear quickly. The dynamism and extraordinary profitability of the tourism industry have led to intense competition between countries in this field. Therefore, preparation for welcoming tourists and creating unique experiences (Sato et al., 2018) is crucial in addition to marketing (Ciriković, 2014). The basic requirements of welcoming tourists include security and safety (Uvinha et al., 2018), accommodation, transportation, a culture of welcoming tourists (Hudson et al., 2010), health services, financial services, and telecommunication and Internet services. To provide these infrastructures and requirements, a lot of investments should be made, and a lot of coordination should be done between the government, the public, sports organizations/institutions, and the private sector (Wäsche, 2015). Employee and service environment are the most important criteria that affect service experience. Therefore, tourism factories and international tourist hotels must invest resources in training and managing employees to equip them with the specialized knowledge needed to deliver a high-quality service experience (Hsieh & Chuang, 2020). Enjoyment and excitement (Uvinha et al., 2018) are other factors in creating extraordinary experiences in sports tourism, which sports marketers should pay special attention to in designing sports attractions.

Viral dissemination of content plays an essential role in the success of destination marketing and branding in the tourism industry. Social media has become a relevant content dissemination channel in recent years, and each user can potentially reach others. Therefore, marketers are looking for ways to encourage customers to share their content on social networks (Dafonte-Gómez et al., 2020). Suppose sports tourism marketing campaigns work well and provide distinct and exciting experiences to sports tourists. In that case, these experiences are expected to be shared by tourists on social networks and spread virally in target markets (Bampo et al., 2008). Finally, success in destination branding (brand positioning, brand promotion, and brand development) in target market countries will increase visitors and tourists to the destination country (Kaushal et al., 2019).

In conclusion, tourism is one of the most important industries of the new century, which is very dynamic and profitable, and sports tourism is an integral part of this industry. The development of sports tourism in section tourist welcoming is related to the development of the entire tourism industry and requires investment, planning, and organization. Marketing, providing necessary services, and creating distinct and exciting experiences for tourists and satisfying them is the key to success in the development of this industry. All these works require the cooperation and coordination of people and organizations in the sovereign, government, public and private sectors.

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الگوی توسعه صنعت گردشگری ورزشی ایران

مهدی دستگردی^۱، مهدی سلیمی^۲، نادر رنجبر^۳، رحیم خسرومنش^۴

- ^۱ استادیار، گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه فنی و حرفه‌ای، واحد امام علی صفادشت، تهران، ایران.
- ^۲ دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه فردوسی مشهد، مشهد، ایران.
- ^۳ دکتری روانشناسی ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه تهران، تهران، ایران.
- ^۴ دکترای مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده مدیریت و حسابداری، دانشکده‌گان فارابی، دانشگاه تهران، تهران، ایران.

کلیدواژه

استقبال گردشگران
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برند مقصد

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: صنعت گردشگری یکی از مهمترین صنایع قرن جدید است که بسیار پویا و سودآور است و گردشگری ورزشی قسمت مهمی از این صنعت است. هدف پژوهش شناسایی و دسته‌بندی انواع جاذبه‌های ورزشی در ایران و طراحی مدل توسعه برای صنعت گردشگری ورزشی بود.

روش: روش‌شناسی تحقیق، گردن‌د تئوری، رویکرد سیستماتیک بود. روش نمونه‌گیری از نوع نمونه‌گیری نظری بود و به منظور دستیابی به اشباع نظری، علاوه بر مطالعه متون تخصصی، با ۳۵ نفر از متخصصان شامل ۱۹ نفر از اعضای هیئت علمی دانشگاه‌های ایران و ۱۶ نفر از فعالان آژانس‌های مسافرتی و جهانگردی، مصاحبه‌های نیمه ساختاریافته انجام شد.

یافته‌ها: در بخش اول تحقیق یافته‌ها نشان داد که ۱۱ نوع جاذبه ورزشی در ایران وجود دارد. یافته‌های بخش دوم تحقیق نشان داد که شناسایی و تحلیل جاذبه‌های ورزشی، بازاریابی، برنامه‌ریزی و سازماندهی برای استقبال از گردشگران از مهمترین اقدامات لازم برای توسعه گردشگری ورزشی است. توسعه گردشگری ورزشی در بخش استقبال گردشگران با توسعه کل صنعت گردشگری مرتبط بوده و نیازمند سرمایه‌گذاری، برنامه‌ریزی و سازماندهی است. بازاریابی، ارائه خدمات لازم و خلق تجربیات متمایز و هیجان‌انگیز برای گردشگران و جلب رضایت آنها رمز موفقیت در توسعه این صنعت است. همه این کارها مستلزم همکاری و هماهنگی افراد و سازمان‌ها در بخش‌های حاکمیتی، دولتی، عمومی و خصوصی است.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: نویسندگان در این مقاله انواع جاذبه‌های ورزشی در ایران را شناسایی و دسته‌بندی کردند و یک الگوی توسعه جامع برای توسعه صنعت گردشگری ورزشی ارائه کرده‌اند.

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Identification and Analysis the Process of Co-creation Experience in Sports Tourism of Iran

Samaneh Rastgoo¹, Hasan Bahrololoum^{2*}, Reza Andam², Hadi Bagheri³, Seyedeh Azra Mikazemi⁴

¹ PhD Student in Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education, Shahrood University of Technology, Shahrood, Iran.

² Associate Professor Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education, Shahrood University of Technology, Shahrood, Iran.

³ Assistant Professor Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education, Shahrood University of Technology, Shahrood, Iran.

⁴ Associate Professor Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, University of Birjand, Birjand, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The present study investigates the experience co-creation process in Iran's sports tourism.

Methodology: This study is a type of mixed research. Ten experts and researchers in the field of co-creation in sports tourism participated in the qualitative stage, while 15 specifically chosen tourism professionals participated in the quantitative phase. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data for the qualitative section of the study, and a researcher-structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the quantitative section. These data were used to create the research model based on the DEMATEL technique's results.

Findings: Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data, and the results revealed six organizing themes such as market research, creation of dynamic organization, working team development, conversation, and interaction, as well as creation of shared commitment and participation. The quantitative analysis revealed that the most effective and impressionable components are the creation of shared responsibility and a dynamic organization, respectively. Market research is the minimum significant component, while the creation of active organization is the maximum.

Originality: The limited participation and interaction of visitors in many disciplines are obstacles to the growth of sports tourism in Iran. The purpose of the current study was to use the DEMATEL technique and the thematic analysis method to determine the significant and influential factors that contribute to the development of sports tourism.

Keywords

Co-Creation
DEMATEL Technique
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1. Introduction

The tourism sector has emerged as a significant force in the global economy in the twenty-first century as one of the most lucrative businesses and a critical factor in the growth of the worldwide economy. The World Tourism Organization's data show that tourism has grown to be the world's most significant source of revenue (Pourmohammadi et al., 2015). Sports tourism, a new category in Iran, like many other areas in this subject, is one of the most significant sectors of the global tourist industry and has recognized as an employment-generating, income-earning and influential industry with broad and complex consequences and effects in the context of human societies (Moradi Doliskani & Atghia, 2021). Sports tourism, a new category in Iran, like many other areas in this subject, is one of the most significant sectors of the global tourist industry. According to the currently available data, the advanced nations of the world earn more than 20 billion dollars annually from sports tourism. However, despite its distinctive tourism, natural attractions, and historical, civilizational, and cultural relics dating back many thousand years, Iran has not been able to secure a position deserving of attention.

Nevertheless, despite the significant costs incurred by the Ministry of Sports and Youth, the National and International Sports Committee, Federations, and other related institutions for organizing sports events, these organizations will not benefit financially because of the small participation of some interested organizations, visitors, and locals. Additionally, sports tourism has been ignored up until now due to a lack of expertise, administration, and clear and defined strategic planning. Many authorities are still unsure of this sector's place in the tourist business (Nateghi et al., 2017).

Accordingly, finding effective tactics to increase visitor engagement in developing the sports tourism business is crucial. One way to do this is to focus on the co-creation phenomena. For tourist services, the idea of co-creation, which entails both consumer participation and communication that links the client to the experience, is exceptionally vital. To uncover possible chances for co-creating value with the client, the structure of the companies participating in the tourism services industry should be such that it facilitates such interactions. The company needs to improve the experiences for its personnel to reduce the co-creation experiences with the customers. As a result, the company should work to foster settings that encourage co-creation and provide conditions that allow for effective employee-customer engagement, such as providing the required training, information infrastructure, and other resources (Terblanche, 2014). Co-creation also involves customer and organization value-creating activities that result in creating goods or services that ultimately provide consumers with more pleasurable consumer experiences (Xie et al., 2008). And prefers individuals as the starting point of knowledge rather than businesses (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Experience co-creation can therefore be characterized as having a focused interaction with consumers and incorporating the personal resources of visitors with businesses (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). "Experience co-creation" refers to businesses and visitors collaborating to develop an experience that eventually adds value (Mathis et al., 2016).

Studies have revealed the many elements of experience co-creation. According to (Campos et al., 2018) co-creating, the visitor experience involves two fundamental dimensions: active participation and interpersonal interaction. Additionally, because the tourism sector is increasingly focused on customer experiences, interactions between visitors and the institution and their involvement in the background and attitudes toward sharing it with others are crucial to the co-creation process (Oyner & Korelina, 2016). Also, tourists can participate in the co-creation process by sharing their knowledge and experiences with networks of family, friends, and anonymous internet users and social networks (Buonincontri et al., 2017).

Considering what was mentioned above, how to enhance the tourism experience and draw in more tourists through co-creation is one of the most crucial concerns in sports tourism. In this regard, the foundation for improving the caliber of sports tourism and drawing more visitors to Iran would be the adequate performance of sports managers and authorities associated with the tourism business. However, the overall experience co-creation process has received less attention than the components of active participation and interaction with tourists. In addition, it is possible to correctly prepare to utilize all of the potentials by recognizing the elements that influence the co-creation process and lowering the risk and implementation costs of tourist initiatives. It is important to note that there is a significant study gap in experience co-creation and that existing studies solely focus on identifying antecedent and consequence components. Therefore, it is imperative to carry out this research, and the subsequent study seeks to make a minor advancement in the growth of sports tourism by defining the constituent parts of the co-creation process. In the sphere of experience co-creation, there are primarily two sorts of theoretical and practical gaps—theoretically, few studies on experience co-creation in sports tourism, particularly in Iran. The global statistics demonstrate that compared to regional rivals like Turkey, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, Iran does not rank exceptionally high in terms of tourist competitiveness (Schwab et al., 2015). All these statistics, along with the findings from studies done in the field of tourism, show that until now, Iran has not placed much emphasis on using the potential already present in the tourists' co-creation experience. This shortcoming will be explored as a practical gap in this research. Therefore, the primary study question is what the experience co-creation process is and how it operates regarding effectiveness and impressionability. While reviewing the co-creation literature, an attempt was made to create a model of the components' influence and impressionability to provide an answer to this question. Discovering this process and portraying it as a model may significantly add to the scientific depth of the fields of sports tourism and sports management and can serve as a starting point for more research in this area.

2. Theoretical background

A literature review survey reveals that most studies have only analyzed a few of the co-creation phenomenon's features, ignoring its processes. Some of these research, like (Buonincontri et al., 2017). They examined the antecedents, while others, like Lončarić et al. (2019) examined the consequences. Co-creation with a unilateral focus on the

consumer or the organization has also been the subject of several studies (Chen et al., 2015; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Trischler et al., 2017).

Some studies have been performed related to the current research (Bentzen, 2020) demonstrated that high-level, ongoing participation improves co-creation results in terms of invention, better solutions, and participant trust. The findings achieved by Bhardwaj and Sharma (2020) also support the idea that interactions between visitors and suppliers of tourism services and tourists' active participation impact co-creation. Hassanzadeh et al. (2021) focused on the participation, knowledge sharing, skill, creativity, and trust of visitors in co-creating customer value to foster citizenship behavior and tourist loyalty. Rahmati (2020) research indicated that co-creation development in the tourism sector depends on strengthening organizations, infrastructures, market dynamics, and consumer behavior. According to (Lončarić et al., 2019) market experts frequently share their tourism experiences and participate in the co-creation of tourism experiences. The passive nature of the local community's participation was demonstrated by (Giriwati et al., 2019). As a result, information is provided to people at the planning stage, and people participate in developing and planning the tourist accommodations and the research team's evaluation of the community throughout the development stage. According to Chen et al. (2019) customer participation affects value co-creation and promotes customer satisfaction and loyalty. In a study titled introducing the co-creation participation model in the tourism market, Irani et al. (2018) indicated that two forms of overt and covert participation exist that encourage consumer involvement in co-creation activities with the goal of sharing information and experience generation. According to Berrada (2017) Moroccan tourists who use the Internet believe that they can provide value by participating in the co-creation process, which results in satisfaction. Today's travellers seek experiences that are meaningful, supportive, interactive, engaging, authentic, personalized, and unique. Buonincontri and Micera (2016) reported how adopting an intelligent strategy increases the tourist experience co-creation by promoting engagement with tourists, raising their level of active participation throughout the background, and encouraging the sharing of experiences among tourists. According to Lee (2012) the degree of involvement of tourists influences both their satisfaction and desire to participate, as well as the result of the co-creation process.

The lack of a thorough description of the elements of the experience co-creation in sports tourism can be found in the available literature. The importance of undertaking such research can thus be demonstrated by identifying such aspects and the degree and manner of their influence and impressionability. This study's purpose is to answer the question of how tourists co-create their experiences.

3. Methodology

The present study is a practical one in terms of the purpose and a mixed exploratory one in terms of the data collection method, which has been carried out in two stages (qualitative-quantitative). In this approach, weaknesses and limitations of each quantitative and qualitative section were compensated for helping the researcher in answering questions that may not be responded to using the quantitative or qualitative

approaches alone (Niazi, 2011). For this purpose, first, the process of experience co-creation in sports tourism was qualitatively identified via thematic analysis. The data was collected using the online library method, searching databases, and reviewing the research background corresponding to the research topic. Next, in-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts to identify the process of experience co-creation. Participants in the present in-depth and semi-structured interviews were scientific and academic experts (with a history executive and research activities in tourism), co-creation specialists, travel agency managers, and tour guides. The purposeful sampling method was used in interviews and data collection, and thus, the interviews continued until the codes reached theoretical saturation. Based on theoretical saturation, ten people were interviewed for 35 to 70 minutes. The interview analysis method was such that the critical phrases or concepts were first classified as primary codes through an in-depth study of the transcripts of the interviews. Then, different codes were classified as recurring themes, and the initial codes relative to each primary theme were identified and collected. To improve the validity and reliability of the data, two review methods were employed by the participants and non-participant experts. Two interviewees were asked to review the final analysis report and the topics obtained in the review method and to express their opinions. According to these people, the research findings essentially highlighted the process of experience co-creation in Iranian sports tourism. However, in the review by non-participant experts with the cooperation of 3 faculty members, achievements were reviewed, and after receiving corrective comments, the editing was concluded. The codes were manually examined in this study for classification and coding purposes.

In the quantitative part of the research, the DEMATEL technique was used to analyze the causal relationships between the identified factors. This decision-making method is based on pairwise comparisons that take advantage of experts' judgments about the extracted components. The DEMATEL technique is used among the various multi-criteria decision-making methods because this technique uses relational feedback; each element can affect and be influenced by other aspects at equal, higher, and lower levels. The importance and weight of each model component are determined not only by upstream and downstream factors but also by all existing factors or the whole model. Also, this technique examines the effect of criteria on each other and determines their relationships. This methodology confirms the relationship between variables and helps to show the relationship between variables by creating a directional graph (Azar et al., 2019). The advantage of this method over other multi-criteria decision-making methods is its transparency in reflecting the interrelationships between a wide range of components so that experts can better express their views on the direction and intensity of effects between factors. In addition, one of the most important reasons for its widespread use in problem-solving processes is that this method structures complex factors in the form of cause-and-effect groups. By dividing a wide range of complex factors into cause-and-effect groups, the decision-maker is better positioned to understand relationships. This issue leads to a better understanding of elements' position and role in the process of mutual influence (Ghaobadi et al., 2019).

To implement DEMATEL, the following steps are performed:

Identifying the constituent elements, performing pairwise comparisons, calculating the average of opinions, normalizing the direct relation matrix, calculating the complete relation matrix, creating the causal diagram, calculating the threshold value, obtaining the IRM diagram, and final analysis.

A pairwise comparison questionnaire (between identified factors) was used to collect quantitative data. To answer this questionnaire, 15 experts were selected using purposive sampling. Using the opinion of a small number of experts in the field guarantees the validity of the research (Azar et al., 2019). These individuals included academic experts in sports management and tourism, skilled and practical experts in the field of tourism and co-creation, and researchers who carried out the pairwise comparison of the examined components using a 5-value scale (0 to 4). The DEMATEL software was also employed for the DEMATEL technique (behin-tasmim.ir).

4. Results

4.1. Part one (qualitative section of the research): results obtained via thematic analysis

The demographic characteristics in the qualitative section indicated that 6 participants were male, and the mean age of participants was 38.2 (years). Moreover, the education level of 5 participants was doctorate, 3 were master's graduates, and 2 had bachelor's degrees. Three participants majored in sports management: seven studied strategic management, educational management, business management, and geography and tourism planning. Furthermore, four of the research samples were researchers in the field of co-creation, two were academics with a background in tourism activities, and four were managers in travel agencies or sports tourism tour guides.

In the present research, theme coding was done in three stages: primary, organizing, and global. Ultimately, 34 essential and six organizing themes were obtained, which were associated with the worldwide theme of the experience co-creation process in Iranian sports tourism, as presented in Table 1. It should be noted that P in this study indicates the interviewed individuals.

Table 1. The basic and organizing themes of experience co-creation process in sports tourism.

| Organizing theme | Basic theme | Source |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Market research | Identifying the tourists' needs | P1, P6 Javashi Jadid et al. (2020) |
| | Analyzing and interpreting tourism market data | P1 |
| | Studying the experience quality | P8, P10 |
| | Implementing customer relationship management | P1, P4 Javashi Jadid et al. (2020) |
| | Studying the competitors' status | Rahmati (2020) |
| | Studying the target community to divide the market | P5, P6, P7, P8 |
| Creation of dynamic organization | Determining the interaction policies with others | P1, P3, P6, P7 |
| | Using flat organizational structures with less hierarchy | P1, P3 |
| | Developing a staff development unit | P1, P7 |

| Organizing theme | Basic theme | Source |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| | Striving for organizational excellence through learning and improving the service delivery quality | P6, P8 |
| | Collaborative decision-making as a critical organizational principle | P7, P8 |
| Working team development | Using tourists based on their skills and expertise in performing tours | P8 |
| | Determining roles and purposefully work division between members | P5, P8 |
| | Members recruitment based on pre-defined goals | P5 |
| | Determining the interaction and knowledge exchange procedures (explicit and implicit) | Stacey (2007) |
| | Determining dispute resolution and decision-making procedures | P7 |
| | Attracting the employees' collaboration | Hamel and Breen (2007) |
| Conversation and interaction | Multilateral communication | P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P10 Bhardwaj and Sharma (2020) / Buoincontri and Micera (2016) / Buoincontri et al. (2017) / Campos et al. (2018) / Pashaei et al. (2019) |
| | Social networks-based communications | P1, P5, P7 Irani et al. (2018) / Buoincontri et al. (2017) |
| | Accurate and targeted Conversations between the tourism institute representatives and tourists | P2, P5, P9 |
| | Brainstorming conferences and sessions | P7 |
| | Holding amicable gatherings with tourists | P7 |
| | Using collective idea generation in programs | Hamel and Breen (2007) |
| | Getting verbal and written feedback from tourists | P7, P9 |
| | Collaborative goal-setting to increase the members' commitment | P1, P10 |
| Creation of shared commitment | Delegating authority and assigning tasks to members based on their ability and expertise | P1, P8 |
| | Building mutual trust among members | P3 |
| | Identity formation to members using group performance-related feedback | P7 |
| | Determining the acceptable dos and don'ts of teamwork to express responsible behavior | P1 |
| | Tourists' cooperation and participation | P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8 (Bhardwaj & Sharma, 2020) / (Giriwati et al., 2019) / (Lončarić et al., 2019) / (Buoincontri & Micera, 2016) / (Campos et al., 2018) / (Lee, 2012) / (Irani et al., 2018) |
| Participation | Sharing tourists' travel experiences | P3 Buoincontri et al. (2017) / (Buoincontri & Micera, 2016) |
| | Sharing tourism experiences of market experts | Lončarić et al. (2019) |
| | Sharing tourists' knowledge and ideas | P1, P3 |
| | Launching tourists' virtual communities | P1, P7 |

Table 2. A sample of the interview text and the basic and organizing themes of participation.

| No | An example of the interview text | Basic themes | Organization themes |
|----|---|---|---------------------|
| 1 | ...Tourism businesses can leverage the skills of tourists to suit their demands and comprehend what the actual needs of visitors are if tourists use their talents to create sports tourism in collaboration with tourism companies. | Tourists' cooperation and participation | Participation |
| 2 | ...Sharing experiences from various journeys and experiences is one of the outcomes of interactions between visitors with one another or with locals, which is one of the reasons for them to re-visit and suggest to others. | Sharing tourists' travel experiences | |
| 3 | ...There are several processes at work in interactions, including a system for information transfer. For instance, a sports team's fan club-related forums, where everyone interested in the team is present, are one of the perfect areas to run polls and ask questions that encourage people to share their ideas. | Tourists' knowledge and ideas sharing | |
| 4 | ...Processes that encourage sharing various experiences via social media are particularly beneficial. In other words, nowadays, social media concerning co-creation aid in receiving input independent of the business' information technology infrastructure or customer relationship management software. Information technology serves as a facilitator in businesses. | Launching tourists' virtual communities | |

4.2. Part two (quantitative section of the research): results obtained from the DEMATEL technique

In this section, the opinions of 15 experts in the field were used. The descriptive findings related to this group of experts are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of the research experts in the quantitative section.

| Features | Options | Frequency | Frequency percentage |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Gender | Male | 9 | 60 |
| | Female | 6 | 40 |
| Age | 20-30 | 4 | 26.66 |
| | 31-40 | 6 | 40 |
| | 41-50 | 5 | 33.33 |
| Education | Bachelor's degree | 2 | 13.33 |
| | Master's degree | 3 | 20 |
| | PhD | 10 | 66.66 |
| Occupation | University faculty members | 7 | 46.66 |
| | Members of the board of federations | 1 | 6.66 |
| | Cultural heritage experts | 2 | 13.33 |
| | Tour guides | 3 | 20 |
| Work experience | Managers of tourism companies | 2 | 13.33 |
| | 1 to 5 years | 3 | 20 |
| | 6 to 10 years | 2 | 13.33 |
| | 11 to 15 years | 6 | 40 |
| | 16 to 20 years | 4 | 26.66 |

Similar to the qualitative section, cause-and-effect relationships of the components identified using the DEMATEL technique have been calculated and implemented.

After identifying the components and constructing the survey matrix, the experts (15 people) were asked to perform pairwise comparisons of the components. In the next step, the initial decision matrix (A) has been formed using the arithmetic mean of experts' opinions as

$$(1) \quad z = \frac{x^1 + x^2 + x^3 + \dots + x^p}{p}$$

Where p is the number of experts, x^1 , x^2 , and x^p are the pairwise comparison matrices associated with experts 1, 2, and p, respectively? Table 4 presents the initial decision matrix (mean of the experts' opinions).

Table 4. The initial decision matrix.

| Components | Market research | Creation of dynamic organization | Working team development | Conversation and interaction | Creation of shared commitment | Participation | Total |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Market research | 0 | 2/93 | 2/86 | 2/6 | 2/66 | 2/53 | 13/58 |
| Creation of dynamic organization | 2/8 | 0 | 3/06 | 2/86 | 2/66 | 2/86 | 14/24 |
| Working team development | 2/86 | 3/6 | 0 | 3/33 | 2/73 | 2/86 | 15/38 |
| Conversation and interaction | 2/73 | 3/4 | 3/33 | 0 | 2/53 | 2/93 | 14/92 |
| Creation of Shared commitment | 2/53 | 3/4 | 3/26 | 2/8 | 0 | 3/26 | 15/25 |
| Participation | 2/93 | 3/53 | 3/06 | 3/33 | 3/13 | 0 | 15/98 |

The next step is to normalize the direct correlation matrix (N). To normalize the data, at this stage, all the rows of the average matrix of experts' opinions are divided by the sum of the most significant row value. This matrix is known as the relative intensity or direct effect matrix (Table 5).

Table 5. The normalized matrix.

| Components | Market research | Creation of dynamic organization | working team development | Conversation and interaction | Creation of shared commitment | Participation |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Market research | 0 | 0/1834 | 0/179 | 0/1627 | 0/1665 | 0/1583 |
| Creation of dynamic organization | 0/1752 | 0 | 0/1915 | 0/179 | 0/1665 | 0/179 |
| Working team development | 0/179 | 0/2253 | 0 | 0/2084 | 0/1708 | 0/179 |
| Conversation and interaction | 0/1708 | 0/2128 | 0/2084 | 0 | 0/1583 | 0/1834 |
| Creation of Shared commitment | 0/1583 | 0/2128 | 0/204 | 0/1752 | 0 | 0/204 |
| Participation | 0/1834 | 0/2209 | 0/1915 | 0/2084 | 0/1959 | 0 |

Another step in the DEMATEL technique is extracting direct and indirect effect total matrix (T).

Table 6. Total relation matrix.

| Components | Market research | Creation of dynamic organization | working team development | Conversation and interaction | Creation of Shared commitment | Participation | Row (R) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Market research | 1/8615 | 2/3509 | 2/2045 | 2/1232 | 1/9844 | 2/0625 | 12/5869 |
| Creation of dynamic organization | 2/09 | 2/2898 | 2/301 | 2/2198 | 2/063 | 2/1594 | 13/1231 |
| Working team development | 2/2198 | 2/624 | 2/2806 | 2/3759 | 2/1916 | 2/2909 | 13/9829 |
| Conversation and interaction | 2/1645 | 2/5569 | 2/3983 | 2/1507 | 2/1337 | 2/2425 | 13/6465 |
| Creation of Shared commitment | 2/1976 | 2/607 | 2/4419 | 2/3451 | 2/039 | 2/3015 | 13/9323 |
| Participation | 2/2929 | 2/7037 | 2/5188 | 2/4505 | 2/2791 | 2/212 | 14/457 |
| Colum (j) | 12/8264 | 15/1322 | 14/1451 | 13/6652 | 12/6909 | 13/2688 | |

In the next step, the causal diagram is created. Then, the threshold value is calculated to determine the network relations map. This way, partial relations can be ignored, and a network of reliable relations can be established. In the diagram, only the connections whose values in the total relation matrix are more significant than the threshold value will be displayed. After the threshold intensity is determined, all matters of the natural relation matrix smaller than the threshold are considered zero, indicating that the corresponding causal relation is disregarded. The value calculated for the point in this section was 2/2702. Thus, all matters less than this amount are insignificant and will not be displayed in the diagram. The pattern for the significant relations in the present research is as follows:

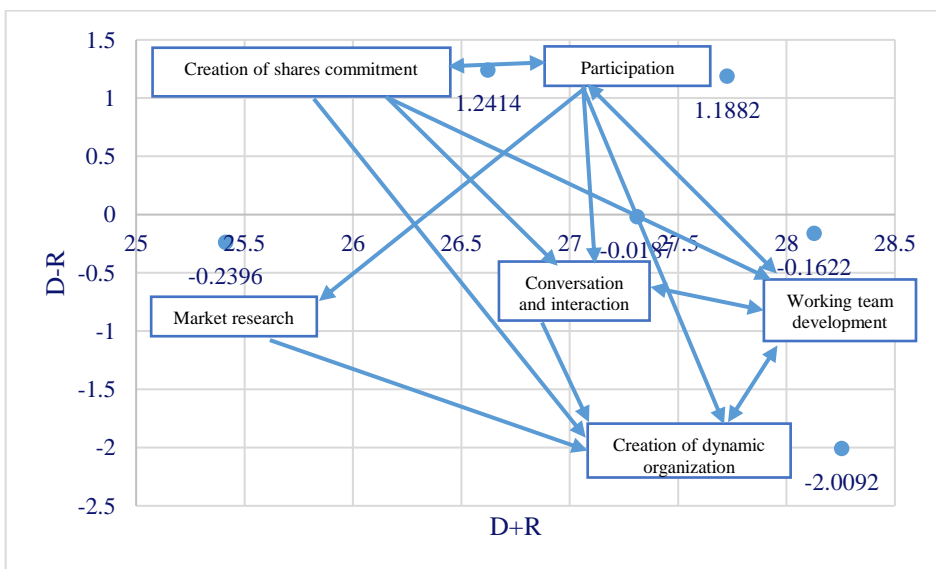


Figure 1. Causal relationships between co-creation experience process in sports tourism.

Figure 1 shows the significance, effectiveness, and impressionability of the experience co-creation process in sports tourism. In this figure, the horizontal axis shows the component's value, and the vertical axis indicates effectiveness or impressionability.

The values of D+R and D-R must be obtained to plot the cause-and-effect diagram. D+R (known as superiority) indicates the significance and the sum of the intensity of an element in terms of both effectiveness and impressionability. Similarly, D-R represents the vertical position of a component. If this value is positive, it will be effective, and if it is negative, it will be impressionable. Therefore, according to the cause-and-effect diagram in the process pattern of experience co-creation in sports tourism, it is evident that shared commitment and participation are the most influential factors. On the other hand, the most impressionable factors are creating a dynamic organization, Market research, working team development, Conversation, and interaction.

Based on the DEMATEL hypothesis (i.e., $D-R < 0$ and $D+R = M$, where M is a large number), the Creation of dynamic organization and working team development components are the main issue that must be resolved. In addition, the DEMATEL formula for participation and shared commitment is $D-R > 0$ and $D+R = M$. Therefore, it is considered the main component of solving the dynamic organization Creation and working team development, which should be prioritized. The effectiveness and impressionability of other components are the priorities that follow these two.

Table 7. The extent of effectiveness and impressionability of the experience co-creation process in sports tourism.

| Result | R | D | D+R | D-R |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Participation | 14/457 | 13/2688 | 27/7258 | 1/1882 |
| working team development | 13/9829 | 14/1451 | 28/1279 | -0/1622 |
| Creation of Shared commitment | 13/9323 | 12/6909 | 26/6231 | 1/2414 |
| Conversation and interaction | 13/6465 | 13/6652 | 27/3117 | -0/0187 |
| Creation of dynamic organization | 13/1231 | 15/1322 | 28/2553 | -2/0092 |
| Market research | 12/5869 | 12/8264 | 25/4133 | -0/2396 |

The results showed that a dynamic organization interacts more with other factors (because it has a larger R+D) and thus is more important than other factors. Market research interacts less with other factors (because it has a smaller R+D).

5. Discussion and conclusion

The tourism industry is one of the most important industries of the new century, which is very dynamic and profitable. Sports tourism is an essential part of this industry (Dastgerdi et al., 2022). In recent years, tourism, especially sports tourism, has become a rich source of income in many countries (Fallah Kazemi & Atghia, 2021).

Since the factors in the real world have internal and internal connections, the DEMATEL technique was utilized to study the causal relationships between the components following thematic analysis to identify the elements of the experience co-creation process in sports tourism. It should be emphasized that relatively few studies have

studied the causal relationships between the co-creation process's constituent parts; this study will add to the body of knowledge in this area. Additionally, sports tourism can be developed and promoted by focusing on the above elements.

The findings of the qualitative research section indicated that market research, dynamic organization creation, working team development, Conversation and interaction, and Creation of shared commitment and participation are essential elements of the experience co-creation process in sports tourism. Experience co-creation can be generated through interactions, Conversations, ongoing communication, knowledge sharing, and experiences about tourists' travels. Additionally, the constant engagement between a company's employees and customers lays the groundwork for more user participation and accelerates the organization's response to changes in the competitive environment. In this context, writers like [Payne et al. \(2008\)](#) and [Prahalad and Ramaswamy \(2004\)](#) highlighted that co-creation encourages meaningful and participatory interaction between businesses and customers. This conversation makes it possible to identify issues quickly and collaborate to find solutions, ultimately creating more incredible value.

Moreover, by utilizing customer relationship management (CRM) tools, administrators and accountable tourism businesses can get essential input from tourists and implement remedial steps. As a result, it is advised that tourism businesses inform tourists and clients that providing feedback is in both their own and the business's best interests and that by doing so, they can influence how services are provided. A more profound comprehension of the needs and expectations of tourists can help managers design a more suitable program. This is made possible through interactions, conversations, participation, and the formation working team. Managers should also take into account that tourists have different needs and expectations.

According to the analysis of the co-creation process's constituent parts, the Creation of shared commitment has been the most effective component. This demonstrates the significance of these elements since any unfavourable alteration in them has a harmful and destructive impact on other aspects because of their influencing function. Accordingly, tourist loyalty may be attained through the Creation of shared commitment among tourists and those working for organizations involved in the tourism industry. This can accelerate the execution of the co-creation process. According to the research, delegating responsibilities to team members, given their skills and experience, and cultivating trust among them will create value for tourists and provide the basis for encouraging dedicated and responsible behavior.

Moreover, the results indicated that the Creation of dynamic organization was the most impressionable component. Thus, co-creation activities can create dynamicity in tourism-related organizations and tourists. In contrast, the absence of tourists and local people in decision-making processes stimulates resistance to any scheme that intends to change their values. The component can contribute to an organization's competitive advantage by taking concrete steps in challenging competitions, always moving one step ahead of environmental changes, guaranteeing their survival and advancement, and moving toward globalization by relying on such advantages.

The findings in the quantitative part demonstrated the need to pay more attention to the elements needed to creation of dynamic organization and working team development.

The growth and profitability of sports tourism may be facilitated and supported by taking the formation of an active organization for granted, deciding on the policies of engagement with tourists, collaborative decision-making, and the desire to be a learning organization. Also, working teams are one of the cooperative management techniques that organizations utilize to enhance productivity and increase employee satisfaction. In other words, participation improvement is crucial to experience co-creation. Members of a high-authority organization known as a team emphasize synergy and work to achieve success. Effectiveness in this area may be performed by the presence of the right kind of people and the deliberate division of labor among them, such as volunteers for the project or tourists who enter the job based on their unique interests and skills.

In the analysis of the components of the experience co-creation process, results showed that the creation of joint commitment and participation are the critical elements for resolving the issues of dynamic organization creation and a working team need to be emphasized. Even the most motivated people will not take any responsibility if no commitment is made to programs. Commitment and active participation not only prompt people to express their opinions and adhere to agreed-upon decisions but also increase the yield of groups. The same commitment makes people loyal to the group and prompts them to return and recommend the organization to others to gain travel experiences.

The development of experience co-creation in sports tourism is based on the findings and the analysis of the theoretical foundations. Organizations involved in the tourism industry should always consider this principle when making decisions to observe the respectful behavior of tourists towards the business. In this regard, the findings are in line with those of (Bentzen, 2020; Bhardwaj & Sharma, 2020; Buonincontri & Micera, 2016; Irani et al., 2018; Javashi Jadid et al., 2020; Lee, 2012) in which each study identified the presence of tourists as one of the factors influencing co-creation. People, tourists, and tourism businesses may collaborate and participate productively if the participants value their contributions and see themselves as essential to the organization. This will enable them to provide ideas that will advance sports tourism. Besides, the construction of a proposal system that efficiently reacts to suggestions is another action that managers can take to improve co-creation and contribute to the growth of sports tourism. One benefit of having tourists participate is being able to offer unique services, reduce development time, and build lasting relationships with tourists.

The results showed that the Creation of a dynamic organization more significantly interacted with other factors and, consequently, was more critical. As co-creation in the sports tourism industry is an extensive phenomenon and interacts with diverse fields, planning to establish it should systematically investigate the topic from several perspectives. Thus, communications, conversations, and interactions are not sufficient for the success of co-creation in the sports tourism industry, and other discussions like dynamic organization Creation should also be considered. That is because the component plays a remarkable role in the field due to its significance. The results of the present study were in line with the findings of (Rahmati, 2020) where it was shown that the dynamicity of industry was a factor in the formation and expansion of co-creation.

Moreover, it was shown that studies on market research had less interaction with other factors, and the study participants considered them less significant. Perhaps one of the

reasons for the underdevelopment of the country in terms of sports tourism is the less significance given to the component. Co-creation, as a recent and expanding phenomenon, generally aids marketers in better understanding the requirements of tourists. They may also keep up their activities by providing items more appropriate to their interests and according to their age, gender, and preferred activities. To meet tourists' expectations and eventually satisfy them, service providers in the tourism sector are working on properly setting up their resources and facilities, which market research would be highly beneficial in this respect. Planners, marketers, and staff members of tourism organizations can utilize the research's findings to attract tourists, keep them coming back, foster customer loyalty, and promote sports tourism. Decision-makers can also use data that have been tailored for Iranian tourists.

Additionally, it is advised to leverage tourist involvement with higher degrees of loyalty as they play a crucial part in the experience co-creation in sports tourism. To accomplish the ultimate aim of co-creation in sports tourism, it is also required for the decision-making organizations to first concentrate on the specified components, and analyze the gap in the optimum condition in the field of co-creation, accordingly. Responsible organizations and tourism industry managers may use the results of the current study. They pursue the business to take action to create interactions, share knowledge and personal experiences with tourists, and promote the growth of sports tourism in the country. The managers of the relevant organizations are also advised to upgrade tourist attractions online or through participation in international exhibitions. They create videos and brochures to draw in new sports tourists, promote culture, and work to resolve cultural conflicts between tourists and locals to create the conditions necessary for interaction and cooperation, which are essential for the process of co-creation experiences. As the DEMATEL technique cannot rank influential components, future researchers should investigate detected variables using multi-criteria decision-making methods on larger populations. Moreover, as the study was not conducted as an experimental one, future studies are recommended to run the components and investigate their validity in terms of their performance. Given the significance of sports tourism and that Iran has numerous natural resources for developing this industry, the country's tourism and sports sector managers should work to advance this sector so that, shortly, this sector will experience growth and benefit from various advantages in the nation.

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شناسایی و تحلیل فرآیند هم‌آفرینی تجربه در گردشگری ورزشی ایران

سمانه راستگو^۱، حسن بحرالعلوم^{۲*}، رضا اندام^۳، هادی باقری^۳، سیده عدرا میرکازمی^۴

^۱ دانشجوی دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی، دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود، شاهرود، ایران.

^۲ دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی، دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود، شاهرود، ایران.

^۳ استادیار مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی، دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود، شاهرود، ایران.

^۴ دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه بیرجند، بیرجند، ایران.

کلیدواژه

تحلیل مضمون
تکنیک دیمتل
گردشگری ورزشی
مشارکت و تعامل
هم‌آفرینی

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: هدف پژوهش حاضر شناسایی و تحلیل فرآیند هم‌آفرینی تجربه در گردشگری ورزشی ایران بود.

روش: پژوهش انجام شده از نوع آمیخته است. مشارکت‌کنندگان در مرحله کیفی، شامل ۱۰ نفر از خبرگان گردشگری ورزشی و پژوهشگران حوزه هم‌آفرینی و در مرحله کمی، شامل ۱۵ نفر از متخصصان گردشگری بودند که به روش هدفمند انتخاب شدند. ابزار گردآوری داده‌ها در بخش کیفی مصاحبه نیمه‌ساختارمند و در بخش کمی پرسشنامه محقق‌ساخته‌ای بود که عوامل آن از طریق مطالعه بخش کیفی استخراج شد و مدل پژوهش، از طریق خروجی‌های نرم‌افزار دیمتل ترسیم گردید.

یافته‌ها: یافته‌ها در بخش کیفی با استفاده از روش تحلیل مضمون بیانگر ۶ مضمون سازمان‌دهنده تحقیقات بازار، ایجاد سازمان پویا، توسعه تیم کاری، گفتگو و تعامل، ایجاد تعهد مشترک و مشارکت بود. در بخش کمی نتایج نشان داد که مؤلفه‌های ایجاد تعهد مشترک و ایجاد سازمان پویا به ترتیب، اثرگذارترین و اثرپذیرترین مؤلفه‌ها هستند. همچنین ایجاد سازمان پویا و تحقیقات بازار به ترتیب با اهمیت‌ترین و کم‌اهمیت‌ترین مؤلفه‌ها هستند.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: یکی از چالش‌های توسعه گردشگری ورزشی در ایران مشارکت و تعامل کم‌رنگ گردشگران در زمینه‌های مختلف است. پژوهش حاضر تلاش کرده است با استفاده از روش تحلیل مضمون و تکنیک دیمتل مؤلفه‌های اثرگذار و بااهمیت در راستای پیشبرد گردشگری ورزشی را شناسایی کند.

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Estimating People's Willingness to Pay for Team and Individual Sports Has the Service Quality Effect on It?

Roghayeh Sarlab¹

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of sport management, Faculty of Sport Science, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Investigating people's willingness to pay for sports is one of the best ways to increase demand. Through it, the economic development of the desired sports venue can be achieved.

Methodology: The current research was applied as a part of descriptive-analytical research carried out in the field. The statistical sample of the five places is in Baghshomal, Manzarieh, Mirdamad, Imam Ali Sports Complex, and Tabriz Khyabani Sports Complex. The statistical population of the visitors to these places was 534 randomly selected according to Morgan's table and clustered. The measurement tool was the willingness to pay questionnaire by (Bidram et al., 2018) and the quality of sports services by (Liu, 2008). Logit probit was used to investigate the research questions using SPSS and Eviews software.

Findings: The research results indicate that the average willingness to pay for team sports was 43.95 tomans and 51.06 tomans for individual sports. The total economic value (willingness to pay) of the team and individual sports for these places equals 129213 Tomans and 18259056 Tomans, respectively. Also, the results showed that all components of the quality of sports services, such as satisfaction, equipment, and facilities have a positive and significant effect on the proposed value for paying for places.

Originality: In this study, we examined the willingness of people to pay for sports and the impact of service quality on the value proposition that has not been studied so far.

Keywords

Conditional Valuation
Method
Logit Probit
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1. Introduction

Now, sports as a relatively global entity have had significant effects on the social, political, economic, and technological changes (Askarian et al., 2021). The sports industry has international economic and social consequences, so that it is considered as one of the most important platforms for economic development and social improvement of the society (Sarlab & Farid Fathi, 2021). Since the 1970s, the sport has assumed an ever-increasing role in the globalization of business and public events, with sports participants, capital, and labor moving around the world (Zhang et al., 2018). Since globalization has taken over major economic sectors worldwide, the sports industry is not exempt from this trend. It is one of the industries that have provided the most benefit for developing and expanding the global market (Pitts & Zhang, 2016). Now, in industrialized and advanced countries, it is usually required to have a suitable per capita of service and sports spaces. Therefore, in any urban planning, health, recreational and environmental needs require a suitable per capita in allocating spaces for providing services. Let's be a sport within the city limits (Soltan Hoseini et al., 2014). The existence of sports venues and complexes not only in terms of their role in urban development and increasing citizens' sports participation; it also increases the economic wheel in the sports industry and national economy. Likewise, estimating the monetary value of sports venues in a city, in addition to clarifying the price for customers and the material and non-material benefits of sports venues, helps to correct uniform pricing in the field of the sports industry and increase the financial profit of sports venues. Finally, it leads to the development of more and more sports venues according to the needs of the people and the increase in public sports.

Despite considerable advances in academic and applied pricing research over the past decades, many companies still make their pricing decisions without a profound understanding of the likely response of (potential) buyers and competitors to alternative price quotations (Breidert et al., 2006). The conditional valuation method is often used to estimate consumers' willingness to pay for non-market goods (Baral et al., 2008). Marginal willingness-to-pay values—commonly referred to as implicit prices—are calculated to measure the number of money consumers are willing to pay to maintain the current amount given a unit change in the level of a particular attribute (Shin & Lyu, 2019). In the field of goods and services for which there is a market, it is possible to create different needs based on the number of suppliers and demanders. All these markets' characteristics are that the supply and demand functions determine the equilibrium price and quantity.

Regarding price determination in the market, it should be said that both supply and demand are subject to price, and the price is subject to supply and demand (Bidram et al., 2018). Based on the stated preference approach to recognize respondents' innate preferences using different hypothetical market situations, the contingent valuation method involves direct questions regarding how much a customer wants to pay for proposed products and services (Castellanos-García et al., 2014). Individual preferences must be monetarized to measure the monetary value of a public good like national defense, environmental protection, or hosting the Olympic Games. The concept of WTP is an economic concept to express the preferences of individuals in monetary terms. Likewise,

the concept of the WTA (negative WTP) is an economic concept that displays the minimum amount of money that an individual is willing to accept to put up with something negative. Both images allow to monetization of public goods and demonstrate the consumers' utility. The amount of the WTP depends on the utility of consuming the public interest and increases with it. Based on different preferences, the utility and, thus, the WTP differs among individuals (Bakkenbüll & Dilger, 2020). The Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) is an established method to monetarize consumers' preferences regarding certain public goods. By surveys, the CVM identifies the WTP of economic entities for the provision or the withdrawal of public interest. For this purpose, hypothetical scenarios are created where public goods are directly assessable. In these scenarios, respondents have to state an amount of money they are willing to pay or except for the public interest, considering their individual preferences. Hence, this determines the personal consumer surplus (Coates & Humphreys, 2003).

Due to the relatively uncomplicated procedure for eliciting respondents' willingness-to-pay values, most previous studies regarding the economic importance of sports facilities and sporting events (Shin & Lyu, 2019). The most critical weakness of the contingent valuation method is the use of only one attribute, which results in limited knowledge of respondents' complicated preference mechanisms (Lyu & Hwang, 2017). For example, Johnson and Whitehead (2000) measured Kentucky taxpayers' willingness-to-pay values for developing two proposed basketball and baseball facilities by applying a contingent valuation approach (Johnson & Whitehead, 2000). Bakkenbüll and Dilger (2020) investigate whether and how much individuals are willing to pay to host Olympic Games in Germany. Extrapolations of the individual WTP and WTA show that, in the net aggregate, the German population is willing to pay €3.57 billion for hosting the Olympic Games in Germany (Bakkenbüll & Dilger, 2020). Based on a discrete choice experimental approach, results indicate that spectators place the most significant importance on fast access to ballparks, largely dependent upon the location. Results also suggest that respondents are willing to pay ₩4102 for one more subway line (Shin & Lyu, 2019).

Also, Humphreys et al. (2022) estimate professional sports fans' willingness to pay (WTP) for the reduced likelihood of coronavirus infection through the mask and social distancing policies at games using a stated preference approach. Regression results based on a latent class logit model using survey data collected from 1,391 fans of professional sports teams in five large U.S. metropolitan areas indicate increased attendance likelihood if the venue requires masks and limits attendance to below capacity. Latent class logit models indicate significant heterogeneity in WTP across risk scenarios and sports. We characterize professional sports fans as casual fans who prefer a mask requirement but are indifferent to stadium and arena capacity. These rabid fans are anti-maskers indifferent to ability and fans who only have a positive WTP when there is a mask requirement and low stadium/arena capacity (i.e., opportunities for the most significant amount of social distancing).

Most published studies of contingent valuation methods in sports have focused on the willingness to pay for professional sports or spectators (Johnson et al., 2012). Therefore, in this research, we have tried to question the willingness of people to pay for sports in East Azerbaijan province. From this point of view, the economic value of Individual and

team sports can also be estimated. Based on what was mentioned above and the importance of valuing sports venues, one of the best ways to achieve an economical solution for this issue is to understand the willingness of people and athletes to pay for the infrastructure. In this case, you can set a reasonable rate for it and earn an adequate income. If the willingness of people to pay the membership fee is more than the set price, this place will face an increase in demand.

2. Methodology

The present research has been conducted in terms of practical purpose and method, analytical-descriptive, and field-based research. The statistical population is the residents of the city of Tabriz, which was among the five sports venues located on the four roads of BaghShomal, Mirdamad, Manzariyeh, Imam Ali Sports Complex, and Tabriz Khiyabani Sports Complex. The size of the statistical sample was also estimated with the help of Morgan's table of about 534 people who were randomly selected by class and cluster. The research tool is the willingness to pay questionnaire by (Bidram et al., 2018) and the quality of sports services by (Liu, 2008). The amount of economic value and willingness to pay in the current research was for two weeks (in the form of even and odd days for sports clubs) and for the study sample (people who visited the club during this period).

In the term conditional valuation method, the word dependent indicates a condition in the simulation of the hypothetical market for the questioned product. It is based on which the hypothetical markets should be designed in a standard way so that the respondents correctly understand the designed space and prevent distortions in the answers given. The direct approach to estimating the willingness to pay is called the conditional valuation method, usually done using a questionnaire. If you are willing to pay for some environmental features around them, you can ask people. The word "conditional" is used because one must put oneself in a hypothetical market position. For example, this happens in the food market. While in the case of the environment, we ask people how much they are willing to pay if they face the market. Contingent valuation studies have been conducted so far for a long list of environmental factors: air quality, the value of visiting and enjoying a recreational site, fishing, and so on. When using the contingent valuation method in estimating people's willingness to pay, the following steps should be taken:

- 1- Designing a hypothetical market for goods or services for which people are willing to pay.
- 2- Data collection.
- 3- Calculation of the average willingness to pay of people.
- 4- Estimation of the demand function or factors affecting willingness to pay.

Principles of conditional valuation and two-dimensional double selection (DDC)

In the two-dimensional dual selection method, it is assumed that people have the following utility function:

$$(1) \quad U(Y, S)$$

Where U is the indirect utility function, Y is the individual's income, and S is a function of other socio-economic factors of the individual. Every person is willing to pay an amount of his income to use the sports facility as the suggested amount (A), which will create a benefit for him. The amount of utility created by using sports venues is more than in the case where he does not use sports venues, shown in relation number (2) (Hanemann & Kanninen, 1996).

$$(2) \quad \Delta U = (1, Y - A; S) + \epsilon_1 \geq U(0, Y; S) + \epsilon_0$$

U : is the indirect utility that the user obtains, one: acceptance of the proposed amount (determined by sports venues), zero: non-acceptance of the suggested amount, A : proposed amount, S : other effective socio-economic characteristics on individual preferences, ϵ_0 , and ϵ_1 ; random variables are with zero mean that are equally and independently distributed. The difference created in the desirability of the athlete (ΔU) due to the use of sports venues is:

$$(3) \quad \Delta U = (1, Y - A; S) - U(0, Y; S) + (\epsilon_1 - \epsilon_0)$$

Since the structure of the two-dimensional questionnaire in examining people's willingness to pay has a dependent variable with a double selection, we need a qualitative choice model for estimation. Usually, in qualitative methods, logit probit models are generally used for Investigating the impact of different explanatory variables on the WTP of customers to determine the value. In the framework of the logit model, the probability (P_i) that a person accepts one of the offers is expressed as the following relationship:

$$(4) \quad P_i = F_{\eta}(\Delta U) = \frac{1}{1 + \exp(-\Delta U)} = \frac{1}{1 + \exp\{-(\alpha + \beta A + Y + \theta S)\}}$$

It is a cumulative distribution function with a standard logistic difference. Some socio-economic variables, such as income, suggested amount, age, gender, household size, education, etc., are included in this research. α is the intercept, β and θ are estimated coefficients that are expected to be $\theta > 0$, $0 < \beta$ and > 0 (Asafu-Adjaye & Tapsuwan, 2008). In general, there are three standard methods to calculate the willingness to pay: The first is the average willingness to pay, which is used to calculate the expected amount of desire to pay through numerical integration between zero and infinity. The second method is known as the average total willingness to pay, which is used to calculate the expected value of willingness to pay through numerical integration in the range of negative infinity to positive infinity. The third method is known as an average partial willingness to pay, and it is used to calculate the expected value of willingness to pay through numerical integration in the range of zero to the maximum offer. Among these methods, the third method is more suitable. The model's parameters are estimated using the complete likelihood method, the only technique for estimating the logit model. Then, the expected value of WTP is calculated by numerical integration from zero to the highest offer (A) as follows:

$$(5) \quad E(WTP) = \int_0^{maxA} F_{\mu} (\Delta U) dA = \int_0^{maxA} \left(\frac{1}{1+exp-(\alpha+BA)} \right) dA$$

That E (WTP) is the expected value, and α^* the y-intercept has been adjusted and added to the y-intercept original (α) by means of the socio-economic sentence.

$$(6) \quad \alpha^* = (\alpha + \gamma Y + \theta S)$$

The regression model for estimating the willingness to pay for the usefulness of sports venues is in the form of the following equation:

$$(7) \quad WTP = \beta_A + \beta_i x \quad i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, 11$$

Where X_i is the explanatory variables, β_i are the explanatory variable coefficients, and n is the number of explanatory variables. The explanatory variables examined in this study include the proposed number of sports venues, income, age, marital status, gender, education level, type of sport (team and individual), history of sports activity, and the number of sessions per week. To check the descriptive findings of the research data, descriptive statistics tests of abundance and percentage of abundance were used in SPSS 20 software. Finally, Eviews 9 software was used to estimate the total economic value.

3. Results

The descriptive results of the research in the five regions of the General Administration of Sports and Youth of East Azerbaijan such as Manzariyeh, Mirdamad, Baghshomal, Khiyabani sports complex, and Imam Ali sports complex, showed that 74.5% of athletes in Baghshomal region were male and 52.5% were female. Also, 71.3% were women, 28.7% were men in the Manzariyeh region, 49.6% were women, and 50.4% were men in the Mirdamad region. Finally, in the Imam Ali sports complex, 73.1% were women, and 26.9% percent were men; in the Khiyabani sports complex, 43.1% were women, and 58.7% were men. Regarding marital status, 75% of the sampled people were single, and 25% were married. Regarding the type of sports, the results showed that 54.9% of the sample was active in team sports and 45.1% in individual sports. The level of education of the 21 participants in the research showed that 22.1% of the people had an undergraduate degree, 34.1% had a diploma, 34.8% had a bachelor's degree, 7.4% had a master's degree, and 1.7% had a doctorate. The level of sports activity history showed that 50.1% of the sample people under five years, 36.3% between 6 and 10 years, and 13.6% had more than ten years of sports activity experience. The age status of the people showed that 41.38 percent of the sample was between 15 and 20 years old, 39.8 percent between 21 and 30 years old, 11.2 percent between 31 and 40 years old, 5.9 percent between 41 and 50 years old, and 81 The percentage was over 50 years old. The results showed that 64% of the sample had income between 1 and 3 million Tomans, 22% between 4 and 5 million Tomans, and 12.7% above 5 million Tomans per month.

Next, we investigated the willingness of people to pay for the desired places. In total, the results showed that 41.3% of the sample (224 people) were willing to pay the amount

(amount) suggested by sports venues, and 58.7% (319) of the selection were willing to pay the amount (amount) told. They did not have the sports venues of the general administration of sports and youth. The following tables show people's willingness to pay in five regions (Tables 1-3).

Table 1. Willingness to pay people by sports for the sports venues of the General Administration of Sports and Youth of East Azerbaijan.

| Number | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | kinds of sports | Number | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | | Kinds of sports |
|--------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------------|--------|-----------|------------|-----------|--------|------------------|
| 10 | 10 | 1 | | Tennis | 211 | 9.46 | 99 | wtp | Un wtp | Futsal |
| | 90 | 9 | | | | 1.53 | 112 | | | |
| 28 | 50 | 14 | | volleyball | 0 | 0 | 0 | wtp | Un wtp | Artificial Grass |
| | 50 | 14 | | | | 0 | 0 | | | |
| 29 | 69 | 20 | | Weightlifting | 89 | 44.9 | 40 | wtp | Un wtp | Martial Arts |
| | 31 | 9 | | | | 55.1 | 49 | | | |
| 20 | 0 | 0 | | Skate | 60 | 11.7 | 7 | wtp | Un wtp | Swimming |
| | 100 | 20 | | | | 88.3 | 53 | | | |
| 35 | 54.7 | 16 | | Basketball | 9 | 44.4 | 4 | wtp | Un wtp | Archery |
| | 54.3 | 19 | | | | 55.6 | 5 | | | |
| 24 | 33.3 | 8 | | Squash | 18 | 66.7 | 12 | wtp | Un wtp | Fencing |
| | 66.7 | 16 | | | | 33.3 | 6 | | | |
| | | | | | 10 | 30 | 3 | wtp | Un wtp | Wrestling |
| | | | | | 70 | 7 | | | | |

Table 2. People's willingness to pay for sports venues of the General Directorate of Sports and Youth, separated by men and women.

| Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Number | | |
|-----------|------------|-----------|--------|--------|-------|
| 36.8 | | 110 | 299 | Wtp | Women |
| 63.2 | | 189 | | Un wtp | |
| 46.7 | | 114 | 244 | Wtp | Men |
| 53.3 | | 130 | | Un wtp | |

Table 3. Willingness to pay people separately for the team and individual sports.

| Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Number | | |
|-----------|------------|-----------|--------|--------|------------|
| 45.6 | | 136 | 298 | Wtp | Team |
| 54.4 | | 162 | | Un wtp | |
| 35.9 | | 88 | 245 | Wtp | Individual |
| 64.1 | | 157 | | Un wtp | |

3.1. Estimating the economic value of team and individual sports for sports venues

Table 4. Descriptive results of people's willingness to pay for sports venues by individual and team sports.

| Standard deviation | Average (Toman) | Number of observations | Kinds of sports |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 31.11 | 43.95 | 245 | Team |
| 56.086 | 51.06 | 298 | Individual |

Table 5. Descriptive results of the proposed amount of people's willingness to pay for sports venues by team and individuality.

| Standard deviation | Average (Toman) | Number of observations | Kinds of sports |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 40.607 | 57.38 | 245 | Team |
| 85.794 | 75.32 | 298 | Individual |

Tables 4 and 5 show the average (in Tomans), the number of people, the standard deviation of people's willingness to pay for team-individual sports, and the amount determined by sports venues in all five regions. In this way, team sports estimated the total economic value of these regions separately. The results are given in Table 6.

Table 6. The economic value of the willingness to pay for team and individual sports and the monetary value of the amount determined by the venues.

| | | Kinds of sports |
|---|---|-------------------|
| $245 \times 43.95 = 1076775$ toman (monthly) toman (yearly) *12=129213 | The total value of willingness to pay ¹ | Team sports |
| $245 \times 57.38 = 140581$ toman (monthly) toman (yearly) *12=1686972 | The total value of the amount determined by the sports venue ² | |
| $298 \times 51.06 = 1521588$ toman (monthly) *12=18259056 toman (yearly) | The total value of willingness to pay | Individual sports |
| $298 \times 75.72 = 2256456$ toman (monthly) *12=27077472 | The total value of the amount determined by the sports venue | |

After calculating the willingness to pay people in the team and individual sports, which were given in Table 4, the significance of the coefficients of the explanatory variables of the research in this area was examined (Tables 7 and 8). In this way, using the maximum likelihood (ML) method, the willingness to pay (WTP) dependent variable was regressed on the width of origin and other significant explanatory variables. The estimated coefficients were obtained according to the table below. Below is the interpretation of each of the relevant coefficients.

¹ Total value of willingness to pay for team sports in Tabriz sports areas: Average willingness to pay in team sports in Tabriz sports areas * Number of interviewees

² The total economic value of team sports in Tabriz sports areas (the amount determined by the sports venue): the average amount determined by the sports venue for the team sports in Tabriz sports areas * the number of interviewees

Table 7. Logit model results after removing statistically meaningless variables for individual sports.

| Final effect | Significance level | Z statistic | Standard deviation | Coefficient | Parameters |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|--|
| -0.001 | 0.05 | -1.900 | 0.003 | -6.11 | The proposed amount |
| -1.76 | 0.49 | -0.680 | 8.97 | 00.006 | Income |
| 0.250 | 0.09 | 2.346 | 0.370 | 0.868 | Gender |
| 0.128 | 0.001 | 3.313 | 0.134 | 0.445 | The number of attending sessions at the sports venue |
| 0.125 | 0.03 | 2.058 | 0.211 | 0.434 | Appropriate treatment of employees |
| ----- | 0.000 | -4.390 | 0.996 | -0.437 | intercept |

3.2. Interpretation of logit model coefficients

The coefficient of the income variable, one of the most important explanatory variables, has become negative, which does not match the theory. This article indicates that under the hypothetical market scenario, the offered amount's acceptance decreases with the increase in income. Also, the final effect of this variable is equal to 1.76, which means that a unit increase in this variable reduces the probability of the athlete's willingness to pay by 1.76 percent. This result of the research can indicate that people give less importance to sports activities in their household spending basket and the share of sports expenses in the consumption basket of these regions is less for individual sports. People tend to spend on other sports.

- The variable coefficient of appropriate treatment of employees has been positive. This article indicates that the amount of acceptance of the offered amount will increase along with the proper treatment of the employees in the desired sports venue. Also, the final effect of this variable is equal to 0.125, which means that one unit increase in this variable increases the probability of the athlete's willingness to pay by 0.125 percent.
- The coefficient of the proposed variable has become negative. This implies that under the hypothetical market scenario if the offered or set amount of the sports venue increases, the positive response to the willingness to pay (acceptance of the suggested amount) decreases, which is consistent with the theory. Also, the final effect of this variable is equal to -0.001, which means that a unit increase in this variable reduces the probability of the athlete's willingness to pay by 0.001 percent.
- The gender variable coefficient is positive. This suggests that women are more likely to be willing to pay more than men. Also, the final effect of this variable is equal to 0.25, which means that one unit increase in this variable increases the probability of people's willingness to pay by 0.25 percent.
- The variable coefficient of the number of weekly attendance sessions has been positive. These coefficients show that with the increase in the number of sessions people attend in the sports place, the probability of people's willingness to pay increases. Also, the final effect of this variable is equal to 0.128, which means that one unit increase in this variable increases the probability of people's willingness to pay by 0.128 percent.

Table 8. Logit model results after removing statistically meaningless variables for team sports.

| Final effect | P-value | Z | Standard deviation | Coefficient | |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------|--------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 5.52 | 0.55 | 0.584 | 0.0035 | 0.002 | The proposed amount |
| 0.0007 | 0.14 | 1.464 | 1.02 | 1.49 | Income |
| -0.285 | 0.02 | -2.181 | 0.352 | -0.796 | Marital status |
| -0.216 | 0.01 | -2.545 | 0.22 | -0.584 | Trust |
| ----- | 0.03 | 2.09 | 1.161 | 2.437 | Intercept |
| Mcfadden r-squared = 0/060 | | | | | |
| Lr statistic = 15/08 | | | | | |
| Prob (lr statistic) = 0/004 | | | | | |

3.3. Interpretation of logit model coefficients

- The coefficient of the income variable, one of the most important explanatory variables, has become positive, which corresponds to the theory. This article indicates that under the hypothetical market scenario, the offered amount's acceptance increases with the increase in income. Also, the final effect of this variable is equal to 0.0007, which means that a unit increase in this variable increases the probability of the athlete's willingness to pay by 0.0007%.
- The coefficient of the variable proposal is positive. This implies that if the offered or set amount of the sports venue increases under the hypothetical market scenario, the positive response to the willingness to pay (acceptance of the suggested amount) increases, which is inconsistent with the theory. This is due to the nature of sports and the type of residential area. Also, the final effect of this variable is equal to 5.52, which means that one unit increase in this variable increases the probability of the athlete's willingness to pay by 5.52 percent.
- The variable coefficient of the offer is positive. This implies that if the offered or set amount of the sports venue increases under the hypothetical market scenario, the positive response to the willingness to pay (acceptance of the suggested amount) increases, which is inconsistent with the theory. This is due to the nature of sports and the type of residential area. Also, the final effect of this variable is equal to 5.52, which means that one unit increase in this variable increases the probability of the athlete's willingness to pay by 5.52 percent.
- The variable coefficient of marital status is negative. This suggests that married people tend to pay more than single people. Also, the final effect of this variable is equal to -0.28, which means that one unit increase in this variable increases the probability of willingness to pay by 0.28% in married people.
- The coefficient of trust among the variables of the quality of sports services has become negative. These coefficients show that with the increase in the quality of the services provided in the sports place, the probability of people's willingness to pay decreases. Also, the final effect of this variable is equal to -0.216, which means that one unit increase in this variable reduces the probability of people's willingness to pay by 0.216 percent.

3.4. The effect of the quality of sports services on the proposed value for paying people to five sports venues

To investigate the effect of the quality of sports services on the proposed value (the amount suggested for people to pay to sports venues), regression and the ordinary least squares (OLS) method were used with the help of Eviews version 9 software. It should be noted that all variables had a normal distribution.

Table 9. The results of OLS regression of the quality of sports services on the value offered.

| P -value | T | Standard deviation | Coefficient | Value proposition |
|----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 0.001 | 4.68 | 0.048 | 0.227 | The quality of service |
| 0.28 | 1.08 | 0.059 | 0.063 | Appropriate treatment of employees |
| 0.05 | 1.95 | 0.031 | 0.058 | Facilities |
| 0.007 | 2.72 | 0.043 | 0.118 | Sports equipment and devices |
| 0.001 | 11.62 | 0.055 | 0.641 | Customer satisfaction |
| R- squared= 0/96 | | | | |
| Adj r- squared= 0/96 | | | | |

The results of [Table 9](#) showed that all components of the quality of sports services, such as satisfaction, equipment, and facilities, have a positive and significant effect on the proposed value to pay for the five venues, and the component of service reliability has been removed from the regression model. It should be noted that the collision component had no significant effect on the value proposition.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Pricing the functions of sports venues, which are generally priceless, is an important step to correct economic decisions in line with the development and growth of the sports industry. The results of the present research can provide the sports organizations and the physical education department of East Azerbaijan province with specific and determining criteria in the field of pricing of Sports venues, and increase revenue generation and develop a financial plan for sports complexes.

The geographical location and placement of sports complexes in the five regions and the variety of sports disciplines in them and the presence of experienced and trained coaches in the areas investigated, the position and socio-economic and cultural conditions of the households in these regions are among the most critical factors affecting the rate of Willingness to pay and economic value of areas. Also, the results showed that the quality of sports services significantly affects the increase in the number of customers, and customers are willing to pay more for a sports venue and enjoy sports. Therefore, improving service quality plays a decisive role in the pricing of salons. Also, the physical environment of sports venues, referred to as the sports cape substantially influences the extent to which sports fans attend sporting events and revisit the facilities ([Shin & Lyu, 2019](#)).

In connection with increasing the economic value of sports venues, one can pay attention to the stages before the construction. For example, changing sports and non-

sport's needs (artistic, social, cultural, residential, etc.) should be considered in the design and architecture of sports venues. A multi-purpose complex should be designed instead of a single-purpose complex. Also, after the construction of sports venues, he created new sections next to the sports facilities used for new uses, such as hotels, concert halls, theaters, restaurants, etc. Of course, it would be better to define a further temporary use of these sports facilities by adding special temporary equipment.

The research results showed that the number of people in the household, the economic conditions of people, and the amount of income, gender, and age play a significant role in determining the amount offered by sports venues. Therefore, it is suggested that the managers of sports complexes keep these things in mind when selecting the payment and setting up of sports venues and the price. Based on the research results, it is suggested that people's willingness to pay should be considered when setting up sports in the investigated areas. Based on people's opinions, it is recommended to prioritize individual sports in their work. It is also suggested to consider the type and manner of access of people to sports venues, coaches, equipment of sports venues, health and safety of sports venues, and the amount of tuition in determining the willingness to pay. Based on the research results that sports facilities affected the desire to pay for sports, it is recommended that sports centers provide appropriate facilities. Make it possible to pay installments. They offer gifts to old customers and discounts to old and loyal customers. Also, sports centers give loyalty cards to their customers and provide exceptional services to the holders of these cards. Based on the research results that satisfaction with sports facilities affected the willingness to pay for sports, it is recommended that sports centers provide their services in the shortest possible time and with high quality and handle customer complaints. Based on the research results that sports equipment affected the willingness to pay for sports, it is recommended that the sports equipment used in sports centers meet an acceptable and high safety standard. Also, the equipment and sports equipment should be taken care of and cleaned daily. There should be complete and suitable sports equipment in sports centers.

It is suggested to use up-to-date information technologies (social networks, Telegram, Whats App, and other networks) to inform and promote the sports complex's programs. The current research has investigated the prominent sports venues in Tabriz, so the demographic characteristics of these areas, such as the families' social, cultural, and economic levels, may be close to each other and affect the research results. It has been done almost cross-sectionally, so future researchers are advised to conduct this research longitudinally and in deprived areas. They are making the right decisions based on the output results in the pricing of sports venues. It is suggested that other effects of sports venues (cultural, economic, political, social, and environmental impacts (air pollution) should be investigated regarding the willingness to pay for the platforms. It is hoped that the results of this research can develop sports culture for all, increase sports participation, mental and physical health, and well-being by providing objective and agreed-upon prices to sports venues and gyms, and ultimately contribute to the turning of the economic wheel of sports venues. Do well in the city. In the same way, one of the reasons for the lack of people's visits and lack of enthusiasm among citizens for some sports complexes may be the price of sports venues, which the present research results will help to solve this problem.

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بر آورد تمایل به پرداخت مردم برای رشته‌های ورزشی تیمی و انفرادی آیا کیفیت خدمات بر آن تأثیر دارد؟

رقیه سرلاب^۱

^۱ استادیار، گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه ارومیه، ارومیه، ایران.

کلیدواژه

ارزش‌گذاری مشروط
تمایل به پرداخت
رشته‌های ورزشی تیمی و انفرادی
لاجیت پروبیت

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی

چکیده

هدف: بررسی تمایل به پرداخت مردم برای رشته‌های ورزشی یکی از بهترین راه‌ها برای افزایش میزان تقاضا است. به طوری که از طریق آن می‌توان به توسعه اقتصادی مکان ورزشی مورد نظر نیز دست پیدا کرد.

روش: پژوهش حاضر کاربردی بود که به روش توصیفی-تحلیلی و به صورت میدانی انجام گرفت. نمونه آماری اماکن پنجگانه در مناطق باغشمال، منظریه، میرداماد، مجموعه ورزشی امام علی و مجموعه ورزشی خیابانی تبریز بودند. جامعه آماری شامل مراجعه‌کنندگان به این اماکن بودند که بر اساس جدول مورگان ۵۳۴ نفر به صورت تصادفی طبقه‌ای و خوشه‌ای انتخاب شدند. ابزار اندازه‌گیری پرسشنامه تمایل به پرداخت مردم **بیدارام و همکاران (۱۳۹۶)** و کیفیت خدمات ورزشی **لیو (۲۰۰۸)** بود. به منظور بررسی سوالات تحقیق از لاجیت با استفاده از نرم‌افزار اسپاس‌اس و ایویوز استفاده شد.

یافته‌ها: نتایج تحقیق حکایت از آن دارد که میانگین میزان تمایل به پرداخت افراد برای رشته‌های ورزشی تیمی ۴۳/۹۵ و انفرادی ۵۱/۰۶ تومان بود. کل ارزش اقتصادی (تمایل به پرداخت) رشته‌های ورزشی تیمی و انفرادی برای این اماکن به ترتیب برابر با ۱۲۹۲۱۳ تومان و ۱۸۲۵۹۰۵۶ تومان است. همچنین نتایج نشان داد که مؤلفه‌های کیفیت خدمات ورزشی از قبیل رضایت، تجهیزات و تسهیلات بر ارزش پیشنهادی جهت پرداخت به اماکن اثر مثبت و معنی‌دار دارد.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: محققین در این تحقیق به بررسی تمایل به پرداخت مردم برای رشته‌های ورزشی و تأثیر کیفیت خدمات بر ارزش پیشنهادی پرداختند که تاکنون مورد بررسی قرار نگرفته است.

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Providing a Scale for Measuring Service Quality in Wrestling Events

Mohammad Hussein Mohammad Mirza¹, Hamidreza Saybani^{2*} , Mehdi Savadi²

¹ PhD Candidate, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Qeshm International Branch, Azad University, Qeshm, Iran.

² Assistant Professor of Sport Sciences, Qeshm International Branch, Azad University, Qeshm, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Valid or reliable measurement scales can ensure correct and reliable inferences and conclusions are produced. The present research has been conducted to validate the service quality scale for wrestling events.

Methodology: Accordingly, factors and items assumed to be related to the service quality of wrestling events were first identified using a qualitative research methodology and compiled in a questionnaire form. Then, a questionnaire with seven components and 41 questions was finalized, applying the exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Having been distributed, the compiled questionnaires among 384 Iran Wrestling League spectators, were collected.

Findings: The measurement model fits well. Convergent and divergent validity and internal and composite reliability were additionally confirmed for this targeted scale. Therefore, researchers and executives can be recommended to benefit from this same scale to evaluate the service quality delivered in wrestling events.

Originality: Two quantitative and qualitative methods have been used in this research.

Keywords

Confirmatory Factor Analysis
Exploratory Factor Analysis
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1. Introduction

Nowadays, service quality has attracted a great deal of attention in sports event research due to its effectiveness on psychological and behavioral consumer responses, including their participation, satisfaction, and loyalty (Bahrami et al., 2021; Brady et al., 2006; Yoshida & James, 2011). It is a mental and overall perception induced after consuming a product or service (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994). In general, service quality is determined by customer perceptions (Kim-Soon et al., 2014), and it could play a great significant role in analyzing customer satisfaction and retention (Yu et al., 2014). Further, the tremendous significance noticed for providing sports spectators with service quality has led researchers to put much more effort into assessing the quality of sports event services regarding spectators. Sports events are one of the most significant social phenomena experienced in the contemporary century. Indeed, sports events are considered an essential industry in providing the changing society with invaluable mental and physical health. Organizations also regard them as influential in growing the national economy and understanding and approaching cultures (Dobson et al., 2001). The most important reason for the growing attention of researchers to service quality and their subsequent endeavors to measure it is the significant consequences that service quality brings. One of these important consequences mostly emphasized is satisfaction (Pourzarnegar, 2022; Spreng & Mackoy, 1996). Satisfaction is sometimes considered a determining factor in attending a sporting event or recommending it to others in the future (Yoshida & James, 2011). This consequence can result from factors determining service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Kim et al. (2014) found that participants' overall satisfaction is directly affected by their positive experience of a sporting event and its competitive aspects (Kim et al., 2014). The second practical and significant consequence related to service quality is behavioral tendencies.

In the sports spectator literature, behavioral intentions are defined as spectators' clear and positive intentions to attend future games, recommend such attendance to others, and purchase a team's products and services (Biscaia et al., 2013). This definition could also be used in sports consumer and participant literature. Behavioral intention seems to be a good analyzer (predictor) of participants' attitudes toward a sports event (Bang & Lee, 2014). Therefore, it can be concluded that identifying the relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intention is essential in determining participation in future sports events. Some researchers (Jen et al., 2011; Murray & Howat, 2002; Sarlab, 2022; Yoshida & James, 2011; Zhang et al., 2014) confirmed some relationship between service quality, behavioral intentions, and satisfaction (Biscaia et al., 2013; Jen et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2004; Yu et al., 2014). Specifically, satisfaction results from service quality and can significantly impact consumer behavioral tendencies (Choi et al., 2018). In this regard, Cole and Illum (2006) reasoned that a high level of service quality attracts satisfied customers who tend to repeat their purchasing behavior (Cole & Illum, 2006). Biscaia et al. (2013) substantiated that satisfaction with team games increases the likelihood of participating in future games and recommending them to others (Biscaia et al., 2013).

Nowadays, to attract the sports customers' attention and meet their needs sports, it is necessary to provide managers of sports events with the due condition to augment their level of awareness as to the results obtained in studies focusing on boosting the service quality. Understanding factors that improve the service quality and attract customers to sports events helps managers to find effective ways to meet customers' needs and hold league matches better. In addition, the notable growth of sports events has determined the need to conduct specialized studies focusing on exploring the service quality in sports events (Chelladurai, 2014).

Researchers have used different theoretical and measurement models to evaluate the perception of service quality in this field. Still, SERVQUAL has been introduced as the most common service quality evaluation scale (Parasuraman et al., 1988). For example, Kim and Lough (2007) confirmed that the SERVQUAL scale presented by Parasuraman et al. (1988) was the most accepted and valid scale to explain service quality differently. Most studies investigating the service quality of sports have used the SERVQUAL model.

Despite outstanding advances in this field, criticism of the SERVQUAL model has not given rise to using significantly other scales (Parasuraman et al., 1988) in sports research in the past decade, and they have been generally replaced by more relevant service quality dimensions (Theodorakis et al., 2015). However, some researchers have modified this model in their study contexts (Parasuraman et al., 1988) or developed context-specific measures based on every model (Kelley & Turley, 2001; Moon et al., 2011; Theodorakis et al., 2001). For example, Chang and Chelladurai (2003) developed a service quality scale in fitness centers.

Also, Ko et al. (2011) studied event quality in most popular sports and designed a conceptual framework with a particular measurement scale to evaluate spectators' perception of event quality. As a result, they provided the related research community with a comprehensive model compared to other existing studies. This research process examined factors such as match quality, interaction, service quality, match result, and environmental or climatic conditions for holding matches. As a further matter, three dimensions, including physical environment quality (PEQ), interaction quality (IQ), and outcome quality (OQ) Theodorakis et al. (2015) assessed the effects of a sports event's service quality received or perceived by some runners.

On the other hand, Kim et al. (2019), with a specialized approach, studied the quality of sports medicine services provided in the 2018 Winter Games. Further studies on service quality in sports events have examined the effects and consequences caused by this extensively considered motivator. As for the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games, Ribeiro et al. (2018) explored the impact of service quality on social perception. Their study results indicated that the multidimensional structure of service quality was thought to have consisted of technical, functional, and aesthetic dimensions, accessibility, accommodation, and complementary events. They have a significant causal relationship with a positive social impact (including city image, increase in community pride, social experiences, and public infrastructure) and a negative social impact (social conflicts and costs).

These researchers expounded that service quality is a multidimensional structure that several context-specific dimensions have constructed. However, measurements of such systems cannot be stable for a long time as they are affected by contextual characteristics

each sports event may augment. Therefore, the quality of each event should be studied according to its specific background or context conditions.

Wrestling is Iran's most proud sport regarding the world and Olympic competition achievements and is deemed the Iranian national sport. Currently, this sport is contested worldwide in two disciplines, Greco-roman, and freestyle, and its world championships are held annually. Wrestling is in a relatively good position in the Olympics. Due to the distinct global level of Iranian wrestling, many domestic competitions (wrestling premier league, Takhti Cup, national championships, etc.) and international ones (Olympics, world championships, matches with different ages, etc.) are periodically held in this field. Considering the importance and effectiveness of assessing the quality of sports event services and pointing out that the spectators are provided with decent appropriate quality services in most other countries, a lack of scientific studies and fundamental attention to the service quality in wrestling events is felt.

Hence, focusing on the service quality provided to spectators in wrestling sports events can be one of the research priorities in sports management and marketing. In this regard, building a valid and reliable scale to evaluate the service quality of wrestling events provides two items, including the wrestling federation, wrestling league organization, and club managers, directly with accurate information. Also, its promising results can indirectly convince private sector managers to provide sports teams with more financial support and encourage them to support more teams. As the correctness and accuracy of measurement scales play a significant role in obtaining valid results and conclusions, the present study aims to validate measurement scales for the service quality of wrestling events from the spectators' point of view.

2. Methodology

The present research was considered an applied one in terms of purpose and was designed to be a mixed exploratory (qualitative-quantitative) study in data collection. The main goal of the qualitative part was to obtain the main questionnaire factors and items. The participants in the qualitative part included experts in sports events, especially in wrestling, such as the wrestling federation presidents and managers, the referees' committee, and the wrestling league organization, also experts with good knowledge of sports events. Having reviewed the research literature, and prepared the related interview guide, a sample of 17 experts were interviewed to extract preliminary components and items. For this purpose, semi-structured interview sessions were held to determine the primary and secondary factors of wrestling event service quality based on the experts' viewpoints. It was implemented with the structural equation modeling approach to identify service quality characteristics.

As to the quantitative part, the structural equation modeling method was used. Hence, preliminary questions, a questionnaire with a 7-point Likert scale (one = completely disagree; seven = completely agree) were first prepared. Following the general evaluation of the questions and appropriate literary editing, the content and validity of the questionnaire form were assessed using sports management experts'

opinions (n=10). To explore the structural fact, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis was applied.

Finally, a questionnaire with seven dimensions and 41 questions was prepared. Due to the inaccessibility of the exact number of the statistical population and the generalizability of the research results, we distributed 384 questionnaires to collect data. To analyze the data aimed to evaluate the divergent validity and to evaluate the convergent validity, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio and the average variance extracted were respectively used. Also, to meet the internal consistency and the reliability of the questionnaire items, Cronbach's alpha using SPSS software version 26 was applied. Smart PLS2 was used to fit the measurement model overall, using structural equation modeling with the variance-oriented approach.

3. Results

The demographic analysis of the spectators who completed the questionnaires showed that 58.3% were single, and the remaining 41.7% were married. As to education, people with a bachelor's degree (36.7%), diploma (30.5%), associate degree (18.2%), master's degree (10.7%), and doctorate (3.9%) are the most frequent among the respondents respectively. have among the studied sample. As regards employment status, most of the participants respectively were students (43%), freelance (21.9%), unemployed (12.8%), and pupils (8.1%). Their average age was 29.89, and they have averagely participated in competitions for 3.8 years.

In this research, exploratory factor analysis was applied to define and identify the factors affecting the service quality pattern of Iranian wrestling events. Before conducting the factor analysis, for this reason, to ensure the adequate sample size and to determine the correlation between the variables (items), the Kaiser-Meyer-Okin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's test (Table 1) of sphericity were respectively used.

Table 1. Bartlett's and KMO's Results.

| | Value | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| KMO's Value (Sample Size Adequacy) | 0/755 | |
| Chi-square value (χ^2) | 5628/453 | |
| Bartlett's sphericity test | Degree of freedom | 1431 |
| | Significance level | 0/001 |

According to the findings given in Table 1, the obtained KMO value is 0.755. Therefore, the research sample size is sufficient to conduct the mentioned factor analysis, and it is naturally possible to perform the factor analysis for the desired data. Thus, this number of data can be reduced to a series of hidden factors. Further, Bartlett's test results (Sig=0.001, $\chi^2=5628/453$) demonstrated a high correlation between the items. So, it was permissible to proceed with other factor analysis stages. The components' factor analysis results are separately presented with the factor loading value reaped for each factor.

Table 2. Initial values for analyzing questionnaire components of wrestling event service quality (table of commonalities).

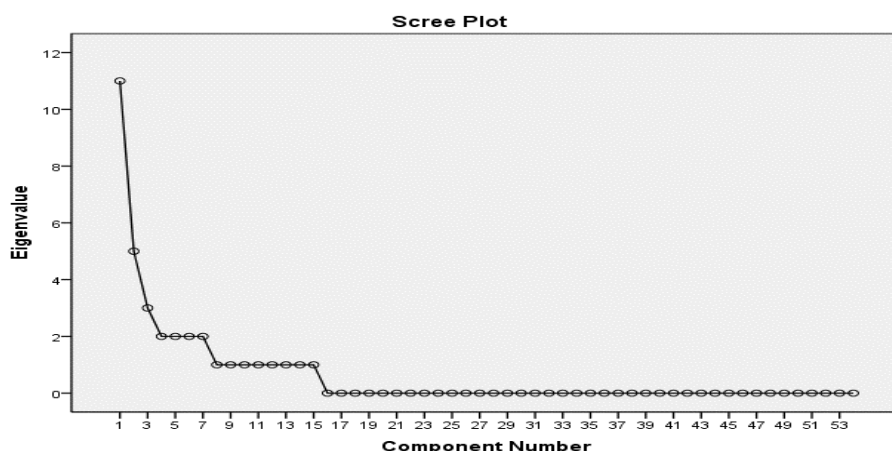
| Item No. | Initial estimation of the share rate of each variable | Item No. | Common factor variance | Initial estimation of the share rate of each variable | Common factor variance |
|----------|---|----------|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Q1 | 1 | Q28 | 0/455 | 1 | 0/771 |
| Q2 | 1 | Q29 | 0/499 | 1 | 0/720 |
| Q3 | 1 | Q30 | 0/633 | 1 | 0/575 |
| Q4 | 1 | Q31 | 0/713 | 1 | 0/733 |
| Q5 | 1 | Q32 | 0/725 | 1 | 0/736 |
| Q6 | 1 | Q33 | 0/516 | 1 | 0/405 |
| Q7 | 1 | Q34 | 0/439 | 1 | 0/636 |
| Q8 | 1 | Q35 | 0/653 | 1 | 0/354 |
| Q9 | 1 | Q36 | 0/435 | 1 | 0/498 |
| Q10 | 1 | Q37 | 0/603 | 1 | 0/548 |
| Q11 | 1 | Q38 | 0/756 | 1 | 0/179 |
| Q12 | 1 | Q39 | 0/440 | 1 | 0/493 |
| Q13 | 1 | Q40 | 0/765 | 1 | 0/443 |
| Q14 | 1 | Q41 | 0/334 | 1 | 0/436 |
| Q15 | 1 | Q42 | 0/545 | 1 | 0/387 |
| Q16 | 1 | Q43 | 0/546 | 1 | 0/498 |
| Q17 | 1 | Q44 | 0/689 | 1 | 0/605 |
| Q18 | 1 | Q45 | 0/582 | 1 | 0/396 |
| Q19 | 1 | Q46 | 0/624 | 1 | 0/637 |
| Q20 | 1 | Q47 | 0/491 | 1 | 0/572 |
| Q21 | 1 | Q48 | 0/771 | 1 | 0/568 |
| Q22 | 1 | Q49 | 0/407 | 1 | 0/730 |
| Q23 | 1 | Q50 | 0/320 | 1 | 0/639 |
| Q24 | 1 | Q51 | 0/732 | 1 | 0/473 |
| Q25 | 1 | Q52 | 0/706 | 1 | 0/366 |
| Q26 | 1 | Q53 | 0/652 | 1 | 0/361 |
| Q27 | 1 | Q54 | 0/736 | 1 | 0/603 |

According to the commonality [Table 2](#), the initial estimation of the commonality rate of each variable revealed that all their value is equal to one. The common factor variance column shows an amount of each variable variance that the factors could explain. The closer to 1 the values are, the greater involvement the related variables have. The smaller values indicated that the variable (item or question) is not suitable enough for factor analysis and should thus be removed from the study. Therefore, the experts modified or removed the variables so that the factors could not determine their changes above 0.3 (or 30%). As noticed in [Table 2](#), the expected variance of all the items has been reported to be more than 0.3. Therefore, all the things would remain in the analysis.

Table 3. Eigenvalues and variance of the wrestling event service quality questionnaire factors.

| Components | Initial eigenvalues | | | Extraction sums of squared factor loadings | | |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|--|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Total | Variance percentage | Collective variance percentage | Total | Variance percentage | Collective variance percentage |
| 1 | 11/417 | 21/142 | 21/142 | 11/417 | 21/142 | 21/142 |
| 2 | 5/899 | 10/924 | 32/066 | 5/899 | 10/924 | 32/066 |
| 3 | 3/503 | 6/488 | 38/554 | 3/503 | 6/488 | 38/554 |
| 4 | 2/580 | 4/777 | 43/331 | 2/580 | 4/777 | 43/331 |
| 5 | 2/418 | 4/478 | 47/809 | 2/418 | 4/478 | 47/809 |
| 6 | 2/139 | 3/961 | 51/770 | 2/139 | 3/961 | 51/770 |
| 7 | 2/069 | 3/832 | 55/602 | 2/069 | 3/832 | 55/602 |

The eigenvalues and cumulative variance percentage values extracted and explained from the data set by each factor have been reported [Table 3](#). According to Keizer's criterion, only elements were selected from [Table 3](#) whose eigenvalue is higher than 1. Other factors with values less than one were removed from the set of characteristics and would not be considered. The results given in [Table 3](#) show that all the 54 items considered in the present research can be reduced to 7 factors, and it is possible to design a new structure by combining these 54 items based on the factors and analyzing the data based on this new structure resulted from such combinations.

**Figure 1.** eigenvalues of factors related to the variables of the wrestling event service quality questionnaire.

Finally, considering the scree plot, the explained variance table, the columns of the initial eigenvalue (three columns on the left,) and extraction sums of squared loadings (three columns on the right), it can be said that a maximum of 41 items has been extracted. Also, the first factor of explanatory variance can be more precisely observed as to the seven factors.

Rotated factor matrix results should be used based on their factor loadings to classify the items into the mentioned factors. Table 4 presents the correlation matrix between the items and factors shown following the rotation. Based on the researchers' opinion, factor loadings with values more than 0.50 are acceptable (Hulland, 1999). The researchers have considered the item classification in terms of their correlation with each other based on the most significant factor loading of individual items.

Table 4. Rotated factor matrix of the wrestling event service quality questionnaire.

| Items | Service provision quality | Technical skills | Interaction | Environment quality | Appraisal | Referee quality | Social value |
|-------|---------------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------|
| Q13 | 0/830 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q21 | 0/823 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q28 | 0/812 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q17 | 0/804 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q11 | 0/801 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q29 | 0/792 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q5 | 0/686 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q15 | --- | 0/704 | --- | --- | 0/704 | --- | --- |
| Q34 | --- | 0/680 | --- | --- | 0/680 | --- | --- |
| Q8 | --- | 0/676 | --- | --- | 0/676 | --- | --- |
| Q16 | --- | 0/605 | --- | --- | 0/605 | --- | --- |
| Q2 | --- | 0/578 | --- | --- | 0/578 | --- | --- |
| Q9 | --- | 0/561 | --- | --- | 0/561 | --- | --- |
| Q7 | --- | 0/546 | --- | --- | 0/546 | --- | --- |
| Q51 | --- | 0/523 | --- | --- | 0/523 | --- | --- |
| Q25 | --- | --- | 0/763 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q26 | --- | --- | 0/731 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q4 | --- | --- | 0/718 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q3 | --- | --- | 0/714 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q18 | --- | --- | 0/709 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q24 | --- | --- | 0/700 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q54 | --- | --- | 0/525 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q47 | --- | --- | --- | 0/744 | --- | --- | --- |
| Q30 | --- | --- | --- | 0/692 | --- | --- | --- |
| Q6 | --- | --- | --- | 0/657 | --- | --- | --- |
| Q10 | --- | --- | --- | 0/625 | --- | --- | --- |
| Q20 | --- | --- | --- | 0/612 | --- | --- | --- |
| Q22 | --- | --- | --- | 0/600 | --- | --- | --- |
| Q12 | --- | --- | --- | 0/563 | --- | --- | --- |
| Q42 | --- | --- | --- | 0/508 | --- | --- | --- |
| Q50 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/734 | --- | --- |
| Q49 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/732 | --- | --- |
| Q48 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/678 | --- | --- |
| Q19 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/653 | --- | --- |
| Q27 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/526 | --- | --- |
| Q46 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/764 | --- |
| Q44 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/729 | --- |
| Q36 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/551 | --- |
| Q37 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/541 | --- |
| Q32 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/823 |
| Q31 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 0/810 |

Based on the findings resulting from the exploratory factor analysis and extraction of seven factors in the being discussed questionnaire, the questions corresponding with the extracted factors are as follows:

Table 5. Service quality factor items of Iran wrestling events.

| Factors | Items | Factor loading |
|---------------------------|--|----------------|
| Service provision quality | The conditions of wrestling racing mats should be at a satisfactory (standard) level. | 0/830 |
| | The conditions of watching the competition area should be at an acceptable level (it should be easily visible from all the points of the wrestling gym). | 0/823 |
| | The price of the delivered services in the competition gym should be affordable. | 0/812 |
| | The quality of facilities should be at a suitable level. | 0/804 |
| | The personnel quality (appearance, personal behavior, efficiency) should be seriously considered to be at a good level. | 0/801 |
| | .The teams' location should be prepared to be appropriate in the competition gym. | 0/792 |
| | The ticket price to be paid for the gym competition should be affordable. | 0/686 |
| Technical skills | Time interference with different competitions should be checked. | 0/704 |
| | Organizing competitions should be performed by the executive staff. | 0/680 |
| | The executive staff should be of rich experience to organize the competitions. | 0/676 |
| | Wrestlers with high technical skills should be employed. | 0/605 |
| | Well-known experienced staff should be employed. | 0/578 |
| | The competition day events should be informed and updated. | 0/561 |
| | Athletes should be of required skills to perform artistic techniques. | 0/546 |
| Interaction | Related people and public should be well-informed before and after the competition. | 0/523 |
| | Good interaction should be established between coach and referee staffs. | 0/763 |
| | Professional courses to teach behavioral principles should be held for team coaches and staffs. | 0/731 |
| | To increase interaction, fans should also be organized. | 0/718 |
| | Fan clubs should be established to expand interaction. | 0/714 |
| | Sports culture should be internalized among spectators. | 0/709 |
| | A Well-educated executive staff should be employed. | 0/700 |
| Environment quality | Acceptable interaction among competition pillars should be provided. | 0/525 |
| | Endeavors should be made to realize easy access to the gym and the targeted places and locations. | 0/744 |
| | Scoreboards should be located in appropriate places. | 0/692 |
| | The gym exit can be easily done. | 0/657 |
| | Locating should be appropriately made in the competition gym. | 0/625 |
| | The gym convenience should be built with enough numbers and in appropriate places. | 0/612 |
| | The gym capacity should be exactly considered. | 0/600 |
| appraisal | Enough and suitable drinking fountains should be situated in the gym. | 0/563 |
| | Beauty and attraction of the gym should be observed. | 0/508 |
| | The spectators' expectations should be met by the organizers. | 0/734 |
| | There should be an appraisal process in different events. | 0/732 |
| | Regulation specific to each competition should be compiled. | 0/678 |
| | Legal cases related to each competition should be redacted. | 0/653 |
| | There should be a conventional and continuous inspection system observing competitions. | 0/526 |
| Referee quality | The referee quality should be at a standard level. | 0/764 |
| | Arranging referees should be impartially done. | 0/729 |
| | Well-known referees with international degrees should be employed. | 0/551 |
| | The match referees should be of required abilities to make required decisions. | 0/541 |
| Social value | Cultural issues and matters should be obsessively observed. | 0/823 |
| | Correct social evaluation should be conducted to perform the competitions. | 0/810 |

To ensure the construct validity and confirmation of the factors identified in the previous step (exploratory factor analysis), the elements were examined using the confirmatory factor analysis test focused on the partial square technique. If the factor load is less than 0.3, the relationship is considered weak and is definitively ignored. Conversely, factor loads between 0.3 and 0.6 are acceptable, and related associations are considered adequate. If the load is more significant than 0.6, it is deemed favorable. The results reported in Table 6, the factor loadings of the research questions have been acceptable, the statistical values have been obtained to be more than 1.96, and all the questions, as a result, would be retained.

Table 6. The results of confirmatory factor loading of the wrestling event service quality questionnaire's items.

| Factors | Question | Factor load | Value t | Significance level |
|---------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|--------------------|
| Service provision quality | 1 | 0/89 | 33/67 | 0/001 |
| | 2 | 0/80 | 17/13 | 0/001 |
| | 3 | 0/79 | 15/86 | 0/001 |
| | 4 | 0/87 | 28/36 | 0/001 |
| | 5 | 0/88 | 28/79 | 0/001 |
| | 6 | 0/86 | 27/65 | 0/001 |
| | 7 | 0/86 | 26/03 | 0/001 |
| Technical skills | 8 | 0/63 | 5/30 | 0/001 |
| | 9 | 0/53 | 2/320 | 0/001 |
| | 10 | 0/64 | 2/94 | 0/001 |
| | 11 | 0/64 | 3/19 | 0/001 |
| | 12 | 0/70 | 3/86 | 0/001 |
| | 13 | 0/59 | 3/19 | 0/001 |
| | 14 | 0/49 | 1/99 | 0/001 |
| | 15 | 0/51 | 2/62 | 0/001 |
| Interaction | 16 | 0/72 | 9/29 | 0/001 |
| | 17 | 0/73 | 10/68 | 0/001 |
| | 18 | 0/70 | 8/86 | 0/001 |
| | 19 | 0/80 | 18/87 | 0/001 |
| | 20 | 0/80 | 19/23 | 0/001 |
| | 21 | 0/81 | 17/07 | 0/001 |
| Environment quality | 22 | 0/54 | 6/13 | 0/001 |
| | 23 | 0/82 | 23/77 | 0/001 |
| | 24 | 0/76 | 14/53 | 0/001 |
| | 25 | 0/45 | 4/53 | 0/001 |
| | 26 | 0/60 | 6/96 | 0/001 |
| | 27 | 0/59 | 7/27 | 0/001 |
| | 28 | 0/52 | 5/51 | 0/001 |
| | 29 | 0/79 | 19/61 | 0/001 |
| | 30 | 0/79 | 19/61 | 0/001 |
| Appraisal | 31 | 0/68 | 13/22 | 0/001 |
| | 32 | 0/56 | 5/26 | 0/001 |
| | 33 | 0/55 | 4/94 | 0/001 |
| | 34 | 0/82 | 16/28 | 0/001 |
| | 35 | 0/88 | 20/55 | 0/001 |
| Referee quality | 36 | 0/61 | 5/36 | 0/001 |
| | 37 | 0/80 | 15/66 | 0/001 |
| | 38 | 0/67 | 7/02 | 0/001 |
| Social value | 39 | 0/56 | 4/98 | 0/001 |
| | 40 | 0/86 | 5/75 | 0/001 |
| | 41 | 0/61 | 3/44 | 0/001 |

Herein, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability indexes were used to examine the reliability and evaluate the internal consistency reliability of the measurement model variables. The index of average variance extracted was also used to explore the convergent validity of the mentioned measurement model. Concurrent validity is used to determine if each question has the highest correlation with its construct compared to other constructs. The average variance extracted explores how much the hidden variable explains the conflict of the questions. In other words, it examines the degree of individual hidden variables' correlation with the related inquiries. The minimum accepted value for the average variance extracted was 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As for Cronbach's alpha index and composite reliability, values higher than 0.7 were acceptable (Mallery & George, 2000). As noticed in Table 7, the values given for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were good for all the research variables. Therefore, the reliability and internal consistency of the research variables were confirmed. Having considered values of the average variance extracted, convergent validity was additionally confirmed.

Table 7. Values of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted.

| Factors | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability | AVE | Significance level |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------|--------------------|
| Service provision quality | 0/93 | 0/94 | 0/73 | 0/001 |
| Technical skills | 0/80 | 0/81 | 0/55 | 0/001 |
| Interaction | 0/86 | 0/89 | 0/54 | 0/001 |
| Environment quality | 0/93 | 0/87 | 0/56 | 0/001 |
| Appraisal | 0/74 | 0/82 | 0/59 | 0/001 |
| Referee quality | 0/70 | 0/76 | 0/55 | 0/001 |
| Social value | 0/73 | 0/71 | 0/56 | 0/001 |

Fornell and Larcker (1981) were used to examine the divergent validity of the research measurement model. Divergent validity is used to check whether each question has the highest correlation with its construct compared to other constructs. According to this same criterion, a latent variable, compared to other latent variables, should be more dispersion among its questions. Specifically, the root means square of each hidden variable variance extracted must be greater than the maximum correlation of that variable with other latent model variables. As can be observed in Table 8, this occurred. So, divergent validity is confirmed (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 8. Values of the measurement model's divergent validity, based on Fornell-Locker's criterion.

| Factors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Service provision quality | 0/85 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Technical skills | 0/71 | 0/74 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Interaction | 0/69 | 0/52 | 0/73 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Environment quality | 0/69 | 0/72 | 0/61 | 0/74 | --- | --- | --- |
| Appraisal | 0/72 | 0/67 | 0/64 | 0/51 | 0/76 | --- | --- |
| Referee quality | 0/68 | 0/42 | 0/43 | 0/35 | 0/69 | 0/74 | --- |
| Social value | 0/46 | 0/23 | 0/39 | 0/20 | 0/43 | 0/63 | 0/75 |

Finally, the commonality index and coefficient of determination (R²) can help test the research model's structural prediction power and quality. The positive values of the

commonality index Q2 indicate the quality deemed appropriate for the measurement model. The coefficient of determination (R²) shows an exogenous component's effect on an endogenous one. The value of this coefficient ranges from zero to one; it is noteworthy that the larger the matter is, the more favorable effectiveness is caused. In sum, values close to 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 are respectively deemed profitable, average, and weak (Bolker et al., 2009).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present research was conducted to build and validate a scale for the service quality of wrestling events. This research identified the most critical components affecting service quality in wrestling events using a qualitative approach. The initial questionnaire was tested using the wrestling competition spectators' opinions based on the factors obtained in the qualitative section. Meanwhile, the findings revealed that the overall research model fits well as seven factors and 41 items are included. The service delivery quality, correct evaluation, the quality of the environments in which matches are held, the referees' qualities, athletes' technical skills, and interaction between tournament organizers and the social event value are seven factors that explain the quality of wrestling sports events.

The high quality of executing competitions and timely holding events satisfies the spectators of sports events. A valid measure for organizations holding competitions is the quality of service in that event, and this category gives rise to great help in making decisions for sports organizations (Calabuig-Moreno et al., 2016). The service quality in sports venues, including the appropriate rate of facilities, the stadium environment, the staff support and use, and services, has a significant impact on the behavioral intentions, satisfaction, and return of the spectators to the sports stadiums (Calabuig-Moreno et al., 2016). In a study on a sports and recreation park in Jiangsu Province, China, Dai et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of service quality in sports venues. It mentioned access to facilities, suitable space, staff services, and environmental safety as components of service quality in sports environments and places.

Further, the service provision quality was recognized in the present study as an effective index in wrestling sports events. So, managers and officials of wrestling sports events are encouraged by the above facts to consider such things as standard conditions of the competition mats, conditions for spectating competitions (being visible from all gym points), the price of the services traded in the competition gym, the quality of facilities, the quality of personnel (appearance, individual behavior, efficiency), the location of the teams in the competition hall and the ticket price. By identifying and considering these indicators and components of service quality in sports events, officials and those involved in organizing events can increase the spectators' satisfaction and provide them with appropriate services to augment the quality of the competitions and satisfy the spectators accordingly.

Undoubtedly, the high quality of holding competitions requires high technical skills. The results obtained in the present research showed that the technical skills of the athletes are one of the main factors which explain the service quality of wrestling events. Brady and Cronin Jr (2001) conceptualized technical quality as an output of service production

and delivery. In other words, technical quality is the quality consumers receive from interacting with a service company. This quality is of great importance for them and service quality evaluation. If the athletes play their role well, represent higher skills, and use all their strength in the competitions, the spectators will be satisfied with the technical quality and feel happy to be in the stadium. In addition, as the opponent team is of high quality and has sound records and history, the spectators perceive that success is not only for the team athletes, but a kind of success can be created for them. Indeed, the praise and admiration of their team can naturally cause happiness and complete satisfaction and superiority for them.

Interaction is another main factor that explains the service quality of Iranian wrestling events. Interaction is reckoned one of the intangible services, including encounters between the stadium staff and the spectators. Regarding service quality, interaction is mainly emphasized as an essential element in making spectators feel good about sports events. For example, [Yoshida and James \(2011\)](#) maintain that interaction is a factor affecting service quality and can provide customers with significant satisfaction. Those engaged in wrestling should consider matters, including interacting between coaches and referees and holding professional courses. The behavioral principles are taught to coaches and team staff, organizing fans, establishing fan clubs to increase interaction, internalizing a suitable culture among spectators, using trained executive staff, and establishing appropriate interactions between the elements of competition.

The present research results indicated that environmental quality is the main factor that explains the quality of services in Iranian wrestling events. [Rozita et al. \(2014\)](#) believed that the environment size, performance quality, and employee competence have a significant relationship with customer satisfaction and behavior. The present research results are consistent with [Rozita et al. \(2014\)](#). Also, easy access to the facilities affects the spectators' perception of the quality of the services provided in the stadium, and it can significantly impact the performance quality. Given such easy access, the spectators feel that the stadium is desirable in terms of its performance. Thus, accessibility is one of the factors mentioned hereafter in environmental quality.

Further, the quality level of access to the competition venue and the quality and hygiene of the platforms are significant for the spectators. The presence of guide signs for spectators' more accessible access to the stadiums can significantly increase their satisfaction. Specific and appropriate markings to guide the spectators outside the stadiums and suitable quality scoreboards inside the stadiums can be two influential factors in improving the environmental quality.

Correct evaluation is another main factor that explains the service quality in Iranian wrestling events. The overall evaluation factor was first introduced in [Shonk \(2006\)](#) research. After that, [Ko et al. \(2011\)](#) proposed the final evaluation factor in the sports service quality. This factor should be conducted after the match. It can be said that the satisfaction that arises from attending a sports event and becoming a fan can be classified into two sub-factors. These two sub-factors of evaluation, namely the pre-and post-game evaluations, have a significant relationship with the service quality, by which emotions and feelings of the spectators are more assessed during and after matches. The overall evaluation includes the probability of attending an event disregarding evaluations of

specific service quality aspects. Spectators' evaluation following the game end is the end point of the game process, which is reckoned as an essential factor in evaluating service quality due to its effective contribution to the overall evaluation. Meeting the spectators' expectations, applying an effective evaluation process in various events, compiling regulations related to each competition, and developing an appropriate and dynamic competition inspection system are included in the essential items that should be considered in the related evaluations.

In addition, the present research results showed that the quality of referees is one of the main factors that can explain service quality in Iranian wrestling events. [Bernthal and Sawyer \(2004\)](#) investigated the referee quality factor for the American Tennis Association tournaments for the first time. In the present study, the referee quality factor is also considered an effective one through which playing time is automatically introduced in the proposed model. Refereeing is the fundamental pillar of every sports event. According to [Kelley and Turley \(2001\)](#), correct game management and the referees' correct decisions are essential for the spectators. Therefore, paying attention to the refereeing quality level, arranging referees unbiasedly, and employing well-known referees with international degrees, also necessary decision-making ability, can significantly affect the event quality. Also, the current research results showed that social value is the seventh main factor employing which the service quality can be explained in Iranian wrestling sports events. These findings are consistent with [\(Ribeiro et al., 2018\)](#). Specifically, [Ribeiro et al. \(2018\)](#) investigated the service quality and social perception of the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games (2016), and they proposed an excellent psychometric analysis of the multidimensional service quality structure, including technical, functional, and aesthetic dimensions, and aspects of accessibility, accommodation and supplementary events. In their results, the service quality structure was significantly correlated with positive social impacts (favorable city image, increased community pride, improved social experiences, and public infrastructure, etc.) and negative social consequences (social conflicts and costs, etc.).

Social values include all desirable or undesirable, appropriate or inappropriate things that are fascinated, noticed, and respected by humans. Any matter or anything, whether material or spiritual that is valuable and respectful in society, seems to meet the materialist and human spiritual needs, or anything precious and beneficial for a human could be included in the social values. In other words, anything useful, desirable, and ultimately appreciated by a human group is a social value. Based on the present research findings, paying attention to the spectators' cultural issues and evaluating correctly and socially for holding competitions are two essential components of the social values in wrestling sports events, which require the attention of the competition organizers.

Considering the results, it can be concluded that providing services leading to the spectators' satisfaction and reattendance is one of the essential factors in completing the sports event cycle, which will only be achieved with the correct evaluation of the sports event. In this research, in a combined way and with qualitative and quantitative assessment, a valid and reliable scale has been built to examine primary and secondary factors of the service quality in wrestling sports events. The managers and officials

responsible for organizing sports events will be thereby informed of the strengths and weaknesses of sports events to make better decisions for better holding events.

Finally, as a study in managing sports events, this study confronted limitations that should be considered for future studies. One of the limitations was the small sample size taken from wrestling experts. This indicates that care should be taken in generalizing the findings. Also, the results are specific to the participants of Iran wrestling sports events and cannot be generalized to other events worldwide. Although the known factors affecting the service quality of wrestling sports events were explored in this study, further studies are needed to investigate other possible factors which lead to spectators' satisfaction and loyalty.

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ارائه یک مقیاس معتبر برای سنجش کیفیت خدمات در رویدادهای کشتی

محمد حسین محمد میرزا^۱، حمیدرضا سایبانی^{۲*}، مهدی سوادی^۲

^۱ دانشجوی دکترا، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، واحد بین الملل قشم، دانشگاه آزاد، قشم، ایران.

^۲ استادیار گروه علوم ورزشی، واحد بین الملل قشم، دانشگاه آزاد، قشم، ایران.

کلیدواژه

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چکیده

هدف: مقیاس‌های اندازه‌گیری معتبر یا قابل اعتماد می‌توانند اطمینان حاصل کنند که استنتاج‌ها و نتیجه‌گیری‌های صحیح و قابل اعتماد در پژوهش‌ها تولید می‌شوند. پژوهش حاضر به منظور اعتبارسنجی مقیاس کیفیت خدمات برای رویدادهای کشتی انجام شده است.

روش: عوامل و موارد مرتبط با کیفیت خدمات مسابقات کشتی با استفاده از روش تحقیق کیفی شناسایی و در قالب پرسشنامه تدوین شد. سپس با استفاده از تحلیل عاملی اکتشافی و تأییدی، پرسشنامه‌ای با هفت مؤلفه و ۴۱ سؤال نهایی شد. این پرسشنامه بین ۳۸۴ نفر از تماشاگران لیگ کشتی ایران، توزیع و جمع‌آوری شد.

یافته‌ها: مدل اندازه‌گیری توسعه‌یافته پژوهش از برازش کافی برخوردار است. روایی همگرا و واگرا و پایایی درونی و ترکیبی نیز برای این مقیاس هدف تأیید شد. بنابراین می‌توان به محققان و مدیران اجرایی توصیه کرد که از همین مقیاس برای ارزیابی کیفیت خدمات ارائه شده در مسابقات کشتی استفاده کنند.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: در این تحقیق از دو روش کمی و کیفی استفاده شده است.

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Introducing a Talent Sports Business Management Model in the Corona Pandemic

Ehsan Shahgholi¹, Mehdi Salimi^{2*} , Rasool Nazari³ , Javad Mohammadi⁴

¹ PhD Candidate in Sport management, Physical Education faculty, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran.

² Associated Professor in Sport Management, Sport Sciences Faculty, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

³ Associated Professor in Sport Management, Physical Education Faculty, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran.

⁴ PhD in Sport Management, Kish International Campus, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The coronavirus has posed significant challenges to organizations' talent management systems. Therefore, a model for talent management of sports organizations has been designed and validated to adapt to this situation.

Methodology: This research is mixed (qualitative-quantitative) in terms of applied purpose and collection method. This study's statistical population comprised experts in sports management at the university, many implementations, and the Ministry of Sports and Youth staff. The purposive sampling method was used for qualitative sampling, and sampling continued until the theoretical saturation was reached; based on this, 15 interviews were conducted. In the quantitative section, 405 samples based on the number of parameters calculated in the qualitative area were randomly selected. Coding and confirmatory factor analysis were used to analyze the data: The structural-breath (ISM) method and ISM software.

Findings: The results showed that talent management of sports organizations is a function of causal factors (strategic agility, diversity management, convergent innovation, flexibility maturity, business intelligence, electronic knowledge management), contextual (online learning and training, organizational transformation, digital transformation) And interventionist (globalization, turbulent atmosphere, global mobility) and by applying blockchain implementation strategies for selection and recruitment, electronic human resource management, strategic alignment and strategic identification of human capital, one can expect personal and organizational consequences. It was positive for sports organizations. Based on the obtained results, talent management in sports organizations is affected by causal, contextual, and intervening conditions, and in dealing with them, the mentioned organizations need a blockchain system for selection and employment. Plan and implement e-human resource management, strategic alignment, and strategic identification of human capital.

Originality: One of the challenges of today's sports organizations is talent management. In this research, an attempt was made to provide a comprehensive model in this field with a comprehensive view and simultaneously with the outbreak of the Corona pandemic.

Keywords

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CONTACT Mehdi Salimi m.salimi@spr.ui.ac.ir

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1. Introduction

Practitioners and academics consider talents a unique resource that can determine a favorable organizational outlook – in various business settings, including sports (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Thereby, McKinsey & Company consultants set talents in focus, highlighting the “war for talent”, i.e. organizations’ imperative to attract, develop and retain talents as a core organizational performance driver (Chambers et al., 1998). Talent management has experienced the most significant growth over the last two decades (McDonnell et al., 2017). Due to its competitive nature, talent management was introduced and welcomed in private organizations and large multinational companies (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018). Its scope has been extended to sports organizations because of properly utilizing talent management and its dimensions. It is possible to improve the productivity of human resources and, consequently, innovation in sports organizations and cause more efficiency of talented people in the organization (Lotfi Yamchi et al., 2017). However, recent studies show that many large organizations, including sports organizations, face severe problems with the shortage of talented individuals (Mousavi Cheshmeh Kaboudi et al., 2020). Talent management is defined as implementing integrated or systemic strategies to improve recruitment, nurturing, and retaining processes according to their skills and meeting the future and present needs of the organization (Wright et al., 2003). It has several levels, and talent management perspectives determine talent management practices that affect organizational, group, and individual outcomes (Aljbour et al., 2022). Talent management assures the organization that qualified people with appropriate skills are in suitable positions to achieve the expected business goals. Talent management includes a complete set of processes for successfully identifying, employing, and managing individuals to implement the business strategy required by the organization. These processes, which are effective in the life cycle of employees, are divided into three main areas: talent recruitment, alignment and retention of talents, and talent development (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021; Pruis, 2011).

Currently, the coronavirus pandemic has created significant challenges for talent management systems of organizations, including stopping hiring and firing employees, blocking salaries, canceling bonuses, reducing salaries, changing the way they work (e.g., working remotely), increasing stress and burnout (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021; Khoshbakht Ahmadi et al., 2022). Also, this virus has changed the future of talent management, and it is observed that organizations in the face of this situation use more than the capacity of information technology and avoid traditional measures for talent management (Haak-Saheem, 2020). So that at present, many companies and organizations attract top talents through social networks (Pandita, 2021). In addition to what has been mentioned, this virus has completely disrupted individuals' daily lives and working lives (Li et al., 2021). And the sudden growth of the pandemic has led to economic fluctuations, a significant increase in the unemployment rate, widespread changes in the activities of organizations, and fundamental reforms in working and management styles (Lee & Trimi, 2021). Therefore, to adapt to these unprecedented challenges, organizations must improve their external and internal performance by

modifying their business continuity plans, changing management strategies and policies, and downsizing the workforce. Many businesses and organizations made changes to manage their operational and economic challenges. However, there has not been any significant progress in the talent management of organizations (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021; Lee & Trimi, 2021). Previous research shows that the formation of talent management is subject to various forces and subjects. This means that these forces must exist in the organization and its pillars to expect the formation of optimal talent management. Dayeh and Farmanesh (2021) found that talent management relates to organizational commitment and intention to leave employees. Also, organizational culture plays the role of moderating variable. In contrast, Setyawan (2021) concluded that talent management has a positive and significant effect on organizational performance, but organizational culture has no significant role between talent management and organizational performance. Also, Mujtaba and Mubarik (2022) showed that talent management positively affects organizational sustainability and that sustainable behaviors mediate the relationship between talent management and organizational sustainability. Aguinis and Burgi-Tian (2021) examined the challenges of talent management during and after the coronavirus and then reported that measuring the results simultaneously with measuring behaviors, measuring adaptive performance, consulting and consulting to preserve top talents, implementing a multipurpose performance management system, collecting and using performance promoting privileges are the only solutions to overcome the emerging challenges. Al-Dalahmeh and Héder-Rima (2021) also found that talent management measures can significantly explain the willingness to leave the staff and negatively reduce this negative behavior among the mentioned employees. Chen et al. (2021) showed that a strategic talent management system could positively affect employees' positive behaviors if planned carefully with a focus on investment in talented individuals (Chen et al., 2021). Haak-Saheem (2020) concluded that information technology capacity should be used to avoid the destructive consequences of Corona. In another study, Anlesinya and Amponsah-Tawiah (2020) discovered that organizational responsibility (organizational accountability), organizational justice, and job opportunities are the principles of a responsive talent management system. If this system is implemented, sustainability results will emerge favorably at different levels of employee welfare, corporate welfare, and work. Saeedi et al. (2020) confirmed the effect of the mental model on open innovation in Iran's sports industry manufacturing sector with the role of talent management mediator (Saeedi et al., 2020). In addition, Mahmodi et al. (2020) identified the success of career path and recruitment capability in subsequent projects based on future talent management and prospective career path behaviors (Mahmodi et al., 2020). Finally, Maleki et al. (2020) showed that at the highest level of performance management factors and other levels, discovery and recruitment and strategy and foresight factors, factors of development, evaluation and implementation, knowledge and information and variability and transformation, factors of establishment and utilization, maintenance and services as well as synergy and coherence, organizational participation factor, factors of self-based adjectives, freedom and independence Competency and job capability and at the lowest level of effectiveness are the effective

roles on talent management. What is inferred from reviewing past research is that different factors play a role in the formation and promotion of talent management in different organizations. These factors vary depending on the type of organization, and the vast majority are derived from research that has been reviewed regardless of crises (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021; Haak-saheem, 2020; Lee & Trimi, 2021). In addition, little research has been conducted on talent management in sports and sports organizations. It has been investigated whether any research is like normal situations without crises. In addition, little research has been conducted on talent management in sports and sports organizations. It has been investigated whether any research is like normal situations without crises. Such a trend in research has led to the formation and improvement of talent management in the past, which is now void with the pandemic crisis. According to Aguinis & Burgi-Tian (2021) and Haak-Saheem (2020), talent management systems do not function as they did before because they have not experienced crisis managers similar to the coronavirus before and have not already planned to face it (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021; Haak-Saheem, 2020). This has caused more uncertainty and variability in talent management systems in different organizations. As a result, organizations are currently facing the problem of a shortage of talented individuals, even though the effects of this crisis are expected to continue for years to come. In such a situation, managers of sports organizations need to know what factors play a role in the development of human resource talent management and how to manage talent management optimally as before during Corona and post-Corona. Therefore, the researcher in this study seeks to design and validate the talent management model of sports organizations in line with the coronavirus pandemic. It is expected that the results of this study provide solutions for the talent management efficiency of sports organizations and the elevation of talent management system weaknesses that have been emphasized in past research.

2. Methodology

This research is applied in terms of purpose and duration of collection method among mixed (qualitative-quantitative) research. In the qualitative part, the data theory of Strauss and Corbin's systematic approach foundation was used, and in the quantitative part, the descriptive-survey method. The statistical population of this study was established in the qualitative section of sports management experts in the university and implementation field and the quantitative section of the Ministry of Sports and Youth staff. A purposeful sampling method was used for sampling in the qualitative selection, and samplings continued until the theoretical saturation level, so 15 interviews were conducted. In the quantitative part, the number of samples was selected based on the number of parameters in the model, and for each parameter, five samples were determined. This means that since the number of parameters was 81 in this study, the sample size was 405. The sampling method in this section was randomly clustered. In addition, semi-structured interviews were used in the qualitative area for data collection. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and after each interview, the contents were recorded and typed. Immediately after the interview, the initial analysis and coding were performed continuously. Lincoln and Guba (1985)

evaluation criteria, including validity, transfer, reliability, and verification, were considered to assess the quality of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the following, while examining the case of each of these criteria, some appropriate strategies for meeting these criteria have been mentioned in the present study. To achieve validity, the following methods were used in this study: A, multilateral assessment: In the process of data collection and information, and selection of research samples for interviewing and designing interview questions, various sources and aspects have been used. B. Evaluation of participants from the research: Interview transcripts and extracted codes were sent to participants in the interview, and their points of view were applied. Transferability refers to the extent to which the study findings can be transmitted or used in other groups or locations. In this study, the following methods were used to achieve this criterion: documentation: All stages of the research were documented in writing for the possible use of other researchers. B. Context logical conditions report: Demographic conditions of interviewees were presented in detail. Reliability: Refers to the stability of data over different times and conditions. In this study, achieving this criterion was done through the following method: A, using two coders: One of the research's management experts in the coding field was assisted. Two interviews were randomly selected, and after the necessary training, coding was performed on them. In each interview, the codes that were similar in terms of two persons were identified as agreement, and non-similar codes were identified as non-agreement. The percentage of agreement between the two coders was calculated using the following formula, and the results were presented in Table 1.

$$\text{Percentage of reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of agreements} \times 2}{\text{Total number of codes} \times 100}$$

Table 1. Results of reliability study between two coders.

| Interview number | All codes | Agreements | Non-agreements | Percentage of reliability |
|------------------|-----------|------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 18 | 7 | 7 | 0.777 |
| 7 | 14 | 6 | 2 | 0.857 |
| Total | 32 | 13 | 6 | 0.812 |

As the table data shows, the total reliability between the two coders is 81%. Since the reliability is more than 60%, the reliability of the coding was confirmed. Conformability: Indicates the relationship between data and resources and the emergence of results and interpretations of these sources. For this purpose, the following methods were used: A, evaluation of experts outside the research process: The results of this study were presented to several university professors outside the research process. After studying and reviewing them, their opinions were obtained. B. Describing the research process: In the present text, the research stages, including data collection, analysis, and formation of themes, are described to provide the possibility of auditing the research for audiences and readers. Also, to confirm the validity of the measurement tool, three types of validity, content validity (a survey of experts confirmed content validity), convergent validity (measured by the extracted mean-variance), and divergent validity (measured by Furnell and Larker method) were used and to determine the reliability of the questionnaire, two criteria of

Cronbach's alpha coefficient and Compound reliability coefficient were used. Finally, the qualitative section used three overlapping processes of open coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding to analyze the data. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis was used using Smart PLS software in the quantitative part.

3. Results

In this study, 15 experts were interviewed to achieve the study's primary objective after studying books, articles, documents, and documents. Demographic information of these individuals is visible in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Demographic information of participants.

| Serial number | Experience | Education | Field of Study | Field of Activity | |
|---------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| | | | | University | Executive |
| 1 | 15 years | PhD | Physical Education and Sport Sciences | | ✓ |
| 2 | Nine years | PhD | Sports Management | ✓ | |
| 3 | 18 years | PhD | Physical Education and Sport Sciences | | ✓ |
| 4 | 13 years | PhD | Sports Management | | ✓ |
| 5 | 17 years | PhD | Sports Management | | ✓ |
| 6 | 23 years | PhD | Physical Education and Sport Sciences | | ✓ |
| 7 | 11 years | PhD | Sports Management | ✓ | |
| 8 | Seven years | PhD | Physical Education and Sport Sciences | | ✓ |
| 9 | 21 years | PhD | Sports Management | ✓ | |
| 10 | 25 years | PhD | Sports Management | | ✓ |
| 11 | 14 years | PhD | Sports Management | ✓ | |
| 12 | 16 years | PhD | Sports Management | ✓ | |
| 13 | 15 years | PhD | Physical Education and Sport Sciences | | ✓ |
| 14 | 19 years | PhD | Physical Education and Sport Sciences | ✓ | |
| 15 | 13 years | PhD | Sports Management | ✓ | |

Based on the text of all interviews in the open coding stage, 81 primary concepts or codes were identified. Then, in the pivotal coding phase, considering the semantic affinity of the identified concepts, 18 sub-categories, including globalization, turbulent space, global mobility, implementation of a Blockchain system for selection and recruitment, business intelligence, online learning and education, organizational transformation, flexibility maturity, digital transformation, convergent innovation, electronic, human resource management, diversity management, strategic alignment, strategic identification of human capital, strategic agility, electronic knowledge management, personal consequences, and organizational consequences were formed. Finally, five main categories were developed based on sub-categories: causal factors, underlying factors, interventional factors, strategies, and outcomes. [Table 3](#) shows how the coding process is specified.

Table 3. Results of the open, axial, and selective coding process.

| Interview Source | Concepts adapted from the interview | Sub-categories | Main category |
|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| P4, P5, 13 | The synergy of diverse perspectives and creating different solutions for problem-solving | | |
| P5, P13 | Participatory decision making | Diversity Management | |
| P14 | Give personality to everyone | | |
| P4, P9, P14, P15 | Maximum use of people's capacity | | |
| P3, P5, P7 | Focus on personal and organizational culture | | |
| P3, P9 | Combining different objects, technologies, ideas, and strategies | | |
| P4, P8, P10, P11, P14 | Creating agility with dynamic capacities | Convergent innovation | |
| P3, P5, P8, P10 | Creating managerial and technological innovations | | |
| P4, P5 | Strengthening technological innovation capabilities | | |
| P2, P3, P14 | Strategic flexibility | | |
| P14 | Technology flexibility | | |
| P2, P14 | Structural flexibility | Maturity of flexibility | |
| P2, P14 | Financial flexibility | | |
| P2 | Human Resources Flexibility | | |
| P2, P8, P14, P15 | Using flexible working practices | | Cause factors |
| P3, P7, P8, P10, P14 | Acceptance and routinizing of business intelligence | | |
| P3, P5 | Integration of scattered and heterogeneous data of the organization | | |
| P2, P4, P5, P7, P10, P11, P12 | Use applications | Business Intelligence | |
| P1, P4, P12 | Providing analytical reports for managers' decision making | | |
| P1, P2, P5, P11, P13, P14 | Database Formation | | |
| P4, P11, P13 | Shared responsibility | | |
| P4, P5, P8, P9, P12 | Clarity and clarity of the landscape | Strategic agility | |
| P8, P11, P12, P15 | Choosing strategic goals | | |
| P9, P12, P15 | Understanding and understanding the fundamental capabilities of the organization | | |
| P3, P4, P8, P9, P11, P12 | Web-based knowledge production and development | Electronic Knowledge Management | |
| P3, P4, P12 | Web-based knowledge transfer and information technology | | |
| P12, P15 | We are using web-based knowledge and IT. | | |
| P1, P4, 6, P7, P9, P11, P13 | Providing efficient educational technical infrastructure | | |
| P3, P4, P14 | Providing the resources needed for online learning | Online Learning and Training | Underlying factors |
| P3, P5, P10, P11, P12, P15 | The relationship between the change management process and online learning and teaching process in the educational system | | |
| P3, P4, P15 | Uniform and increasing change in the environment over time | Organizational Transformation | |
| P1, P7, P9 | Fundamental change in services, processes, systems, structures, and patterns | | |

| Interview Source | Concepts adapted from the interview | Sub-categories | Main category |
|--|---|---|---------------------|
| P7, P9, P14 | Gradual promotion and improvement of services | Digital Transformation | |
| P1, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12, P13, P15 | The use of digital technology in all pillars of the organization | | |
| P3, P4, P6 | Changing process automation using digital technology | | |
| P4, P8 | Using digital technologies to change business models, create new opportunities, revenues, and value | | |
| P3 | Using new technologies such as big data, IoT, cloud computing | | |
| P3 | Change from the traditional model to digital businesses | Globalization | |
| P1, P5, P9 | World-class awareness | | |
| P1, P9 | Action on a global scale | | |
| P7, P11, P14, P15 | Development of cross-border technologies | | |
| P3, P11, P5 | Global Talent Management | Turbulent atmosphere | Intervening Factors |
| P4, P6, P8, P9, P11, P12 | Constantly changing the atmosphere of organizations | | |
| P1, P9, P14 | Unprecedented changes at the organizational level | | |
| P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P10, P11, P13 | Changing demographic characteristics | | |
| P2, P3, P5, P10, P11, P13 | Advances in technologies | | |
| P1, P3, P4 | Global Human Resource Flow | Global Mobility | |
| P9, P15 | Utilizing the experience and expertise of human capital in different places | | |
| P9, P4, P15 | Effective use of global talent | | |
| P5, P15 | Long-term missions and short-term missions | Implementation of a Blockchain system for selection and recruitment | |
| P3, P10 | Adapting people's skills and performance with businesses via Blockchain | | |
| P3 | Discover and hire the right talents through Blockchain | | |
| P3 | Verifying applicants' resumes, verifying credentials, and checking candidates' records via Blockchain | | |
| P3 | Identifying volunteers' skills, knowledge, and experiences through Blockchain | Strategy | |
| P1, P3, P9, P10 | Informed and directed support of web technology-based employees | | |
| P10 | Performing many human resource tasks electronically | | |
| P10, P11 | Electronic compensation of services | | |
| P10 | Electronic Performance Evaluation | Human Resources Electronic Management | |

| Interview Source | Concepts adapted from the interview | Sub-categories | Main category |
|--|--|---|---------------|
| P10 | Covering an employee's entire life cycle from volunteering and hiring to quitting a web technology-based job | Strategic alignment | |
| P8, P9, P15 | Combine all constituent parts of a whole to achieve the common goal | | |
| P1, P8 | Connecting organization components | | |
| P11 | Aligning human resources activities with the organization's strategy | | |
| P11, P12 | Emphasis on Unity | | |
| P3 | Creating coordination and consistency among the organization's strategies | Strategic Identification of Human Capital | |
| P8, P11 | Using a centralized process instead of a traditional human resource strategic management perspective | | |
| P8 | Identification of vital human resources | | |
| P8, P10, P14 | Evaluation of human capital adaptation with strategic capabilities required | | |
| P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P13 | Increase employee trust | | |
| P1, P2, P8, P12, P14, P15 | Increase employee satisfaction | Individual consequences | |
| P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P11 | Increasing employees' belonging to the organization | | |
| P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P12, P14, P15 | Attracting talented people | | |
| , P2, P3, P7, P8, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15 | The persistence of talented people in the organization | | |
| P3, P4, P6, P9, P11 | Improving employee performance | | |
| P1, P2, P3, P4, P10, P11, P12 | Reducing costs and delaying the selection and recruitment process | Organizational Consequences | Consequences |
| P3, P5, P7, P11 | Improving hiring automation | | |
| P10, P11 | Adapting the needs of the organization and the competencies of the workforce | | |
| P3, P4, P8, P11 | Integrating organization information | | |
| P3 | Improving the decision-making process | | |
| P2, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P11 | Reduce management costs | Organizational Consequences | |
| P1, P2, P3, P4, P8, P9, P11, P12, P13, P14 | Increase organizational productivity | | |
| P2, P8, P10, P14, P15 | Accelerate accountability | | |

Finally, after identifying the initial concepts, sub-categories, and main categories of the talent management model of sports organizations along with the coronavirus pandemic, the link between types was depicted in the form of [Table 3](#). According to the talent management model of sports organizations, along with the coronavirus pandemic,

it is subject to the causal conditions of business intelligence, maturity of flexibility, convergent innovation, diversity management, strategic agility, and electronic knowledge management. These categories directly affect the talent management of sports organizations when Corona exists. It was also found that in this situation, the underlying factors of online learning and education, organizational transformation, and digital transformation are environmental factors that affect talent management strategies. In contrast, the interfering factors as external factors were subject to globalization, turbulent atmosphere, and global mobility. In addition, to manage the talent of sports organizations, it was found that implementing a Blockchain system for selection and recruitment, electronic, human resource management, strategic alignment, and strategic identification of human capital are among the strategies of this system. Finally, it was found that using appropriate techniques for talent management of sports organizations can be expected to have positive individual and organizational consequences.

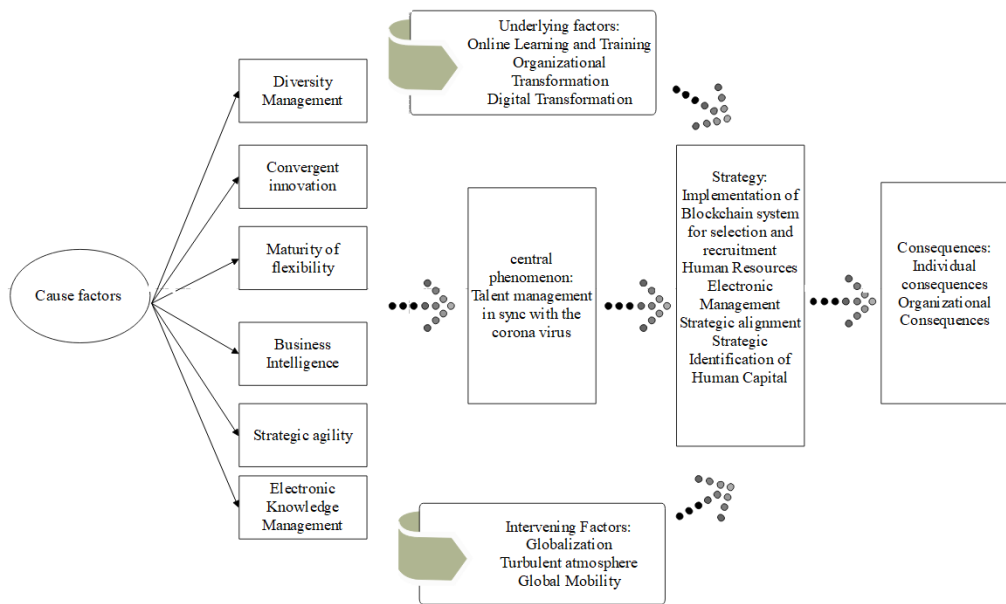


Figure 1. Talent sports business management model of sports organizations during the coronavirus pandemic.

Then, a second-order confirmatory factor analysis approach was used to confirm the results of the qualitative section. [Figures 2](#) and [3](#) of confirmatory factor analysis were presented as t-statistic output and factor load.

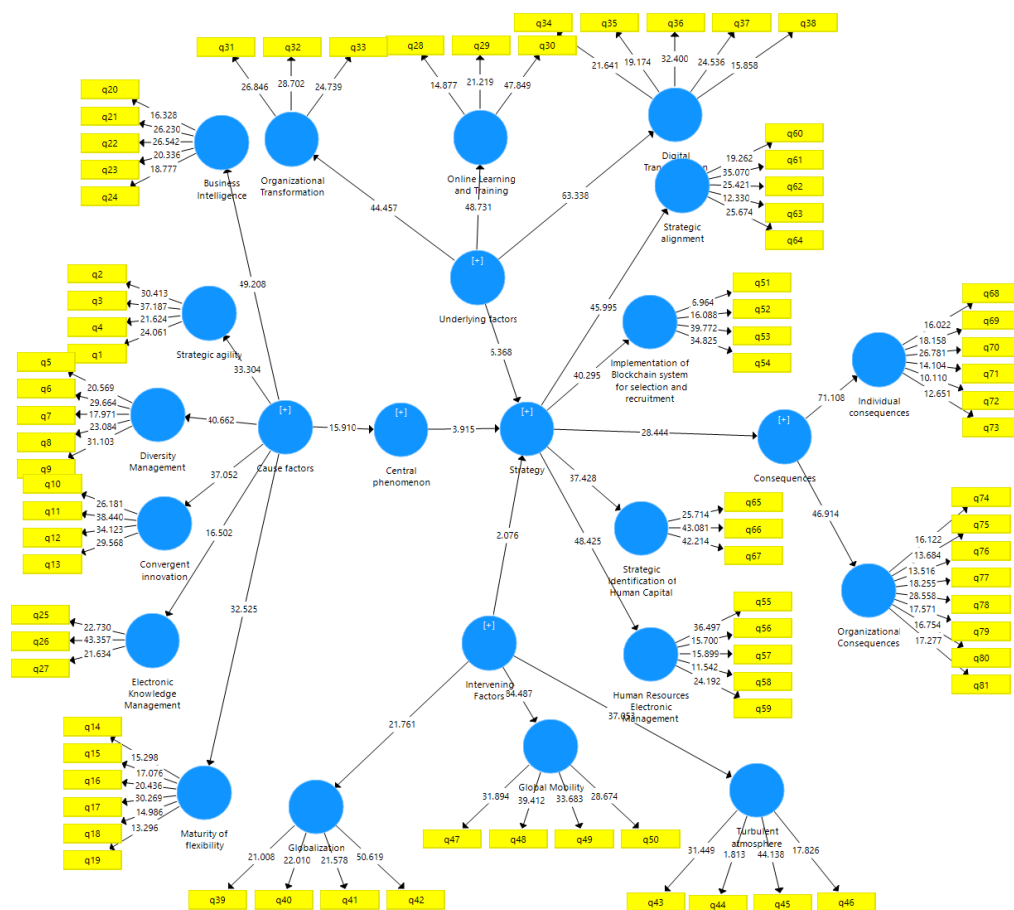


Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis of the talent management model of sports organizations in a significant state.

According to the above figure values, all the significant coefficients of t are higher than 1.96, which indicates the significance of all questions and relationships between variables at the confidence level of 0.95. Also, Figures 3 show the factor loads (λ) for each reference (obvious variables).

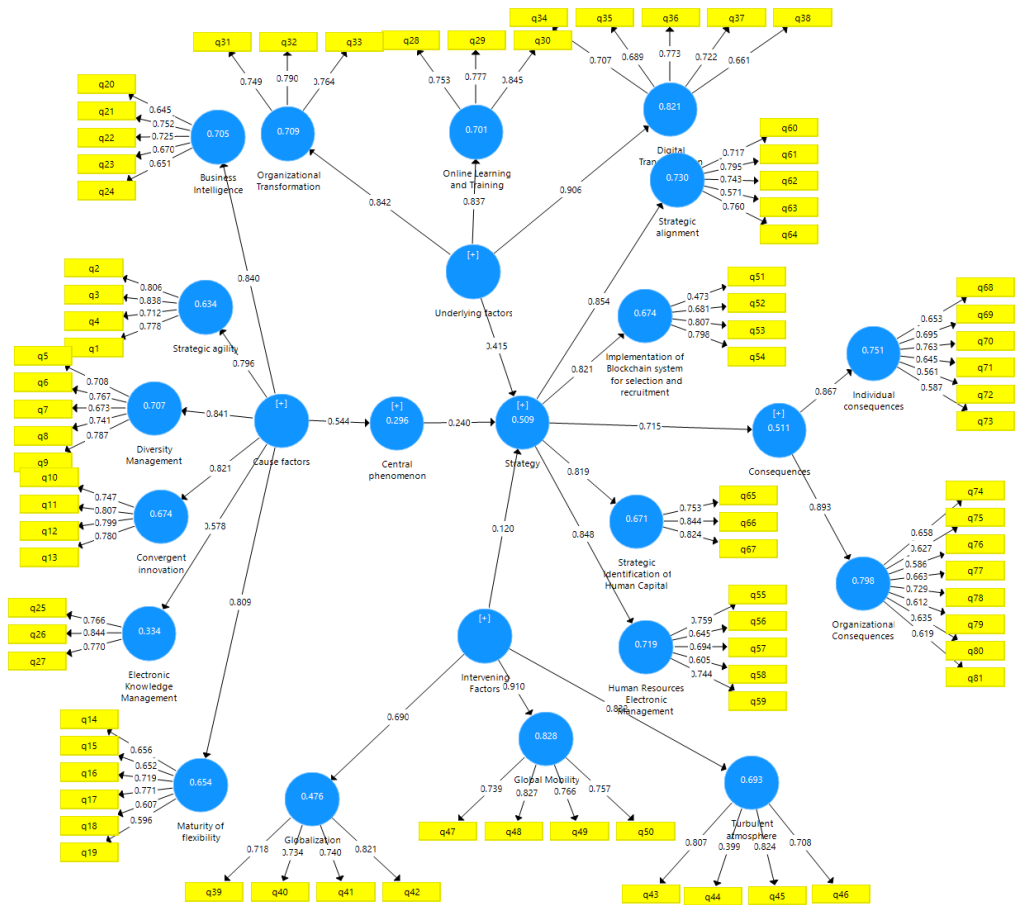


Figure 3. Confirmatory factor analysis of talent management model of sport organizations in standard mode.

According to the results, the number of factors loads of obvious variables from the cut-off point was 0.4, and the value of T-those statistics was higher than the cut-off points of 1.96.

In Table 4 Cronbach's alpha coefficient and compound reliability coefficient, and the average extracted variance are presented. The reported values confirmed the reliability and convergence validity of the components (sub-categories).

Table 4. Demographic information of participants.

| Variables | Components | Cronbach Alpha | Combined reliability | Convergent narrative |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Cause factors | Strategic agility | 0.791 | 0.865 | 0.628 |
| | Diversity Management | 0.788 | 0.855 | 0.542 |
| | Convergent innovation | 0.790 | 0.864 | 0.614 |
| | Maturity flexibility | 0.752 | 0.829 | 0.548 |
| | Business Intelligence | 0.724 | 0.724 | 0.576 |
| Background factors | Electronic Knowledge Management | 0.707 | 0.707 | 0.631 |
| | Online Learning and Training | 0.705 | 0.835 | 0.628 |
| | Organizational Transformation | 0.652 | 0.812 | 0.590 |

| Variables | Components | Cronbach Alpha | Combined reliability | Convergent narrative |
|---------------------|---|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Confounding Factors | Digital Transformation | 0.755 | 0.836 | 0.506 |
| | Globalization | 0.750 | 0.842 | 0.572 |
| | Turbulent atmosphere | 0.650 | 0.792 | 0.499 |
| | Global Mobility | 0.774 | 0.856 | 0.597 |
| Strategies | Blockchain implementation for selection and recruitment | 0.642 | 0.790 | 0.594 |
| | Human Resources Electronic Management | 0.728 | 0.820 | 0.579 |
| | Strategic alignment | 0.765 | 0.843 | 0.520 |
| | Strategic Identification of Human Capital | 0.733 | 0.849 | 0.653 |
| consequences | Individual consequences | 0.729 | 0.816 | 0.528 |
| | Organizational Consequences | 0.796 | 0.848 | 0.513 |

Furnell and Larker's method was used to confirm divergent validity. According to the test results, the primary diameter of all structures was higher than its correlation with other structures, which shows the appropriate divers' validity and good fit of the measurement model.

4. Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to design and validate the talent management model of sports organizations in line with the Coronavirus crisis. Based on data-based findings, talent management, along with the coronavirus in sports organizations, is subject to causal conditions of strategic agility, diversity management, convergent innovation, maturity of flexibility, business intelligence, and e-knowledge control. This finding is consistent with the results of hourly studies by [Maleki et al. \(2020\)](#) that pointed to knowledge and information factors. Strategic agility is one of the most critical factors affecting performance, especially in the case of environmental uncertainty ([Pourzarnegar, 2022](#)). Operational, strategic agility allows organizations to improve performance in dynamic and competitive environments by modifying existing products and services. Operational, strategic agility enhances performance further by achieving greater efficiency in operations. In environmental competition, exploratory strategic agility helps organizations avoid fierce competition by providing new products and services. One of the most critical factors in the survival and progress of organizations in today's dynamic environment is their Agility. The characteristic of future environments is change and uncertainty. In such an environment, how should organizations function to benefit from changes while maintaining their position in the environment? Management science has also witnessed changes according to this principle. Management, whether in the public or private sectors, is responsible for the proper use of production factors for the three goals of the organization, employees, and the government.

For this reason, it isn't elementary to play a management role in this era. Also, in today's organizational environment, managing diversity in the workforce is very important for the success of organizations ([Davis et al., 2016](#)). Diversity creates a competitive advantage with the help of organizations to attract and retain the best employees, grow creativity and improve decision-making ([Foster & Harris, 2005](#)). However, if diversity is

not managed correctly, it can be the source of conflict that leads to inefficiency, poor quality, lack of creativity and innovation, and increased job turnover (Farrer, 2004). Diversity management goes beyond hiring diverse employees and means learning to assess and respond appropriately to the needs, attitudes, and values that various employees bring to an organization and finding the most effective ways to use diverse workforce skills and talents (Abaker et al., 2019). Also, the need for innovation and stimuli such as increased competition and integration have led organizations to move towards structures where work teams are the primary units (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). In a study entitled *Convergent Innovation in the Digital Age and the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis*, Lee and Trimi (2021) stated that sustainable innovation is essential for organizational survival and success in a turbulent market environment in the digital age, especially in the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis (Lee & Trimi, 2021). They believe that organizations should have agility with dynamic capacities to survive and grow in this new market space. In the face of unpredictable crises such as market turnaround (e.g., recession), political uncertainty (e.g., geopolitical and trade wars), climate change, wars, and health issues (e.g., the global COVID-19 pandemic), organizations must face the most severe sustainability tests. Organizations must rely on their innovation capacities to survive and flourish in times of crisis. In addition, the maturity of flexibility results from a macro vision, which makes it understandable and facilitates the implementation of flexibility in the organizational environment, ultimately leading to sustainable performance. This research provides a new flexible perspective for managers and researchers in software development. Sports organizations should carefully assess their current maturity level and try to develop selective measures or indicators that improve organizational performance. In addition, business intelligence is converting raw data into business and management information, which helps managers make their decisions faster and better and show a correct and accurate performance based on the correct information. Business intelligence is also a technology-based process used to analyze data to help senior managers, middle managers and other users make optimal decisions. Finally, sports organizations can access, create, organize, and use knowledge through electronic knowledge management. Organizations can also expand their knowledge of access to partners and business customers, even if special areas are limited. This can play an important role in the development of talent management as technology can promote knowledge culture by changing employers' habits in communication, participation, information sharing, learning, and decision-making. Also, based on data-based findings, talent management, along with the coronavirus in sports organizations, is subject to the underlying conditions of online learning and education, digital transformation, and organizational transformation. This finding is consistent with the Haak-Saheem (2020) results that reported the use of information technology capacity to avoid the destructive consequences of Corona. In explaining online learning and education, it can be noted that education in sports organizations has been significantly disrupted due to the limitation of dynamism and limited educational activities exchange programs along with the coronavirus (Haak-Saheem, 2020). Meanwhile, third-world organizations are facing policy inefficiency, inefficient technical infrastructure for management and organization during this pandemic, academic incompetence, and a lack of resources to control the scene of the

sudden change in educational planning. Small sports organizations are especially the most affected because they are not currently funded. But all sports organizations should learn to live and survive the current crisis because this is just the beginning. In the long run, no one can neglect digital transformation in the education of organizations. Also, it can be noted that transformation is a kind of organizational improvement strategy introduced in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It is based on insights and awareness of group dynamics and theory and practice related to planning change. In its evolutionary way, the organization has reached a coherent framework of theories and applications that can solve many important human problems. It should be noted that these developments provide guidelines for improving compatibility and adaptation between individuals and organizations, between the organization and its environment, and among organizational elements and components such as strategy, structure, and processes. These guidelines are implemented through change-making programs and activities to resolve the problem in specific and problematic situations. In addition, technological evolution is considered one of the inevitable organizational changes because, in many cases, the continuation of the organization's life depends on the absorption, acceptance, and utilization of new technology. Otherwise, achieving efficiency, innovation, and creating competitive leverage will be very difficult and, in some cases, impossible. Based on the findings based on data, talent management along with the coronavirus in sports organizations is subject to the interfering factors of globalization, turbulent atmosphere, and global mobility. In explaining this finding, it can be noted that the atmosphere of organizations today is very turbulent and constantly changing. In today's digital age, changes are occurring at an unprecedented rate and scale (Brosseau et al., 2019). The current crisis caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic is an extreme example of this turbulent atmosphere. Nowadays, many organizations no longer enjoy developing strategies with multi-year approaches but are trying to plan survival plans for the coming seasons or months (Blackburn et al., 2020). The macro waves of trends such as globalization, technological advances, environmental concerns, changing demographic characteristics, urbanization, global pandemic crisis, and other factors make the market increasingly insecure. The environment will become even more complicated as these macro trends are growing at an ever-increasing rate. For example, globalization has already changed the rhetoric of trade crises and nationalist glow (Lund et al., 2019). In the meantime, the pandemic crisis has accelerated geopolitical differences and severely disrupted the supply chain of most organizations, so many are wondering whether it is the end of globalization (Karabell, 2020). On the other hand, global mobility represents an important element of the current global workforce system. Although the outlook for global mobility has changed considerably in recent decades (Collings et al., 2007), global mobility remains a central element of pioneering strategies (Stahl et al., 2009). However, its topography is complicated, as contemporary organizations and companies rely on various workforce options to meet business needs. For example, permanent transfers, international business trips, commuting, and rotational missions, as well as long-term and short-term missions, are all important elements of the organization's global mobility strategies. Empirical research has confirmed that missions related to management development have changed personnel and role innovation because the officer adapts to the new environment. This

may explain why development missions seem to have more job promotion effects than other forms of mission (Stahl et al., 2009). In the meantime, personality traits of managers and leaders, along with intercultural leadership development experiences and high contact, appear as a key factor in determining the efficiency of global leaders. Finally, global mobility facilitates the development of a shared culture and creates the potential to promote equality and process judgment through the transfer of administrative work (Collings, 2014). In addition, based on data-based findings, talent management along with coronavirus in sports organizations is subject to Blockchain system implementation strategies for selection and recruitment, electronics human resource management, strategic alignment, and strategic identification of human capital. It can be noted that the recruitment system of employees in organizations is forced to enter the era of the industrial revolution in which the digital age continues to develop. The old manual recruitment method will be lost, and a database-based digital system will replace it. The limited manual recruitment method may be scrapped in the next few years and pushed towards a more efficient digital-based recruitment process. Everything will turn into an integrated system called Blockchain. Blockchain is a distributed ledger (open ledger) that can record interactions between two parties efficiently and in a verifiable and permanent way. In this regard, Rhemananda et al. (2021) stated that managers should use this technology in formulating their digital strategies following the development of technologies (Rhemananda et al., 2021). Evaluation of Blockchain potential in increasing efficiency and effectiveness should be considered along with broad future consequences of work. Finally, employers will have a stronger and more reliable talent for recruitment, and volunteers will know they are not wasting their time searching for the result. Through Blockchain, the human resources sector can bring trust and transparency to a flawed system and address future global talent shortages. On the other hand, organizations should have a clear strategy to be supported by other organizational strategies to succeed in existing environments. While previous studies have shown that strategic alignment improves organizational performance, little attention has been paid to various factors of strategic alignment or strategic orientation of organizations (Al-Surmi et al., 2019; Norouzi Seyed Hossini et al., 2022). Despite those years, strategic management scientists emphasize the importance of aligning organizational strategies with the overall business strategy. Such strategic alignment leads to greater coordination and focuses on pursuing organizational goals and improving performance (García-Carbonell et al., 2015). Al-Surmi et al. (2019) showed that triad strategic alignment has a positive impact on the performance of organizations and has an ideal three-way strategic alignment for futurists (prospectors) and advocates (Al-Surmi et al., 2019). Despite what has been stated, the existing human resource management literature does not show how human resource management affects the organization's performance. Hence, a new vision is needed: a centralized process rather than the traditional strategic human resource management vision. This method allows human resource management strategies to be defined and then implemented. Accordingly, the human resource management formula can be defined as a strategic process consisting of different stages developed by the senior management team (Clardy, 2008). Wright et al. (2003) define this process as starting with general strategic stages (environmental dynamics and strategic problem interpretation) and then ending

with specific human resource management activities (identifying vital human resources, defining strategic human resource management, human resource management, and communications) (Wright et al., 2003). As can be seen, identifying vital human resources plays a major role in this process, which correlates strategic analysis with human resource management decision-making. As (Clardy, 2008) asserts, this analysis is needed to assess the durability of projected business strategies, as it allows for assessing to what extent the human capital in the company is adapted to the strategic capabilities required (Clardy, 2008). Identifying human resources is considered the first step in the talent management process. Various authors have considered this as one of the relevant challenges that modern human resource management should address. Due to the complexities and difficulties in identifying and evaluating the main competencies, senior managers do not always achieve the expected results. As McDonnell et al. (2010) explain, this effect can be particularly harmful to the organization because managers cannot find where talents are located in their organization and where they can find the human capital needed to implement the business strategy (McDonnell et al., 2010). Previous literature has identified a few factors that influence the development of different stages of the strategy formulation process. Among them, empirical studies have emphasized the relationship between human capital characteristics. Finally, when organizational stimuli are separated from the decision-making process, the main role of electronic, human resource management is to create infrastructures with a focus on preventing dissatisfaction. For electronic, human resource management to be used strategically, electronic human resource management in sports organizations must be regulated.

Finally, it was found that if the strategies for talent management of sports organizations are applied, individual and organizational consequences will follow. This finding was partly based on the results of Dayeh and Farmanesh (2021), Setyawan (2021), Al-Dalahmeh and Héder-Rima (2021); Anlesinya and Amponsah-Tawiah (2020), Mahmodi et al. (2020) all pointed out that talent management has positive individual, organizational and trans-organizational consequences. In this regard, McDonnell et al. (2010) state that talent development is one of the dimensions of talent management that can improve talent awareness and increase skills or motivation in work. The more knowledge-based organizational activities are, the more education and development play a significant role in responding to the organization's learning needs and strategic necessities.

In general, from the perspective of traditional human resource management thinking, development was only possible through education. It was believed that development occurs when a person can be a good manager. Still, in new human resources thinking and based on the present study results, it can be noted that talent management develops in sports organizations through providing causal factors and controlling the underlying and intervening factors. And the use of strategies is done, and, in this regard, sports managers are the main factor in guiding sports organizations toward achieving the desired goal.

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ارائه مدل مدیریت استعداد سازمان‌های ورزشی همگام با پاندمی کرونا

احسان شاهقلی^۱، مهدی سلیمی^{۲*}، رسول نظری^۳، جواد محمدی^۴

- ^۱ دانشجوی دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی، واحد اصفهان (خوراسگان)، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، اصفهان، ایران.
^۲ دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه اصفهان، اصفهان، ایران.
^۳ دانشیار، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، واحد اصفهان (خوراسگان)، اصفهان، ایران.
^۴ دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، پردیس بین‌المللی کیش، دانشگاه تهران، تهران، ایران.

کلیدواژه

جهانی شدن
سازمان‌های ورزشی
فناوری دیجیتال
مدیریت استعدادها
منابع انسانی
ویروس کرونا
هوش تجاری

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: بررسی ویروس کرونا چالش‌های قابل توجهی را بر سیستم‌های مدیریت استعداد سازمان‌ها تحمیل کرده است. بنابراین جهت انطباق با این وضعیت مدلی برای مدیریت استعداد سازمان‌های ورزشی طراحی و اعتباریابی شده است.

روش: این پژوهش به لحاظ هدف کاربردی و به لحاظ روش گردآوری در زمره پژوهش‌های آمیخته (کیفی-کمی) است. جامعه آماری این پژوهش را صاحب‌نظران حوزه مدیریت ورزشی در حوزه دانشگاه و حوزه اجراء و کارکنان وزارت ورزش و جوانان تشکیل دادند. جهت نمونه‌گیری در بخش کیفی از روش نمونه‌گیری هدفمند استفاده شد و نمونه‌گیری تا رسیدن به حد اشباع نظری ادامه پیدا کرد، براین مبنا تعداد ۱۵ مصاحبه انجام گرفت. در بخش کمی نیز تعداد ۴۰۵ نمونه مبتنی بر تعداد پارامترهای احصاء شده در بخش کیفی به‌صورت خوشه‌ای تصادفی انتخاب شدند. جهت تحلیل داده‌ها از روش کدگذاری و تحلیل عاملی تأییدی استفاده شد.

یافته‌ها: نتایج نشان داد مدیریت استعداد سازمان‌های ورزشی تابع عوامل علی (چابکی استراتژیک، مدیریت تنوع، نوآوری همگرایانه، بلوغ انعطاف‌پذیری، هوش تجاری، مدیریت دانش الکترونیکی)، زمینه‌ای (یادگیری و آموزش آنلاین، تحول سازمانی، تحول دیجیتال) و مداخله‌گر (جهانی‌سازی، فضای متلاطم، تحرک جهانی) است و با کاربست راهبردهای پیاده‌سازی سیستم بلاکچین برای گزینش و استخدام، مدیریت الکترونیک منابع انسانی، همسویی استراتژیک و شناسایی استراتژیک سرمایه انسانی می‌توان انتظار پیامدهای فردی و سازمانی مثبت را برای سازمان‌های ورزشی داشت. با اقتباس از نتایج حاصل شده می‌توان گفت که مدیریت استعداد در سازمان‌های ورزشی متأثر از شرایط علی، زمینه‌ای و مداخله‌گر است و در رویارویی با آنها سازمان‌های مذکور لازم است سیستم بلاکچین را برای گزینش و استخدام، مدیریت الکترونیک منابع انسانی، همسویی استراتژیک و شناسایی استراتژیک سرمایه انسانی طرح‌ریزی و پیاده‌سازی کنند.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: یکی از چالش‌های امروزی سازمان‌های ورزشی مدیریت استعداد است که در این پژوهش سعی شد با یک نگاه جامع و همزمان با بروز پاندمی کرونا، به ارائه یک مدل جامع در این زمینه پرداخته شود.

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Propellants of Promoting Productivity Professional Football Clubs in Iran

Bahareh Yabaloie¹, Rasool Nazari^{2*}, Tayebeh Zargar³

¹ PhD Student in Sports Management, Khorasgan University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

² Associate Professor, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Islamic Azad University, Esfahan (Khorasgan), Esfahan Branch, Isfahan, Iran.

³ Assistant Professor of Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to identify the propellants that affect the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran.

Methodology: The present research is applied in terms of the purpose and duration of nature based on Futures studies and analytical and exploratory methods. Through semi-structured interviews with 16 managers of professional football clubs, sports management professors, and organizational productivity experts, the necessary information was obtained, including seven sections and 60 key indicators. Mick Mac software was used to analyze the collected data from the 7×7 matrix. Mick Mac software was used to analyze the collected data from 7×7 matrix cross-effects.

Findings: Seven general categories of factors include, influential to influential, were identified. They are educational and scientific propulsion, propulsion of proponent of attention, propulsion of budget and finance, propulsion of leadership and management, propulsion of tools and professional behavior, Planning and talent development propellants, and marketing and support propellants.

Originality: As a result, it can be said that to develop the productivity of professional football clubs in the country, marketing, supportive propellants, and planning and talent development, practical factors that are both effective and influential should be on the agenda of sports managers to Iranian clubs to reach a professional level like the clubs in developed countries.

Keywords

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1. Introduction

The ability of managers to plan, organize, direct, and control is growingly compromised. Organizations also face rapid and all-encompassing change. The successful response of organizations in a highly dynamic and changing environment depends on their ability to provide the information they need and find appropriate solutions to the problems they face (Hamory et al., 2020). In this regard, organizational theorists and managers focus on designing an organization's productivity. At present, sport is a moneymaking industry that directly and indirectly changes countries' economies and leads to higher economic growth, and its processes affect other sectors. In this regard, one of the problems faced by the sports industry is its low productivity in developing countries (Aisiyah, 2016).

Productivity is a comprehensive concept; of raising the standard of living, better welfare, peace, and comfort for all countries of the world, which has always been of economic importance; it has been consistently defined in government policy as a necessity. Therefore, in this regard, the researcher states that estimating the amount of production in terms of minimum energy consumption, money, and time is called productivity (Azimi Sanavi et al., 2020; Mohamadzadeh et al., 2013). Productivity is one of the concepts of economics and management, which is defined as: "the number of goods or services produced concerning each unit of energy or labor expended without reducing quality or with efficiency" (Way et al., 2019).

In other words, the productivity of obtaining the maximum possible profit by utilizing and making optimal use of labor, human resources, talent, and skills of human resources, land, machine, money, equipment, time, place, etc., to improve welfare used Placed. Society (Chen, 2019; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Undoubtedly, football is the most popular and participatory sport, so much so that many countries on five continents have considered it their national sport (Begovic, 2021). In this regard, professional football in the world has its definition. A professional club employs about 8,752 people directly in its home country. Football is the second largest economy in the world after oil. Therefore, the fact that the stadiums are full of spectators in domestic, national, continental, and world matches and the hundreds of millions of viewers in competitions and television broadcasts has introduced football as the most popular sport in the world. Football in Iran is also the most common and widespread sport, with the highest number of athletes and spectators compared to all disciplines (Balwel & Tayachi, 2021). Memari et al. (2021) showed that human resources, management, legal, software infrastructure, marketing, and economic indicators were essential in enhancing clubs' franchise power and funds (Memari et al., 2021).

In this regard, professional football clubs can be called a Special trade. However, they operate within the same legal framework as other companies but are strongly influenced by sports activities on the field (Miragaia et al., 2019). In the professional football industry, clubs' income comes from television broadcasting rights, exclusive shirt sales, stadium seat ticket sales, field advertising, training ground, sportswear, and training. They work in various economic sectors such as hospitality, transport, transportation, media, and

tourism. Implementing unit management in sport policy is suitable for creating synergy (Nazari, 2021).

Therefore, it can be acknowledged that football is crucial in promoting international trade due to its importance (Guzmán-Raja & Guzmán-Raja, 2021). Productivity in these clubs is also an important issue that researchers have pointed out in this (Balassiano & Bullough, 2021) in a study of scientific productivity measures in English championship clubs. They stated that there are many differences between clubs regarding the type and proportion of productivity opportunities they offer. In addition, the clubs that have qualified for the Premier League as champions are more productive than the teams in the lower divisions, which shows the importance of these professional clubs. Namai and Okeyo (2020) examined leadership styles in the performance and productivity of Premier League football clubs in Kenya, and they stated that transformational leadership greatly influenced the performance of clubs more than any other style.

Therefore, leadership style is an essential element in the productivity of football clubs and primarily determines the teams' success. A study on the performance of clubs looked at Spanish professional football and stated that the older and wealthier clubs had a relatively high-efficiency level (Guzmán-Raja & Guzmán-Raja, 2021). Identified the variables of football management that lead to sustainable success in European professional football clubs and stated that good financial performance, sporting success, maximizing fan well-being, and leadership and governance in successful Sustainable and productive football clubs are effective. Additionally, sports organizations have conducted internal studies on productivity (Schönberner et al., 2021). Asserts that intellectual and cultural capital plays a significant role in human resource productivity. Therefore, to increase the productivity of human resources, in addition to tangible assets, it is necessary to invest in the intangible assets of employees and provide effective communication between them to provide the ground for the organization's growth (Shahali et al., 2020). examined the productivity of sports federations in the championship dimension with emphasis on financial, material, and human components and concluded that the productivity of these federations was less than average or expected (Shamunian et al., 2020). Also with strategic alignment and strategic identification, one can expect organizational consequences (Nazari & Hajiheydari, 2021).

It is necessary for the trustees and trustees of sports in the country to do sports pathology to improve the sports situation. In addition, provide appropriate formulation strategies in this area and with national supervision over them to give the ground for developing championship sports in various fields. Based on the most important findings, the reason for low productivity in sports organizations can be considered the following: (1) investment in technology that companies do not do, (2) long supply chain, and (3) reduced efficiency of machines in the company. Industrial competition in the fast-paced sports industry requires increasing or improving the productivity of manufacturing companies, especially in the face of global competition with the conditions accepted by the economic community (Wahyudin & Hasibuan, 2019). Most organizations' environments have become increasingly dynamic, uncertain, and unpredictable, and goals are so moving that they are challenging to achieve. Accordingly, the unpredictability of

environmental factors and variables is the most critical obstacle in implementing strategic plans for sports organizations (Farokhshahinia et al., 2021).

The most important strategic factors include supporting public and private bodies, enhancing cultural and social responsibility, developing media awareness, managing systems and processes, developing appropriate infrastructure, improving financial and environmental impacts, and security was identified as being consistent with the club's sustainable development. Finally, two scenarios include scenario consisting of financial resources allocation, unit, and integrated management components; and the second is one the components of specialization and highlighting and modeling to chart the Personal club's future (Nazari et al., 2022), therefore, the degree of unpredictability of future developments and results and its lack of understanding of current knowledge is called uncertainty. Organizations seek to create effective models that can create value for the organization quickly and identify critical issues that affect the success and current and future performance. The key to success in this field is an adaptation to the external environment of the organization. In this regard, the challenges of coping with the uncertainty in sports management today have put many football clubs on the verge of bankruptcy. These clubs try to survive the excitement of the competition, and the main factor in such a strategy for the survival of the clubs is the leadership of the football managers and managers and the efficiency of the clubs. Managers are expected to motivate employees and players with organizational goals to achieve the desired results. Productivity is the most critical factor in achieving the set goals because it is vital in improving organizational performance. Corporate failure and success depend on productivity at all levels.

Moreover, the factors that will plague professional football clubs in the future must be identified so clubs can implement their short-term and strategic plans accordingly. As a result, the present study seeks to answer the question, "what is the productivity propellant s in Iranian professional football clubs?" Therefore, improving the level of productivity in sports today is one of the most critical missions of sports managers. Football has become a capital market today, and its main features are the investment of billions of dollars. Additional transfer fees, astronomical sums for signing football players, battles between sponsors to advertise and promote football players' products, and negotiations for TV rights to find a model. It will attract potential investors and thousands more Others depend on the productivity of professional clubs.

2. Methodology

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and analytical-exploratory in nature. The method of the present study is future research, which has been done in a mixed way (qualitative and quantitative). The method of collecting information is library and documentary. First, the existing documents were examined to contain the propellants for the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran. At the same time, in-depth interviews were conducted in the form of semi-structured and open-ended questions until theoretical saturation.

First, information was collected through interviews with research experts, including managers of professional sports clubs, professors of sports management, and specialists in the field of organizational productivity; in this part, the snowball sampling method was used until the data reached theoretical saturation. Finally, 16 managers of professional football clubs, sports management professors, and specialists in organizational productivity were selected as a sample of the quality department. Although the general method of this research is precise, a full explanation of the research method is necessary. The research method will be based on the research onion model, which will be described step by step in [Figure 1 \(Saunders et al., 2009\)](#).

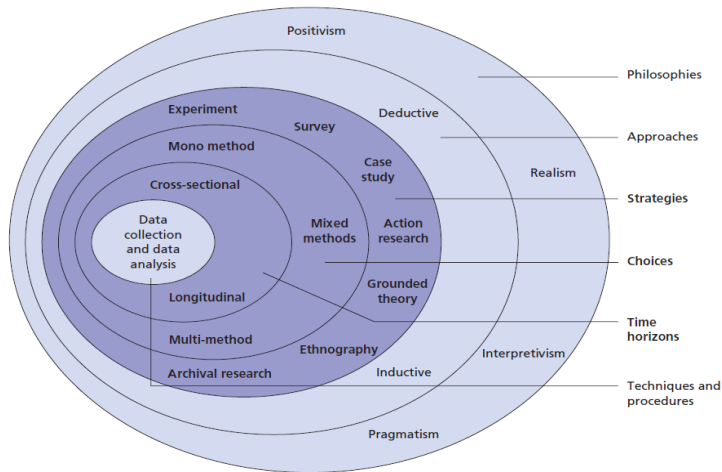


Figure 1. Research onion model (Saunders et al., 2009).

Based on this model, the research consists of several layers in which each layer is affected by a higher layer. Their layers are: 1) the Research Philosophies layer, 2) the Research approaches layer, 3) the Research strategies layer, 4) the Research options layer, 5) the Research time horizon layer, 6) the Data collection and analysis method layer. After reviewing in-depth interviews, factors affecting the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran were provided to the interviewees and, after their approval, were added to the codes. The number of these initial factors was 77. At first, the elements were designed in seven general categories, and a questionnaire was provided to 16 sports management experts, employees, and organizational behavior specialists to confirm the final cases. After three steps of rejection or approval, Factors affecting the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran were obtained using by Delphi method by experts. With the consensus of these experts, the final 60 variables in seven general categories were identified as the main propellants. After this step, the data were prepared numerically from the Delphi questionnaire.

Finally, the impact and effectiveness matrix (Cross Impact Matrix) was formed after collecting indicators and variables in two stages. The 7×7 matrix was provided to the first-stage experts (16 professional football club managers, sports management professors, and

organizational productivity specialists), and the questionnaires completed the matrix. In this questionnaire, the factors were placed in front of each other in rows and columns, and experts were asked to weigh each factor from zero (no effect) to three (highest development) based on its importance and impact. Finally, MIC MAC software was used to analyze the variables and indicators in the final questionnaire using the futures research method and analyzed, which the research process is shown in Figure 1.

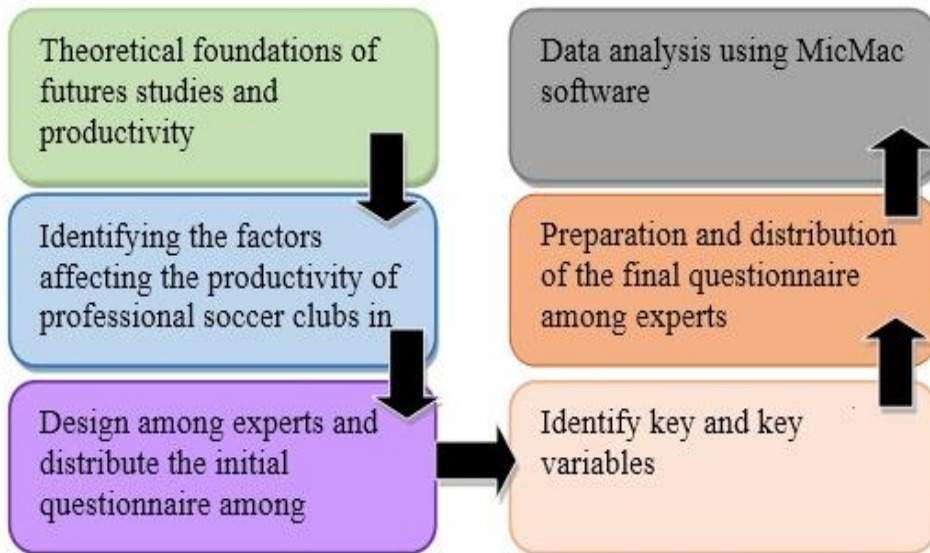


Figure 2. Research Process in futurism of factors affecting the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran.

3. Results

The demographic characteristics of the interviewees are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of the sample under study.

| Frequency percentage | Frequency | Components | Variable |
|----------------------|-----------|---|----------------|
| 37.5 | 6 | Female | Sex |
| 62.5 | 10 | Man | |
| 25 | 4 | 30-39 | Age |
| 62.5 | 10 | 40-49 | |
| 12.5 | 2 | 50 and up | |
| 25 | 4 | Bachelor | Education |
| 37.5 | 6 | Masters | |
| 37.5 | 6 | PhD | |
| 25 | 4 | Manager of a professional football club | Position / Job |
| 37.5 | 6 | Master of Sports Management | |
| 37.5 | 6 | Organizational Productivity Specialist | |
| 100 | 16 | | Total |

To identify the factors affecting the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran through research and in-depth interviews, we identified 77 indicators and provided them to research experts. Seventeen indicators out of 77 hands eventually fell, and 60 were supplied to experts for review. Finally, the key indicators were adjusted in 7 sections and 60 critical indicators with a width of 7 × 7 matrix based on cross-impacts.

Table 2. Specifications of the primary factors affecting the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran.

| Section (Propellants) | Indicator | Item |
|---|--|------|
| Educational and scientific propellants | Permission to participate in decision making | 1 |
| | Positive attitude towards work and club | 2 |
| | Staff training | 3 |
| | Having a work conscience | 4 |
| | Having social discipline | 5 |
| | Preparing the environment for innovation and creativity | 6 |
| | Existence of knowledge management in the organization | 7 |
| | Contribute to career growth and promotion | 8 |
| | Creating a fit between skills and job and personal interests | 9 |
| | Pay attention to expertise and experience in the work team | 10 |
| | Pay attention to moral and legal principles | 11 |
| | Training and updating human resources | 12 |
| propellant Attention to the fans | Attention and respect for the fans | 13 |
| | Giving importance to the fans | 14 |
| | Effective communication between the president of the fan club and the director of the club | 15 |
| | Pay attention to team leaders and select people with knowledge | 16 |
| | Accelerate the provision of appropriate and quality services | 17 |
| | Quick response to fans' problems | 18 |
| Budget and financial propellant | Timely and appropriate payment of player bonuses | 19 |
| | Use payroll systems appropriately | 20 |
| | Existence of facilities and amenities | 21 |
| | Existence of appropriate and available budgets and financial resources | 22 |
| Leadership and management propellant | Creating a workflow in the organization | 23 |
| | Pay attention to the career development of individuals | 24 |
| | Feedback and performance evaluation | 25 |
| | Management stability | 26 |
| | Observance of organizational justice and non-discrimination | 27 |
| | Ability to comment without worry and fear of senior managers | 28 |
| | Use of educated sports people | 29 |
| | Description of specific tasks in application areas | 30 |
| | Use of specialized people in specialized posts | 31 |
| | Pay attention to the importance and role of the CEO | 32 |
| | Emphasis on rules and regulations | 33 |
| | Build infrastructure | 34 |
| | Attention to employee job security | 35 |
| | Attention to the welfare of human resources | 36 |
| Propellant of Professional tools and behavior | Applying standards | 37 |
| | Quality management systems | 38 |
| | Systems Update | 39 |
| | Having strategic thinking | 40 |

| Section (Propellants) | Indicator | Item |
|---|---|------|
| | Establish a solid technical committee | 41 |
| | Acquisition of sports seats | 42 |
| | Existence of political thoughts and tendencies in the team | 43 |
| | Withdrawal of political managers from the body of teams | 44 |
| | Standardization and updating of the stadium | 45 |
| | Transparency of contracts | 46 |
| | Modeling of European professional clubs | 47 |
| Propellant of Planning and talent development | Attention to basic teams | 48 |
| | Establish training camps | 49 |
| | Pay attention to elemental talents | 50 |
| | Create a statute | 51 |
| | Encouragement to become a legionnaire in clubs | 52 |
| | Hiring experts in the field of sports law | 53 |
| Marketing and support propellant | Pay attention to marketing rules | 54 |
| | Privatization in clubs | 55 |
| | Get the proper TV broadcast | 56 |
| | Pay attention to sponsorship | 57 |
| | Pay attention to the development of the club brand | 58 |
| | Create club-related stores to sell products | 59 |
| | Pay attention to copyright law in providing the equipment related to the club brand | 60 |

By analyzing the key indicators and required data, the dimensions of the 7×7 matrix with Mic Mac software and cross-impact analysis method, the degree of matrix filling was 77.55%. Out of 38 measurable matrix relationships, 16 have three cross-impacts, meaning that the indicators are mutually influential and interact. Fourteen associations have type two cross-impacts, meaning they reinforce each other. Eight relationships have a variety one cross-impacts, meaning they have a more significant impact on other indicators. 11 relationships of cross-impacts have neither affected nor been affected by each other [Table 2](#).

Table 3. MDI matrix.

| Total | Degree of filling | Empowering | Booster | Effective | Effectless | Repeat | Matrix dimensions |
|-------|-------------------|------------|---------|-----------|------------|--------|-------------------|
| 38 | 77.55 | 16 | 14 | 8 | 11 | 2 | 7×7 |

The results of cross-impact analysis based on MDI and MII matrices show that many indicators include attention to marketing rules, privatization in clubs, getting the right to broadcast TV, attention to sponsorship, focusing on the brand development of the club, creation of club-related stores to sell products, attention to copyright law in providing the equipment related to the club brand, as for indicators of marketing and propulsion support and, indicators such as attention to grassroots teams, creating training camps, paying attention to talent talents, creating statutes, training legionnaires in clubs, hiring experts in the field of sports law as indicators of propellant of Planning and talent development, have a significant role in improving system relations.

These indicators are the most essential and effective in developing the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran. The future of the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran depends on the development of these propellants. In addition, as be seen from the distribution of variables, the two groups of propellants (23 markers) that have the most impact and the most negligible impact are in the northwestern region of [Figure 2](#).

These indicators include permission to participate in decision-making, Positive attitude towards work and club, Staff training, work conscience, social discipline, preparing the environment for innovation and creativity, knowledge management in the organization, helping to grow and promote the job, balancing skills, profession and personal interests, paying attention to expertise and experience in the work team, paying attention to ethical, Training and in addition, updating of human resources in the field of educational and scientific stimuli and application of standards. Quality management systems, editing systems, having strategic thinking, creating a powerful technical committee, winning sports seats, lack of existence of political thoughts and tendencies in the team, departure of political managers from the group, standardization, and updating of the stadium, transparency of contracts and modeling of European professional clubs in the driving force of professional tools and behavior.

Considering the conditions of professional football clubs in Iran, paying attention to these indicators is necessary. On the other hand, indicators such as paying attention to the fans, including paying attention to and respecting the fans, giving importance to the fans, effective communication between the president of the fan club and the club's director, attention to team managers and selecting knowledgeable people, accelerating appropriate and quality services. Quick responses to fan problems are more and less effective and, in a way, affect the relationships between other stimuli and critical indicators.

Moreover, indicators showed that in the leadership and management sector, such as creating a workflow in the organization, paying attention to the career development of individuals, feedback and performance appraisal, management stability, observance of organizational justice and non-discrimination, the ability to comment without worry and fear of senior managers, the use of educated sportspeople, job descriptions in specific areas performance. Using specialized people in specialized positions, attention to the importance and role of the CEO, emphasis on rules and regulations, creation of infrastructure, attention to the job security of employees, and attention to the welfare of human resources. They are more influential and less influential and, in a way, affect the relationships between other key propellants and indicators.

Finally, indicators such as Timely and appropriate payment of player bonuses, the use of proper payroll systems, the existence of facilities and amenities, and the existence of adequate and available budgets and financial resources are the indicators of funding and financial incentives in the southwestern part of [Figure 2](#). They lack a key and essential role in forming the spatial organization of productivity of professional football clubs in Iran, but they should not be forgotten entirely. Also, [Figures 3](#) and [4](#), Potential Indirect Impact / Dependency Map, Potential Indirect Impact Chart, Indirect Impact / Dependency Chart, Indirect Impact Chart, Potential Direct Impact Chart, and Potential Direct Impact Chart are shown.

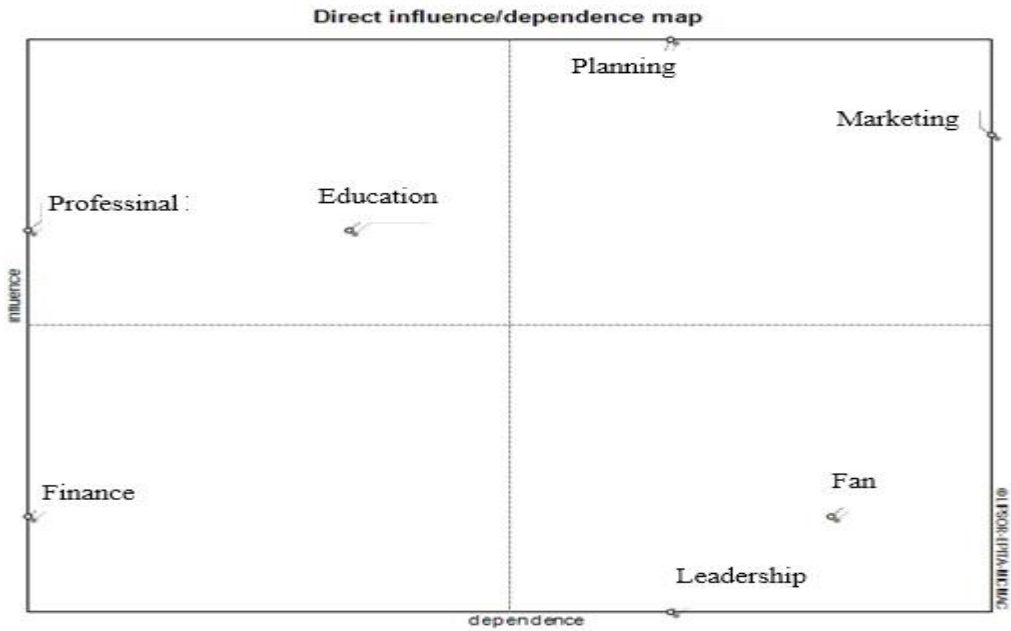


Figure 3. The result of Mic Mac software analysis.

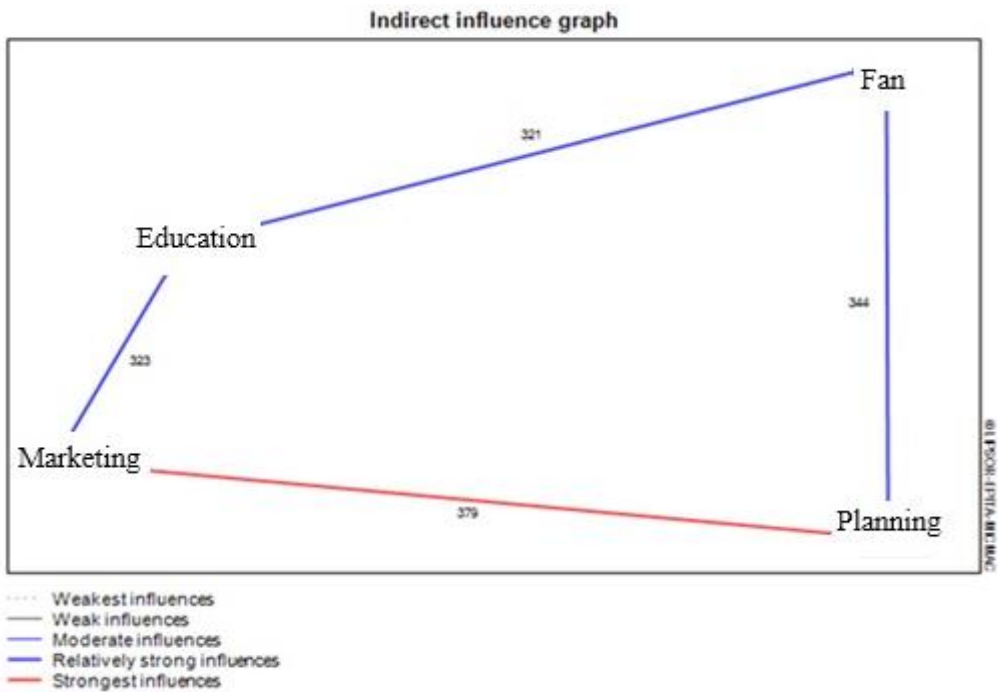


Figure 4. The essential indirect effects.

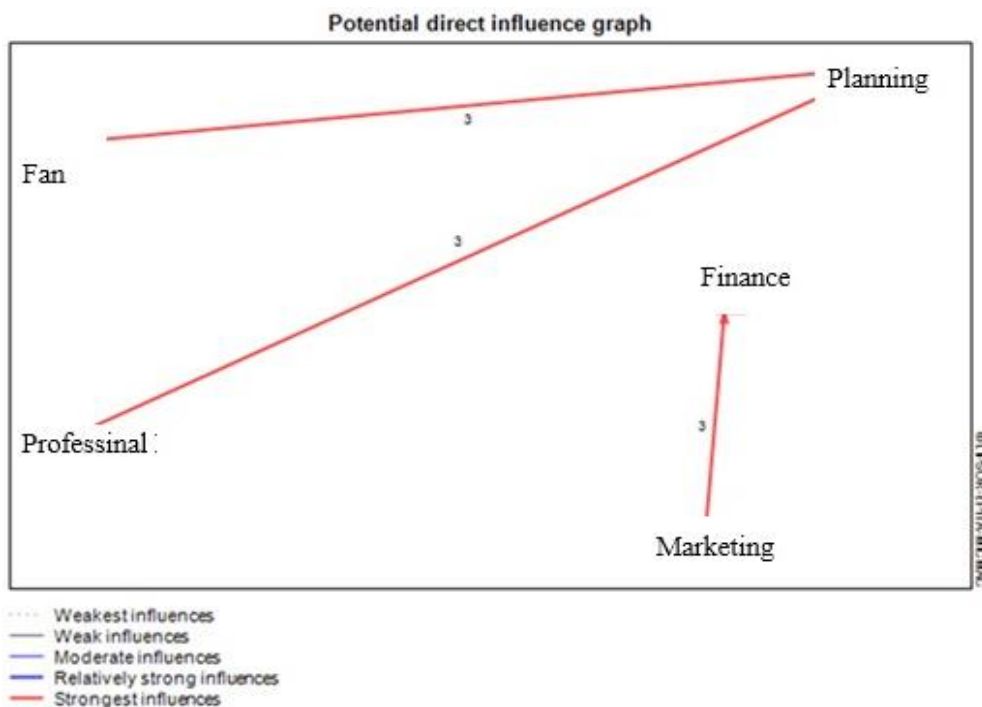


Figure 5. The essential direct effects.

4. Discussion and conclusion

According to the results obtained from Mic Mac software, the first category of practical factors that are both effective and influential affect the future productivity of professional football clubs. The propellants of marketing and advocacy are planning and talent development. Marketing and advocacy propellants include indicators such as paying attention to marketing laws, privatization in clubs, getting TV rights, paying attention to sponsorship, focusing on club brand development, creating club-related stores to sell products and providing club-related equipment while paying attention to copyright law. Productivity development, especially in sports, seems to depend on creating and developing a marketing strategy program for sports clubs (Lis Pasarell, 2021).

Sports executives, with their high performance and productivity, can attract sponsors in the field of sports (Shamunian et al., 2020). In this regard, the researcher states that implementing a marketing program leads to training, motivation, guidance, and workforce leadership and creates high employee satisfaction. It enables them to provide a higher level of service quality to the customer, ultimately leading to better performance in their organization. On the other hand, planning and talent development propellants include indicators such as Paying attention to primary teams, creating training camps, paying attention to elemental talents, creating statutes, training legionnaires in clubs, and hiring people who specialize in sports law. Human resource management and planning

management are positive supports for increasing the economic productivity of communities to achieve their welfare goals (Sara et al., 2021). Moreover, it is stated that the dimensions of strategic planning containing human resource planning, coaching programs, assessment programs, and strategic training programs, affect organizational productivity (Tourani & Aghaei, 2019).

In the present study, planning is one of the essential principles in club management. On the other hand, the central philosophy of talent identification and adherence to its programs is that the growth of young athletes occurs best when a person is trained in a field that is more useful to him and more likely to succeed. Therefore, it is suggested that to increase the organization's productivity in the future, based on marketing incentives and financial support, planning, and talent search, the formation of special training camps for each team to pay attention to the primary sections of clubs, should be on the agenda. This way, young talents can be identified, and legionnaires can be introduced to Iranian and even world football. On the other hand, to be more productive and avoid the heavy fines of the league organization and the Supreme Court of Sports, to terminate the contracts of coaches and players, it is necessary to hire someone familiar with sports rights by the clubs. This person can also provide legal knowledge to managers, coaches, and players. In addition, hiring and employing people with a positive attitude towards work and the club should be on their agenda. So that these people are regular in their work and have enough work conscience and expertise in that work, and in a way, a balance is created between a person's skills and job interests. Therefore, the club must prepare the environment for its stakeholders' training, promotion, and growth by using innovation and creativity to help develop the club's productivity.

In this regard, educational and scientific propellants and professional tools and behavior in the second priority were the factors affecting the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran, which have a high level of effectiveness and low impact.

Educational and scientific propellants include indicators such as permission to participate in decision-making, optimistic attitude towards work and club, team training, having a work conscience, having social discipline, preparing the environment for innovation and creativity, having knowledge management in the organization, helping growth and Career promotion are the creation of a balance between skills, job, personal interest. In addition, focus on team expertise and experience, attention to ethical and legal principles, training, and updating of human resources. One of the most significant pillars of human resource development is staff training and improvement. It improves the organization and maximizes productivity (Soltani & Kargar, 2019). In this regard, the training program has the necessary effectiveness to increase productivity and organizational commitment (Balassiano & Bullough, 2021). Therefore, we can use the training program to improve project managers' and executives' productivity and organizational commitment. New educational programs and approaches are essential in creating the organization's transformation and survival and achieving the desired goals and missions.

On the other hand, propellants of professional tools and behavior include indicators such as Applying standards, quality management systems, updating systems, having strategic

thinking, creating a solid technical committee, winning sports seats, leaving political managers out of teams, standardizing and updating stadiums, clarifying contracts and following the example of European professional clubs. Professionalization in having a statute and bill in sports is one of the critical factors in productivity (Zarifi et al., 2021). Increasing productivity is possible through strategic planning as a management tool (Charles et al., 2019). Despite the financial crises afflicting most countries, prominent Iranian football clubs are still profitable and have a high financial balance. Meanwhile, football clubs in Iran are still facing severe financial problems and have not been able to use the capabilities of our country's football and have stayed away from the football industry.

Accordingly, the educational and scientific proponents of the researcher's professional behavior tool suggest that Iranian professional football clubs emulate European professional clubs by updating their systems, standardizing and updating their stadiums, and clarifying their contracts. The team's lack of political thoughts and tendencies is also a significant issue. People with academic expertise in sports management should enter the field of club management to win sports seats in sports circles in Asia and the world.

Clubs must put staff development and staff turnover on their agenda, eliminate some discrimination in the organization, and make more use of educated people in the clubs. Football clubs inside Iran can use the fans as partners of the club and, in this way, establish effective communication with the team leaders and the club fans. The third priority is the factors affecting the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran, leadership and management motivations, and attention to fans. These factors are more and less effective and affect the relationship between other stimuli and critical indicators. Leadership and management motivations include indicators such as creating a workflow in the organization, paying attention to people's career advancement, feedback and performance appraisal, management stability, observing organizational justice and non-discrimination, being able to comment without worry and fear of senior managers, and using sports educated. People, job descriptions in specific functional areas, using specialized people in specialized positions, paying attention to the importance and role of the CEO, emphasizing rules and regulations, creating infrastructure, paying attention to the job security of employees and the welfare of human resources. Transformational leadership impacts psychological empowerment and human resource productivity (Bond et al., 2022). By using the original leadership style and psychological capital, managers of general sports and youth departments can improve organizational citizenship behavior and job performance of employees and, thus, productivity in the sports organization (Khoshnevis et al., 2021). In this regard, it can be said that productivity is like a tool that is considered a powerful weapon and a way to increase capital.

The relationship between productivity and management is because productivity is a concept in economics and management, so sports organizations need to use strategies for better leadership and management. On the other hand, supporters of fans' attention include indicators such as fans' attention and respect, giving importance to fans, effective communication between the president of the fans' association and the club's director, attention to team leaders, and selection of knowledgeable people, accelerating service delivery. An appropriate and quality service and quick response to fans' problems (Bond et al., 2022). They stated that leadership and management are related to productivity.

Perhaps the best and most modern type of club management in the Spanish league, especially for the four teams of Barcelona, Real Madrid, Osasuna, and Athletic Bilbao. These teams are registered as an association and are managed as a cooperative, i.e., the fans are members of the cooperatives, and the same fans appoint the club manager every four years. When fans want to vote for the club manager, they pay attention to the club manager's plans and strategies, which can lead to more revenue and productivity.

Finally, according to budget experts and financial incentives, the factors affecting the productivity of Iranian professional football clubs were identified as the fourth priority. These propellants, along with their indicators, lack a key and significant role in formatting the spatial organization of productivity of professional football clubs in Iran, but they should not be forgotten entirely. Budget and financial propellants include indicators such as the timely and appropriate payment of player bonuses, appropriate payroll systems, the availability of amenities and facilities, and adequate budgets and financial resources. Financial resources and funding are among the critical factors in the productivity of sports organizations that have been mentioned in (Soltani & Kargar, 2019) research. However, in the present study, this issue was not very important in the fourth priority except for the cases. Perhaps the reason for this discrepancy is that the experts have considered revenue generation in other propellants, so they believe budget and financial issues in other cases through which clubs make revenue. Based on the results of the present study, it can be stated that the future of research reflects how the reality of tomorrow is born from the heart of change (or stability) today. Identifying the factors that are effective in the future can provide a roadmap for Iranian sports managers to make the necessary plans and achieve their organizational goals. Therefore, it can be suggested to managers, policymakers, and decision-makers in this field to develop the productivity of professional football clubs through marketing and financial support. Guide employees and club members to the rules of marketing and brand development. In this regard, it is suggested that the privatization of clubs be put on the agenda to develop the brand of sports clubs. Transferred the television broadcasting rights to the clubs using the club's television, encouraging clubs to create their brand-specific store to attract sponsors to clubs and prevent counterfeit brands from copying and selling club products. It is hoped that taking advantage of these cases will take a big step in Iran's professional club management. Like clubs in other developed countries, Iranian clubs will reach a professional level and be a model in the region.

5. Limitations and suggestions

Practical suggestion based on teaching and learning: It is suggested to provide a creative and innovative environment for the development and improvement of productivity concerning the education and learning component and to support new ideas for the development of the club brand, income generation, fan attraction, technical level development, etc. Professional clubs should be promoted.

Practical suggestion based on attention to the fan: It is suggested that considering the component of paying attention to the fans, with the approach of improving the status of fans and football spectators as an asset. So that we can use this capacity in the

development and improvement of the quality of club football in a good way and favorable conditions for the presence of fans in providing a stadium. It is still suggested that more effort and work be made to create a suitable shape for our stadiums.

Application proposal based on budget and financial factors: It is suggested that due to the component of budget and economic issues, professional clubs should not sacrifice their financial and capital support to attract good players because, in this case, there will be more consequences if they do not pay wages on time.

Practical proposal based on leadership and management factors: It is suggested that because the productivity of the clubs has a lot to do with management issues, more sensitivity should be used in the selection of club managers, work politics should not be involved, sports managers should be trusted, the management period should be more extended, and career development in any position. To be followed by predetermined principles.

Practical suggestion based on tools and professional behavior factors: To increase the productivity of Iran's professional clubs, it is suggested to form a working group in each of the sports clubs that are responsible for the realization and development of the club's goals and to express a clear picture of their vision so that the members of a professional club, including managers, staff, The players and even the staff of the club can also take steps to research the goals.

Practical proposal based on predictive factors and foresight- It is suggested to forecast the future, and managers should not only consider the present. Hence the helpful suggestion is to have research and development teams in their clubs to cultivate their virtual teams by spending the effort of their coaches and improving and developing training camps.

Functional proposal based on marketing and sponsorship factors: It is suggested that they pay serious attention to marketing and sponsoring. Hence the practical suggestion is to proceed towards privatization, provide the infrastructure of dedicated virtual and television networks for broadcasting matches, and the following reliable stores to build the club brand's opinion.

Limitations:

- Hard access to most interviewees due to job responsibilities, work concerns, and distance.
- Different opinions of researchers about data analysis methods, considering the scope and developing nature of qualitative research.
- The confusion of some questionnaires, the failure to answer some questions, and as a result leaving the statistical sample.
- Frequent follow-ups and spending a lot of time collecting questionnaires according to the country scope of their implementation.

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شناسایی پیشران‌های مؤثر بر بهره‌وری باشگاه‌های حرفه‌ای فوتبال ایران

بهاره ییلویی^۱، رسول نظری^{۲*}، طیبه زرگر^۳ 

^۱ دانشجوی دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، دانشگاه خوراسگان اصفهان، اصفهان، ایران.

^۲ دانشیار، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، اصفهان (خوراسگان)، واحد اصفهان، اصفهان، ایران.

^۳ استادیار دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد تهران جنوب، تهران، ایران.

چکیده

هدف: این مطالعه با هدف شناسایی پیشران‌های مؤثر بر بهره‌وری باشگاه‌های حرفه‌ای فوتبال در ایران انجام شده است.

روش: پژوهش حاضر از نظر هدف و مدت ماهیت، بر اساس آینده‌پژوهی و روش‌های تحلیلی و اکتشافی، کاربردی است. از طریق مصاحبه‌های نیمه ساختاریافته با ۱۶ نفر از مدیران باشگاه‌های حرفه‌ای فوتبال، اساتید مدیریت ورزشی و کارشناسان بهره‌وری سازمانی، اطلاعات لازم شامل هفت بخش و ۶۰ شاخص کلیدی به دست آمد. برای تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌های جمع‌آوری شده از اثرات متقاطع ماتریس ۷×۷ از نرم افزار Mick Mac استفاده شد.

یافته‌ها: هفت دسته عوامل تأثیرگذار تا تأثیرگذار شناسایی شد، که شامل: محرک آموزشی و علمی، محرک حامی توجه، پیشران بودجه و مالی، پیشران رهبری و مدیریت، پیشران ابزار و رفتار حرفه‌ای، پیشران‌های برنامه ریزی و توسعه استعداد، و پیشران‌های بازاریابی و پشتیبانی بود.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: در نتیجه می‌توان گفت برای توسعه بهره‌وری باشگاه‌های حرفه‌ای فوتبال کشور، بازاریابی، پیشران‌های حمایتی و برنامه‌ریزی و استعدادیابی، عوامل عملی مؤثر و تأثیرگذار باید در دستور کار مدیران ورزشی قرار گیرد. به باشگاه‌های ایرانی برای رسیدن به سطح حرفه‌ای مانند باشگاه‌های کشورهای پیشرفته.

کلیدواژه

آینده پژوهی
بازاریابی ورزشی
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The Effect of Brand Association on Brand Equity of FC Persepolis Football Team with the Mediating Role of Fan-Team Identification

Farzaneh Mazloomi Soveini^{1*}

¹ PhD in Sport Management, Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aimed to assess the effect of brand association on the brand equity of the FC Persepolis football team with the mediating role of fan-team identification.

Methodology: The present study is a quantitative, cross-sectional, and correlational study conducted in the field. The study's statistical population included football fans of the FC Persepolis football team in Iran. Based on Krejcie & Morgan's table, 391 fans were selected through random sampling in Azadi stadium at 98th Derbi of Tehran. Washburn and Plank's brand association questionnaire (2002), Yoo and Donthu's brand equity Questionnaire (2001), as well as Mael and Ashforth's fan-team identification Questionnaire (1992) were used to collect the research data. The validity of the research tool was calculated and confirmed based on content and structural validity, and the reliability was assessed according to Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. After distributing the questionnaires, 391 valid questionnaires were completed, and structural equation modeling via PLS was used to test the research hypotheses.

Findings: The results showed that brand association significantly affected brand equity ($\beta = 0.39$) and fan-team identification ($\beta = 0.36$). The results also confirmed the positive and significant effect of fan-team identification on the brand equity of the Persepolis football team ($\beta = 0.41$). Moreover, based on the Sobel test, brand association through fan-team identification had an indirect, positive, and significant effect on the brand equity of the Persepolis football team. The GOF index value also indicated the research model's proper fitness.

Originality: This study is one of the limited research projects investigating the relationship among brand associations, team identification, and brand equity simultaneously as a comprehensive model in the Iranian sport context.

Keywords

Branding
Football Teams
Sports Brands
Sports Fans

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1. Introduction

The brand equity of sports teams is one of the critical aspects of business management in sports (Hattula, 2018). By strengthening the equity of sports brands, sports teams will be able to show more successful performance at national and international levels by generating more income. Brand equity as a competitive advantage affects the future benefits, financial gain, and effectiveness of communication marketing (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Branding in sport setting has become even more critical as sports turn into a consumer-based industry (Kalashi et al., 2021). In order to survive in the current competitive market, sport teams have to adapt to new changes and new markets (Sarlab et al., 2022). According to the limited revenue sources, besides sports organizations' intense competition for fan base revenues, football teams must consider the augmentation of team brand equity (Tarighi et al., 2021).

It is developing and strengthening sports brands and attracting fans as the main customers in the sports industry. It can be one of the central strategies at the heart of sports team management because developing and strengthening the sports teams' brand and earning money can provide a platform for football teams' national and transnational success (Jaberi et al., 2014). Therefore, paying attention to the dimensions of branding and specifically to strengthening the brand equity as one of the most important intangible assets of sports teams (Ahn & Kang, 2022), can provide the necessary grounds for creating a strong brand image of sports teams and the conditions necessary to prepare sports clubs to become income-generating brands (Yağız & Özer, 2022).

The customer-oriented brand equity is the essence of a sports organization's success, and the basis of brand equity lies behind what customers have learned, felt, seen, heard, and experienced from the brand. In other words, brand power is rooted in customers' minds (Keller, 1993). In brand management, actions such as creating, strengthening, and developing brand equity will lead to greater penetration of the brand in the market and increase the brand's share and value in the market. Brand equity can provide brands with strategic advantages which capture the increasing value to consumers (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). The brand equity is critical for sport brands to be reputed (Bahrami et al., 2021). The importance and benefits of creating brand equity in teams are documented in some recent studies (Biscaia et al., 2016). Developing the brand value can play a significant role in branding of sport brands (Nazarian Madavani et al., 2022). Increased fan loyalty, global presence, differentiation of team, positive fan attitude, and increased purchase intentions can be described as consequences of high team brand equity; hence, team management needs to identify important factors affecting the teams' success (Naik & Gupta, 2012).

Ashforth and Mael (1989) have defined identification as a sense of belonging or a perception of oneness. Gladden et al. (1998) and Ross (2006) have shown a significant relationship between fan-team identification and brand equity in their model. Fan-team identification has been suggested as an essential predictor of fan attendance at college sports events (Laverie & Arnett, 2000). (Murrell & Dietz, 1992) argue that sports fan identification refers to fans' psychological connection to a team or a sport (Murrell & Dietz, 1992). Fan-team identification provides sports teams with enthusiastic fans with personal commitment and emotional involvement (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), making

sports fans display unique cognitive, psychological, and emotional reactions to their favorite teams. Generally, fan-team identification has received increasing attention in the marketing literature (Brian Greenwood et al., 2006). To create adequate income streams, sports teams should attract, develop, and maintain close relationships with many sports consumers (James et al., 2002). Formation of fan-team identification can pave the way for developing sports team brands and reinforcing the fan base and economic base of sports teams (Jaberi et al., 2014). Identifying fans with sports teams is a critical concept in sports marketing. It arises from the close relationship that fans have with their favorite teams and can have significant economic and financial consequences for sports teams (Tsordia et al., 2021).

One of the essential strategies for sports marketers to increase consumer preferences and loyalty; is creating strong, positive, and unique beliefs about sports brands in consumers. In other words, creating favorable associations about the brand in customers' minds will ultimately lead to customer loyalty (Bauer et al., 2008). Aaker (1991) defines the brand as a set of associations that differentiate offerings within the marketplace. In a sports context, such associations can be every organization-specific feature that persuades fans to choose their favorite team among alternatives. Brand associations are a set of perceptions of a brand name that are meaningfully organized in a consumer's mind and influence their judgment of whether a product is valuable (Hal Dean, 2004). The association of the brand reflects the consumer's deep attitudes toward the brand. Mental associations must have sufficient power, desirability, and distinction in the eyes of the customers to help the brand's positioning (Javani et al., 2016).

Numerous studies have been conducted in the research literature regarding the main hypotheses included in the research model. Regarding the proposed relationship between the brand association and fan-team identification, Moshabaki Esfahani et al. (2016) found that the Iranian football league's brand association influences fans' belonging to the football teams. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) discussed the strong affiliation of consumers with companies based on the concept of identification. They believed that identifying with organizations helps consumers satisfy their self-definitional needs. Ross (2006) found that a sports team's commercial success dramatically depends on brand associations and brand equity. The results of a study conducted by Wann et al. (1996) indicated that parental interest in a team, the talent of the team players, geography and the influence of friends, and the team's success were the origins of team identification. The geographical location was the prominent reason for supporting a team (Jones, 1997). A team's success was also significant in team identification (End et al., 2002). The relationship between brand association and brand equity was the following proposed hypothesis in the research model. In this regard, Ross (2006) revealed that brand associations could help sports teams in the branding process (Ross, 2006), which influences consumers' behavior, and brand differentiation and establish positive attitudes towards a brand (Aaker, 1991). Gladden et al. (1998) explain that brand association is critical in creating brand equity. Considering the essential role of brand association in the brand equity of sports teams (Gladden et al., 1998), paying particular attention to the factors affecting brand association in sports settings may help sports teams develop their brand equity. Gladden et al. (1998) state that success, reputation and tradition, conference affiliation, and product delivery contribute

to brand associations. Kerr and Gladden (2008) found star players, head coaches, conference and league cooperation, or stadium/arena as other indicators affecting brand associations. Gladden and Funk (2002) introduced team-related and organization-related features as essential dimensions of brand associations. Gladden and Funk (2002) found that success, head coach, and star player as team-related characteristics and reputation and tradition, product delivery, logo, and stadium/arena organization-related characteristics, were distinctive elements in generating sports brand associations.

The effect of fan-team identification on brand equity was the following proposed hypothesis in the research model. In this regard, Underwood et al. (2001) argue that social identification plays an essential part in brand equity development. Sports brands that are significantly able to attract high levels of consumer identification (Underwood et al., 2001) provide sports organizations with a significant chance to develop their brand value. (Carlson et al., 2002) found that the level of brand equity was positively correlated with the level of fan-team identification. According to Milne and McDonald (1999), and Sutton et al. (1997), fan behavior, loyalty, and attitudes are affected by the level of fan-team identification. It has also been suggested that the more significant social identification (Underwood et al., 2001), or team identification (Carlson et al., 2002), the more considerable brand equity. Generally, the relationship between brand equity and team identification has been emphasized by many studies (Carlson et al., 2002; Underwood et al., 2001). In the study of Kim and Manoli (2022), team identification was found as a significant determinant of both behavioral intention and WOM intention.

Considering the multidimensionality of brand equity, studying the psychological and sociological components related to this concept in sports can be considered an essential step in brand management in the professional football league of Iran. The power of the brand is rooted in the minds of customers (Keller, 1993); therefore, evaluating the psychological and emotional tendencies and attitudes of fans and the effects of these factors in strengthening the value of sports brands can provide the necessary grounds for developing brand equity. Studying the behavior and attitude of fans and explaining them from different psychological and sociological aspects can provide more practical knowledge and information to sports managers to manage the behavior of fans. Brand association, fan-team identification, and brand equity are among the indicators that can provide sports managers and marketers with comprehensive information about fans' expectations by evaluating the fans' characteristics and tendencies (Jaberi et al., 2014).

Examining the process of identifying with different organizations and identification consequences have become attractive in marketing and management research (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Because of the critical role of identification (that involves a significant attachment) in maintaining a close and long relationship between consumer and organization, they are addressing this issue in sports marketing research is of great significance. Moreover, because of depending on governmental resources and engaging in different financial problems, it is increasingly necessary for football clubs of professional leagues in Iran to reinforce their brand equity to pave the way for playing a more critical role within the marketplace. Although Participation and attendance for all levels of football in Iran have increased rapidly in recent years, the performance of football teams is relatively

weak from a marketing perspective. One of the most important strategies for coping with these challenges is developing the brand equity of football teams.

From a research perspective, while research on team identification, brand association, and brand equity has been widely conducted in the sports marketing literature, very little research has been undertaken to study these variables together as an integrated model. In other words, this study is one of the limited types of research that investigated the relationship among brand associations, team identification, and brand equity simultaneously as a comprehensive model in the sport context of developing countries, particularly for teams below the professional level.

As an emerging potential market with enthusiastic fans, the professional football league in Iran can be considered a marketing research focus. FC Persepolis is known to have a remarkable number of million supporters in Iran, and this abundant number of eager fans can bring the excellent potential for economic achievement (Miri et al., 2022). While this football team with such enthusiastic fans has remarkable potential to become an attractive brand, this club is severely engaged in financial and economic crises. The club is owned by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports as a governmental sector, which may be the main barrier to becoming a profitable brand. It should be taken for granted that there have recently been many efforts to privatize the club with no success due to the enormous debt it has accumulated. Besides these challenges and branding problems, psychologically attached fans of this team (as a significant asset) convinced us to conduct this study to find out if these concepts can help the club improve brand equity and ultimately develop brand positioning in fans' minds.

In this research, the researcher, using the existing research literature with a multi-dimensional view to examine the sociological, psychological, and marketing variables in an integrated and comprehensive conceptual model, seeks to provide a model to explain the role of brand association and fan-team identification in brand equity of the of Persepolis football teams in professional football league of Iran. This research will investigate the effect of brand association and fan-team identification on brand equity as a conceptual model. This model may demonstrate the role of psychological (brand association) and sociological concepts (fan-team identification) in strengthening the brand equity of a football brand among the fans as the main customers in a football setting. The research hypotheses and components are presented in the following model (Figure 1). The primary purpose of the current research was to test a conceptual model to illustrate how team brand association can affect the development of fan-team Identification and the brand equity of the FC Persepolis football team.

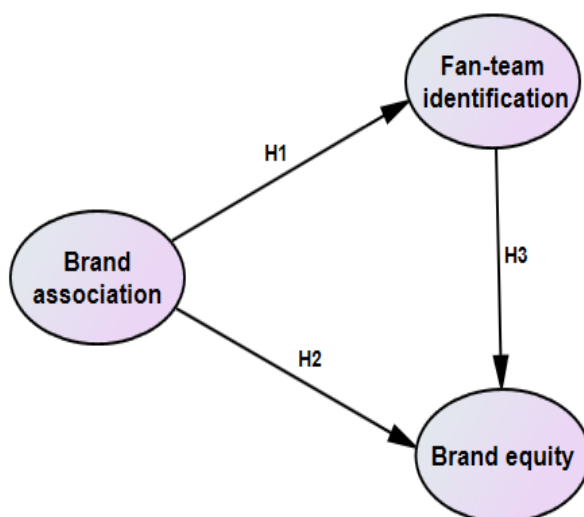


Figure 1. Research model.

2. Methodology

This research is practical in terms of objectives and descriptive and survey in terms of data collection. To collect data, library studies and a field study among the statistical population of the research (fans of the Persepolis football team) have been used. Questionnaires in similar studies in the research literature have been used to collect data in the field section. In this research, brand equity questionnaires (Yoo & Donthu, 2001) with four items, a brand association questionnaire (Washburn & Plank, 2002) with three items, and a fan-team identification questionnaire (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) with three items, were used. The rating scale of each question was prepared from agree to completely disagree based on the Likert scale of one to five. The statistical population of this research included all fans of the Persepolis football team in Iran who had at least five experiences of attending the matches of their favorite team. SPSS and PLS software were used to analyze the data. Based on Krejcie & Morgan's table, the required number of samples was estimated to be at least 384 people according to the number of fans of the Persepolis football team.

The 98th Derbi of Tehran, held in the eighth week of the 18th edition of Iran's premier football league at Azadi Stadium in March 2022, was selected for data collection. The research questionnaire had an appendix that contained the purpose of the research and a guide for completing the questionnaire for the respondents. Distribute and collect questionnaires eight research associates, who had explained in advance how to distribute and collect the questionnaires, were in eight different places in the stadium. Questionnaires were distributed and collected one hour before the start of the game. Four hundred twenty questionnaires were randomly distributed among the fans present at Azadi Stadium. At the end and after the investigations, from a total of 401 returned questionnaires, 391 questionnaires were used in data analysis. Because of the different

cultural contexts of the environments in which the questionnaires were developed and used, to further ensure the validity and reliability of these tools for use in the research process, Validity and reliability evaluation of the tools were considered.

Cronbach's alpha method and composite reliability were used to ensure the tool's reliability. A reliability study of Cronbach's alpha was conducted in a preliminary study on 30 Iranian football fans. A higher alpha value of 0.7 and a composite reliability index higher than 0.8 indicate the excellent reliability of the research tool (Chin, 2010), which is presented in Table 1. Face validity, content validity, and construct validity were conducted to check the instrument's validity. The face and content validity of the research tool was confirmed based on the opinions of nine sports marketing experts. Based on these opinions, brief changes were made in the wording and writing of the statements. Confirmatory factor analysis and convergent validity were also used to evaluate the instrument's construct validity. In the confirmatory factor analysis, factor loadings higher than 0.5 indicate the validity of the research tool in Table 1. Convergent validity was also estimated by calculating the average variance extracted. The amount of variance removed for the research tool in Table 1 was higher than the suggested value (0.5), indicating the research tool's convergent validity (Hair et al., 2020)

3. Results

More details about the demographic features of the research sample have been presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the research sample.

| Demographic features | | Percent % |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Employment status | Employed | 40.3% |
| | Not employed | 58.6% |
| Age | 18–22 | 23% |
| | 23–27 | 21% |
| | 28–32 | 22% |
| | 33–37 | 23% |
| | >=37 | 11% |
| Education | Under the Bachelor | 11% |
| | Bachelor | 68% |
| | Master | 20% |
| | Doctoral | 1% |
| Monthly income | <= \$100 | 37% |
| | \$ 100–300 | 36% |
| | \$ 300–500 | 19% |
| | >= \$ 500 | 8% |
| Marital state | Married | 41% |
| | Not married | 59% |

In the first step of inferential statistical analysis, the internal consistency, indicator reliability, convergent reliability, and discriminant validity were calculated to examine the measurement properties (Hair et al., 2011).

Table 2. Results of measurement properties.

| Construct | Items | OL (>0.70) | α (>0.70) | CR (>0.70) | AVE (>0.50) |
|-------------------------|-------|-------------------|------------------|------------|-------------|
| Brand association | Q1 | 0.82 ^a | 0.84 | 0.86 | 0.73 |
| | Q2 | 0.80 ^a | | | |
| | Q3 | 0.84 ^a | | | |
| Fan-team identification | Q4 | 0.79 ^a | 0.85 | 0.83 | 0.75 |
| | Q5 | 0.80 ^a | | | |
| | Q6 | 0.83 ^a | | | |
| Brand equity | Q7 | 0.78 ^a | 0.79 | 0.81 | 0.69 |
| | Q8 | 0.81 ^a | | | |
| | Q9 | 0.82 ^a | | | |
| | Q10 | 0.79 ^a | | | |

Notes: a: P< 0.05. OL= Outer Loading. α = Cronbach’s Alpha. CR= composite reliability. AVE= Average variance extracted.

As Table 2 shows, the values of indices all reach the acceptable amount and indicate a good model fit. In the next step, structural equation modeling was conducted to estimate the t-value for hypothesis testing. The findings revealed a positive and significant effect for the brand association on fan-team identification ($\beta= 0.39$; $t= 2.73$; $p<0.001$) and brand equity ($\beta= 0.36$; $t= 2.36$; $p<0.001$). Moreover, fan-team identification significantly affected brand equity ($\beta= 0.41$; $t= 2.89$; $p<0.001$).

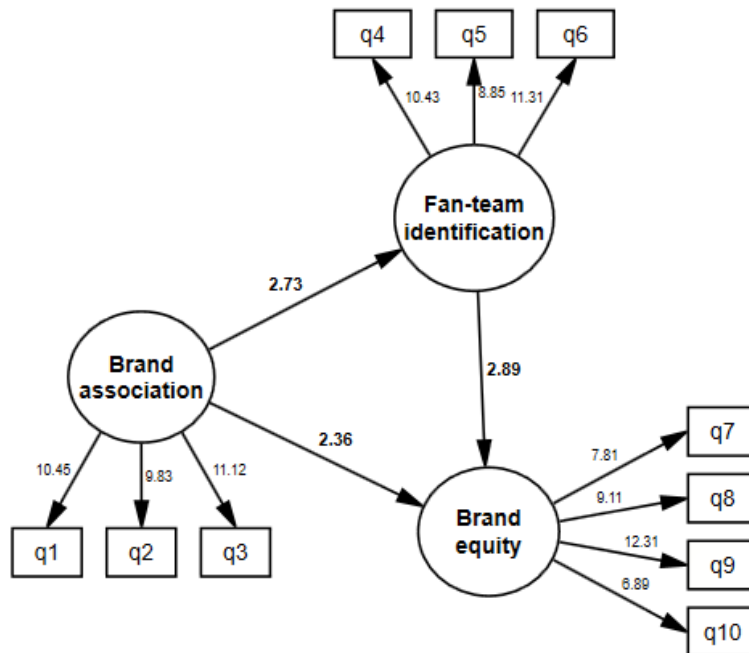


Figure 2. T value model.

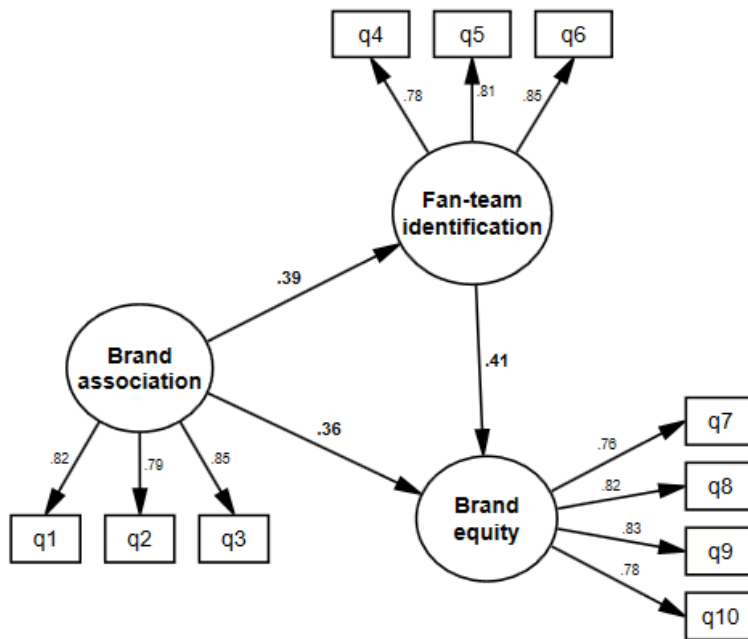


Figure 2. The research model with Beta coefficient.

The results presented in [Table 3](#) revealed that all the proposed hypotheses were empirically confirmed.

Table 3. Structural model test results for hypotheses.

| H | Path | β | T-value | P | Result |
|----|---|---------|---------|-----|-----------|
| H1 | Brand association → Fan-team identification | 0.39 | 2.73 | *** | Supported |
| H2 | Brand association → Brand equity | 0.36 | 2.36 | *** | Supported |
| H3 | Fan-team identification → Brand equity | 0.41 | 2.89 | *** | Supported |

*** $p < 0.001$.

According to the findings in [Table 3](#), all the proposed hypotheses were found to be statistically significant. All of the structural relationships, t values, and path coefficients have been presented in [Figure 2](#). As illustrated in [Figure 2](#), the data supported all proposed hypotheses.

Sobel test was used to test the significance of the mediating variable (Fan-team identification) in the relationship between the brand association and brand equity. Z-value was found to be 2.03, and since this value is higher than 1.96, it can be stated that at the 95% confidence level, the effect of the mediator variable is significant in the relationship between the brand association and brand equity. VAF index was used to determine the intensity of the indirect effect through the mediator variable. The value of VAF was 0.26, which means that more than a quarter of the impact of brand association on brand equity

is indirectly explained by the mediating role of fan-team identification. The general fit of the model is calculated through the GOF criterion provided by (Henseler & Sarstedt, 2013). The use of this criterion is calculated through the following relationship:

$$\text{GOF} = \sqrt{\text{communalities} \times R^2}$$

In this criterion, Communalities is the sign of the average communal values of each structure, and R^2 is the average value of the R Squares values of the endogenous structures of the model. In the GOF criterion, three values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 have been introduced as a weak, medium, and strong values for GOF. The GOF value for the current model was calculated as 0.316, which shows the strong overall fit of the research model.

4. Managerial implications

The findings have implications for managers who are responsible for football marketing programs. Recognizing the associations relevant to football teams and their effect on the behavioral and emotional reactions of the fans towards the sports teams can provide the base for the identification of the fans with the sports teams. They are considering the importance of managing the relationship with sports fans (as the core customers in sport setting) in strengthening the brand equity of sports clubs that leads to revenue generation of sports teams. Also, the study of mechanisms enhancing the relationship between fans and sports teams can be one of the critical priorities in marketing studies. Without a doubt, proper management of CRM in sports will be impossible without paying attention to the sociological and psychological components governing the relationship between fans and sports teams. Therefore, studying psychological and sociological aspects as a critical prerequisite in sports marketing in Iran, which is at the beginning of professionalization, is unavoidable, and conducting quantitative and qualitative studies to explain the various psychological and sociological aspects of the relationships between fans and sports teams is recommended. Due to the importance of brand association in this research and their effect on fan-team identification and the brand equity of the football teams, sports managers should consider the identity associations of football teams such as color, team uniform, club logo, head coach, success, and star players, stadium, sponsor, website, and group experiences, history, owners, and geographic region related to the team. These features should be given special attention and taken for granted in formulating brand strategies. Sports managers can develop the team-fan connection and quality of the league in a football setting to achieve team success and fan satisfaction by focusing on brand association aspects (Tarighi et al., 2021). According to the prominent role of brand equity in creating economic potential, studying, and presenting multidimensional and comprehensive models of brand equity of sports clubs can be very helpful and strategic. Looking at the critical and influential factors in attracting fans and providing models to develop the brand equity of football clubs can be a practical step in the all-round growth of football teams in the sport setting. Defining a proper identity document based on the expectations and demands of football fans is critical for approximating the identity of football fans with the essence of football clubs. Sports managers and sports marketers can

maximize the marketing potential by establishing more identified fans. Providing an engaging experience for sports fans in events and matches is critical in creating more favorable brand associations in fans' minds, resulting in more identification with teams and increased brand equity.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Recognizing the elements persuading fans to be more engaged in football team brands make sports manager able to meet fans' needs and interests more effectively. This, in turn, helps to develop stronger relationships between teams and fans. The current study focuses on delivering a model involving brand association and fan-team identification to highlight the importance of team brand equity.

A part of the findings revealed that "brand association" had a positive and significant effect on the "brand equity" of the FC Persepolis football team in the professional football league of Iran. It has been accepted that brand associations directly affect the perceived value of brands (Burmam et al., 2009). E M Steenkamp et al. (2003) found that brand attributes lead to improved brand equity. Brand association is an internal factor that enhances brand equity (Burmam et al., 2009). The findings of Jabetri et al. (2014) also showed that the brand identity dimensions of football teams, which are rooted in brand association, have a positive and significant effect on the loyalty of football fans. Increasing the attractiveness of the brand identity of the football teams develops the unity and integration of fans with sports teams and organizations, and this phenomenon can lead to the creation of significant potential in the development of the fan base and money generation for sports teams and organizations (Jabetri et al., 2014). Consistent with this finding, Aaker (1991) argued that brand associations provide different functions, such as influencing customers' decisions, differentiating the brand, and creating positive customer emotions. Gladden et al. (1998) explained that brand association is critical in building brand equity.

Moreover, Jabetri et al. (2014) found that brand associations such as star players, coaches and managers, technical qualities, team history, social commitments and responsibility, social interactions, and fan-team close relationships have a significant effect on fan-team identification of football fans. Therefore, to create strong brands of sports teams in the field sports industry and to reach loyal fans, sports managers and marketers should investigate the perceptions of fans and determine the association-building factors of sports teams at the top of their marketing and branding strategies; at this way, they can efficiently use their fan potential, according to this fact that brand associations play a significant role in establishing brand identity (Gladden et al., 1998), getting a complete understanding of these associations and their effect on the behavioral and emotional reactions of the fans towards the sports teams. They can provide the basis for more brand equity in football teams.

The findings also demonstrated that "brand association" is significantly influential on "fan-team identification" of the FC Persepolis football team in the professional football league of Iran. The findings showed that team brand associations are potent tools in identifying fans with the FC Persepolis football team. The results of a study

conducted by Wann et al. (1996) indicated that brand association (parental interest in a team, talent of the team players, geography and the influence of friends, and the success of the team) were the origins of team identification. According to Moshabaki Esfahani et al. (2016), brand Association Assets of the Iranian Football League played a significant role in belonging fans to their favorite teams. The geographical location as a brand association was also a prominent reason for supporting a team (Jones, 1997). Another brand association, such as the sports team's success, was also found to be significant in team identification (End et al., 2002). Brand associations can help sports teams in branding (Ross, 2006), influence consumers' behavior and brand differentiation, and establish positive attitudes toward a brand (Aaker, 1991). The combination of football team features underpinned in the fans' minds provides a strong image of football teams. A proper image of football teams leads to close relationships between fans and their favorite football teams.

Another part of the research findings showed that "fan-team identification" had a positive and significant effect on the "brand equity" of the FC Persepolis football team in the professional football league of Iran. One of the key concepts in the field of strengthening team brands is the development of a fan-team identification level that ultimately makes fans eagerly involved in issues related to their favorite teams (Jaberi et al., 2014). The level of identification with sports teams has been defined as one of the important predictors in the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive reactions of fans in past research (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). In previous research, fan-team identification has been an essential predictor of fan attendance at university sports events (Wann et al., 2004), and ticket and merchandise sales (Kwon & Armstrong, 2002). In line with these findings, Gladden et al. (1998) and Ross (2006) have also demonstrated a significant relationship between fan-team identification and brand equity in their model. (Carlson et al., 2002) believed that customer-oriented brand equity is positively associated with the level of identification with the sports team. Therefore, this part of the findings is consistent with Gladden et al. (1998) and Ross (2006). The findings of Jaberi et al. (2014) have also shown that fan-team identification had a positive and significant effect on the loyalty of football fans (as one of the dimensions of brand equity). In the study of (Kim & Manoli, 2022), team identification was found to be a key determinant of behavioral intention and WOM intention. The effects of team identification on consumer purchase intention in sports marketing were also confirmed by (Lee, 2021). According to the findings of (Jaberi & Barkhordar, 2022), fan-team identification can provide critical consequences for sponsors in professional football leagues. A comprehensive understanding of the process of co-identification and development of the brand equity of sports teams provides the opportunity for marketers and sports managers to present their sports goods and services in a way that satisfies the needs and demands of target consumers. Generally, the relationship between brand equity and team identification has been emphasized by many studies (Carlson et al., 2002; Underwood et al., 2001). It has also been suggested that the more significant social identification (Underwood et al., 2001), or team identification (Carlson et al., 2002), the more substantial brand equity. In sports contexts, it would also appear that fans' primary reason for supporting sports teams depends upon their level of team identification. More identification of fans with football teams can be a critical factor

in brand equity. If sports managers and organizations pave the way for developing mutual communications of football teams with sports fans, this makes a crucial platform for improving team brand equity.

The investigation of the mediating role of fan-team identification in the relationship between the brand association and brand equity showed that the effect of fan-team identification is significant in the relationship between the brand association and brand equity. According to this finding, fan-team identification can facilitate and strengthen the impact of brand association on the brand equity of the FC Persepolis football team. In other words, increasing the level of identification of football teams with their fans can pave the way for more positive behavioral and cognitive consequences in a marketing context. Sports managers and marketers should take this for granted. Providing outstanding opportunities for approximating the identity of sports teams with the demands and expectations of sports fans can facilitate the identification of sports fans with their favorite teams. This ultimately results in brand equity and brand positioning of the teams.

The study of various psychological and sociological variables, such as brand development and strengthening the brand equity of sports teams, can provide a basis for developing the attractiveness of sports teams' brand identity. Sports managers should be aware that the development of brand equity in sports is not a one-dimensional issue, but paying attention to various marketing, social, and psychological aspects of brand equity creation is particularly important.

The research model casts Fan-Team Identification as the focal point at which one's psychological connection with a team is influenced by brand association. Strong Fan-Team Identification, in turn, is felt to result in a higher level of team brand equity. The findings showed that team brand associations are powerful in identifying fans with the FC Persepolis football team. Improving brand equity will also be achieved via reinforcement of fan-team identification. The current research results afford general support to the notion that brand association and Fan-Team Identification are critical concepts shaping brand equity among football fans. Indeed, Fan-Team Identification as a psychological commitment to football teams plays a crucial role in consumer decision-making of team-related services. Bringing the association of sports brands closer to the identity and demands of sports fans will provide the basis for more communication and identification of fans with sports teams. It will ultimately lead to strengthening the fan base and developing the brand equity of sports teams.

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تأثیر تداعی برند بر ارزش ویژه برند تیم فوتبال پرسپولیس تهران با نقش میانجی همذات‌پنداری هوادار-تیم

فرزانه مظلومی سوینی^۱

^۱ دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه علامه طباطبائی، تهران، ایران.

کلیدواژه

برندسازی
برندهای ورزشی
تیم‌های فوتبال
هواداران ورزش

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: هدف از مطالعه حاضر، بررسی تأثیر تداعی برند بر ارزش ویژه برند تیم فوتبال پرسپولیس تهران با نقش میانجی همذات‌پنداری هوادار-تیم بود.

روش: پژوهش حاضر یک مطالعه کمی، مقطعی و همبستگی بوده که به صورت میدانی انجام گرفته است. جامعه آماری پژوهش شامل هواداران تیم فوتبال پرسپولیس در لیگ برتر فوتبال ایران بوده است. بر اساس جدول کرجسی و مورگان، ۳۹۱ نفر از هواداران تیم فوتبال پرسپولیس تهران با استفاده از روش نمونه‌گیری تصادفی در ورزشگاه آزادی تهران در داری نود و هشتم به عنوان نمونه آماری انتخاب شدند. از پرسشنامه تداعی برند **واشورن و پلاتک (۱۹۹۵)**، پرسشنامه ارزش ویژه برند **یو و دانته (۲۰۰۱)** و پرسشنامه همذات‌پنداری **میل و اشفورث (۱۹۹۲)** جهت گردآوری داده‌های مرتبط با تحقیق استفاده شد. جهت بررسی روایی از روایی سازه و محتوا استفاده گردید و پایایی ابزار نیز با استفاده از الفای کرونباخ و پایایی ترکیبی مورد تأیید قرار گرفت. پس از توزیع پرسشنامه‌ها، تعداد ۳۹۱ پرسشنامه بصورت کامل و صحیح گردآوری گردید و جهت آزمون فرضیات تحقیق، آزمون مدلیابی معادلات ساختاری با استفاده از PLS به کار گرفته شد.

یافته‌ها: نتایج نشان داد که تداعی برند هم بر ارزش ویژه برند ($\beta=0/39$) و هم بر همذات‌پنداری هوادار-تیم ($\beta=0/36$) تأثیر معناداری داشته است ($\beta=0/41$). براساس نتایج، تأثیر همذات‌پنداری هوادار-تیم نیز بر ارزش ویژه برند تیم فوتبال پرسپولیس تهران مثبت و معنادار گزارش گردید. بر اساس آزمون سوئل نیز تداعی برند از طریق همذات‌پنداری هوادار-تیم دارای تأثیر غیرمستقیم، مثبت و معناداری بر ارزش ویژه برند تیم فوتبال پرسپولیس تهران بوده است. مقدار شاخص GOF نیز حاکی از برازش مطلوب مدل پژوهش بوده است.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: این مطالعه از معدود تحقیقاتی محسوب می‌شود که با ترکیب مفاهیم روانشناختی و بازاریابی به بررسی رابطه بین تداعی برند، همذات‌پنداری هوادار-تیم و ارزش ویژه برند به‌طور همزمان در قالب یک مدل جامع در حوزه ورزش ایران پرداخته است.

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How Can the Elite Sports in Iran Lead to the Promotion of the Sports Industry Businesses? An ISM-MICMAC Approach

Rasool Norouzi Seyed Hossini^{1*}, Erfan Moradi², Maryam Amini³

¹ Associate Professor in Sport Management, Department of Sport Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

² PhD in Sport Management, Department of Sport Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

³ PhD Student in Sport Management, Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Shahid Chamran University, Ahvaz, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines what makes elite sports and how it affects Iran's sports business and industry. An integrated approach was used to achieve this goal.

Methodology: We segmented the data analysis procedure into three stages. For the fuzzy Delphi method, experts and academics were asked for their opinions on what was most important. After that, we used interpretative structural modeling (ISM) to classify the components and create a hierarchical model. The MICMAC analysis was also used to determine how the factors drive and depend on each other.

Findings: This study has identified 14 factors related to ES in Iran. The model that was developed has six levels. Also, the MICMAC analysis found that three variables were independent, two were dependent, three were linked, and one was found to be autonomous.

Originality: According to our knowledge, the research design presented in this article represents the first attempt to hierarchically analyze these factors and develop a model for ES in Iran, which can lead to the promotion of the sports business industry. Using the model that was made for the future of Iran's ES, preparations will need to be made, such as the following: Active diplomacy in sports (with a focus on championships and professional sports) by those who are involved and responsible for the problem; redesigning the country's sports structure for excellence and success in international arenas; There is a need to modify the goals and policies of ES to make them more coordinated with the specific goals and programs that correspond to the different scenarios that could occur: alterations to budget allocation and distribution to medal-rich and medal-prone sports; A talent search system that is built in and can be used to look for talents is also needed.

Keywords

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1. Introduction

At the global level, gaining credit through sports is of great importance, especially for developing countries, which makes these countries known to the world. According to some authors, [Freeman \(2012\)](#) and [Santos \(2021\)](#), sports can be used in various ways to gain soft power. Success in sports gives people a unique identity and makes people feel more connected to each other. In addition, it will strengthen national pride ([Tashbaeva, 2022](#)) and economic prosperity ([Khoshbakht Ahmadi et al., 2022](#); [Pedauga et al., 2022](#)). Sports are essentially economic, political, and social pillars in developed countries ([Ganjkanloo et al., 2021](#)). For example, the financial success of sports in Germany ([Kwiatkowski et al., 2017](#)) makes up a big part of their gross national product. The increase in competition for success among countries has caused them to be able to make themselves look different from their competitors ([Allen et al., 2018](#)).

On the other hand, the success of countries in international sports events can be a symbol of those countries' stability and comprehensive capabilities, in addition to their social and economic effects ([Elahi et al., 2021](#)). One reason for countries' high investment in sports is to address the issue of elite sports (ES) ([Hosseini et al., 2013](#)). A platform that causes the names of victorious nations to be raised on the world level ([Monkaresi et al., 2015](#)) and is considered one of the essential pillars of sports development in a general and comprehensive sense in countries ([Keshavarz et al., 2017](#)).

Indeed, the competition between countries to succeed in sports competitions at the international level has led to an increase in government investment in elite sports. Evidence shows that some countries have doubled their elite sports spending over the past decade ([De Bosscher et al., 2019](#)). In addition, governments and institutions related to them spend vast sums of money to invest in sports for their elites and heroes to achieve optimal performance in international competitions ([McLeod et al., 2022](#)). Winning medals in sports events has been the basis for comparing international success among countries ([De Bosscher et al., 2006](#)). In a way that can be achieved by winning titles in major and international sports events, this country is at the center of attention, the result of which will be the influence of the economic, cultural, and social conditions of society ([Alidoust Ghahfarokhi et al., 2014](#)). Nevertheless, it is essential to remember that the success of a country's top sports teams depends on many things.

For example, as [Hoffmann et al. \(2004\)](#) stated, a country's population size and wealth are the main factors determining success and winning medals in the international arena. [Lindfelt \(2010\)](#) also acknowledged that political (internal and external), economic, legal, and environmental factors could affect elite sports. [De Bosscher et al. \(2013\)](#) also showed in their research that financial support, increasing the participation of athletes in national and international competitions, the growth of scientific research in sports fields, and supporting and guaranteeing the careers of champions are among the most critical factors for the success of international sports. In this regard, many other indicators have been identified by different researchers. These indicators include economic indicators and the amount of gross domestic product ([Čustonja & Škorić, 2011](#)), economic, social, and cultural factors, weather conditions ([Luiz & Fadal, 2011](#)), population size, territorial extent, and non-specific domestic production ([Shabani & Moradi, 2019](#)). They are also

discovering gifted people (De Bosscher et al., 2008), demographic factors and socioeconomic status (Storm & Eske, 2022), cultural factors (Gorczyński et al., 2021; Sotiriadou et al., 2014), educational, academic, and facility issues (Humphreys et al., 2018) as well as psychological well-being (Silva et al., 2020). The diversity of these factors can be considered one of the challenges that researchers will face in identifying the factors affecting the success of elite sports and developing a plan to achieve this goal. On the other hand, in Iran, despite the passing of more than a decade since the presentation of the SPLISS model (the model based on the current research), unfortunately, this issue has not been addressed in a detailed and comprehensive manner as it should and perhaps will be. Because of how it works, researchers and people in charge of making plans have missed a few opportunities to use it. Although domestic researchers have focused on championship sports and their effects in some research, as far as we know, none of these studies has considered the existing trends, drivers, and uncertainties, and only descriptive studies have identified several influential factors. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this research gap. For this reason, this study aims to answer the first and most important question: What factors affect elite sports in Iran? In addition, what will be the dependence and interrelationships among the factors? Also, what elements make up a model with a hierarchical structure? Lastly, what role does each identified essential factor play in the growth of elite sports in Iran? So, the main goal of this study is to find and evaluate the things that affect elite sports (ES) in Iran. It also gives a structured model that shows how these factors relate to each other. Making a structured model that shows how these factors interact and affect ES in Iran is vital. It helps the stakeholders of Iranian sport (elite level) assess its strengths and weaknesses, highlight its growth potential, and develop strategies to mitigate threats.

2. Literature review

2.1. SPLISS model¹

De Bosscher et al. (2006) presented this model as one of the most thorough studies of the factors that affect elite sports policy. It has also been used as a coherent theoretical model that empirically tests the relationship between championship sports policies (at the elite level) and athletic success (McLean et al., 2021; Shilbury et al., 2008). This model consists of nine pillars. Two versions of this model have been presented so far. Its first version was published in 2006 by De Boscher and was first tested experimentally in six countries; After this model was evaluated and tested by various researchers, in 2015, the second version of this model was evaluated and tested in 15 countries (De Bosscher et al., 2015). The nine pillars in this model include (1) financial support, (2) governance, organization, and structure, (3) sports participation, (4) identification and development of talent, (5) support after a sports career (support during a sports retirement), (6) facilities for practice, (7)

¹ The SPLISS model consists of 9 PILLARS and approximately 100 Critical Success Factors (CSF) that have been identified as key drivers of successful elite sport policies at the overall national policy level.

coaching and training, (8) competition at the national level, and (9) scientific research and innovation. The SPLISS model consists of a multi-dimensional approach to investigate the influencing factors in the international success of countries in elite sports in the form of nine pillars and consists of three processes: "inputs," "capacities," and "outputs." Entries are referred to as financial support for sports and elite sports. Capacities are political actions (like looking at what to use and why) that might help a country do better in international sports competitions. However, in sports, this stage is called "policy efficiency" because it gives the best inputs to get the best outputs. The last step is the work output, which [De Bosscher et al. \(2015\)](#) state is a measure of international success in elite sports.

3. Methodology

The main determinants impacting ES in Iran are identified, and those factors are modeled in this research. We used various ways to collect and analyze data for our studies, such as fuzzy Delphi, ISM, and MICMAC. The emphasis of this study is on ES in Iran (as the unit of analysis). For this study, experts were chosen based on a set of criteria that had already been set (level of education, field of expertise, experience, and type of activity). This ensures that experts in their fields are reliable and respected (see [Table 1](#)). [Novakowski and Wellar \(2008\)](#) stated that a sample size of 5 to 15 experts would be best because the panel has a wide range of skills. In this research, seventeen experts were considered a suitable sample size. Purposive sampling, which is not based on chance, was also used to choose experts for the study ([Mohamed Yusoff et al., 2021](#)).

3.1. Fuzzy Delphi method (FDM)

The traditional Delphi decision-making method was associated with significant ambiguity and uncertainty. Therefore, [Ishikawa et al. \(1993\)](#) developed a fuzzy-based Delphi technique to address this issue. This technique uses verbal expressions to gauge participants' opinions ([Habibi et al., 2015](#)). In other words, FDM is a combination of the Delphi method and fuzzy set theory and consists of the following steps: Selecting experts and explaining the topic to them is the first step. [Khalilzadeh et al. \(2021\)](#) state that this method involves putting together and sending a survey to experts and collecting and judging their answers.

3.2. Interpretive structural modeling (ISM)

ISM is a method that relies on the opinions and decisions of a collective group of people. [Warfield \(1974\)](#) is credited as the inventor of this method. [Attri et al. \(2013\)](#) describe it to learn how the factors that make up a complex system are linked. The ISM technique is interpretive because the relationship between variables depends on the judgment of experts. It is called "structural" because it is possible to build a clear framework that shows how the variables relate to each other ([Moradi et al., 2022](#)). Using the ISM method to look at factors that affect elite sports in Iran, the following steps are taken (see [Figure 1](#)):

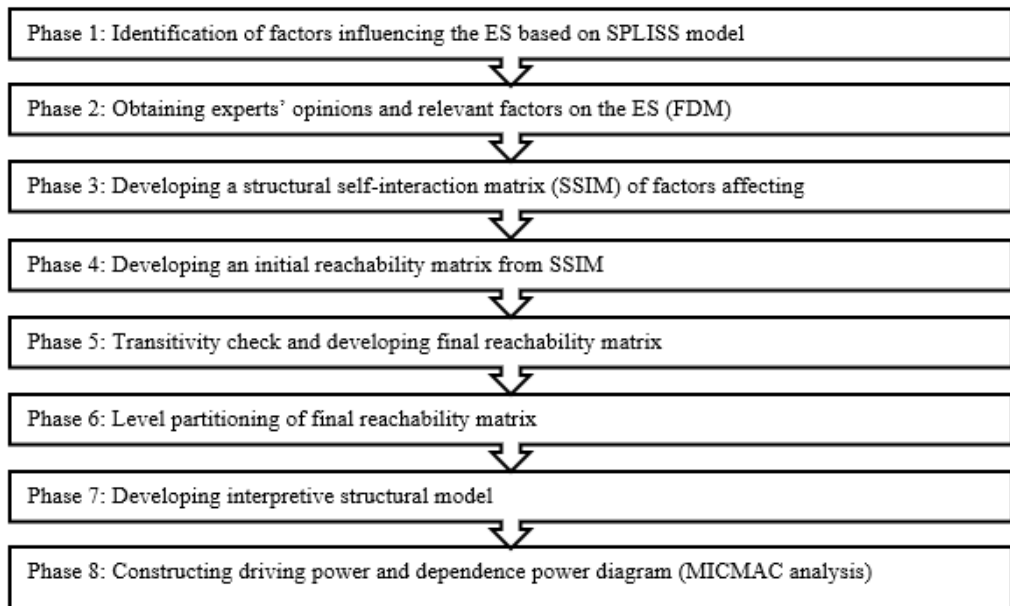


Figure 1. The steps of using the ISM technique adapted from (Moradi et al., 2022).

3.3. MICMAC analysis

Duprin and Gaudet came up with MICMAC in 1994. It uses a method of grouping variables into four groups to find essential factors that affect each other directly or indirectly. Independent variables are placed in the first group due to having low "driving power" and "dependence power". The second set of variables is made up of "dependent" factors that have a high level of "dependence power" but a low level of "driving power." In the third group, the link variables have high dependence and strong driving forces. The "dependence strength" of "independent" variables is low, but the "dependence strength" of "strong drivers" is high (Moradi et al., 2022).

4. Results

The factors affecting ES in Iran have been evaluated in this section using the fuzzy Delphi technique, the ISM approach, and MICMAC analysis. Below is a detailed analysis of the findings of each step: The steps used to construct the ISM model are as follows:

4.1. Identification of factors affecting the ES in Iran

The influencing factors have been determined via a literature review and expert perspective. A panel of 17 professionals from industry, academia, and other stakeholders has been assembled to conduct the research (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic information of the experts.

| Experts | Field | Position |
|--------------------|--|---------------------------|
| E1, E2, E3, E4, E5 | Faculty member | Academic |
| E6 | Faculty member | Academic and professional |
| E7 | Member of Sports Federation Committee | Professional |
| E8 | Vice President of Sports Federation | Professional |
| E9, E10 | Sports club manager | Professional |
| E11 | Head of Sports Federation | Professional |
| E12, E13 | Member of the National Olympic Committee | Professional |
| E14 | Sports startup manager | Professional |
| E15 | Sports referee | Professional |
| E16, E17 | Coach | Academic and professional |

The fuzzy Delphi method was used in this study to look at how experts in Iran agree on ES evaluation criteria and find critical factors. For this reason, a list of things that affect ES in Iran was put together. After including the elements in the questionnaire, the experts were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the criteria. This was done using verbal variables. Table 2 contains a list of linguistic variables and fuzzy triangular numbers.

Table 2. Linguistic scale.

| Fuzzy number | Triangular fuzzy numbers | Linguistic variables |
|--------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1~ | (0, 0, 0.1) | Very low |
| 2~ | (0, 0.1, 0.3) | Low |
| 3~ | (0.1, 0.3, 0.5) | Medium-low |
| 4~ | (0.3, 0.5, 0.7) | Medium |
| 5~ | (0.5, 0.7, 0.9) | Medium-high |
| 6~ | (0.7, 0.9, 1.0) | High |
| 7~ | (0.9, 1.0, 1.0) | Very high |

The experts' answers to the fuzzy Delphi questionnaire were turned into fuzzy triangular numbers. Fuzzy triangle numbers were used to give each alternative criterion a value based on what expert's viewpoint. Klir and Yuan (1995) geometric mean model was used to understand better how expert panels make their decisions and to make decisions less confusing. To determine the final indicators, one selection criterion was applying a threshold value (0.6) to each de-fuzzification number. After de-fuzzification and filtering, Table 3 shows the exact numbers that show the unqualified opinions of the experts.

Table 3. Factors affecting ES in Iran.

| Criteria | | Fuzzy weight | | | Defuzzification | Result |
|----------|--|--------------|-------|---|-----------------|----------|
| | | L | M | U | | |
| F1 | Financial support | | | | | |
| Var1 | Appropriate financial facilities (reward) | 0.3 | 0.858 | 1 | 0.754 | Accepted |
| Var2 | Allocation of appropriate funds to medal-prone sports | 0.3 | 0.871 | 1 | 0.760 | Accepted |
| F2 | An integrated approach to policy development | | | | | |
| Var3 | Adopting a strategic and coordinated approach between organizations and stakeholders | 0.3 | 0.830 | 1 | 0.740 | Accepted |

| | Criteria | Fuzzy weight | | | Defuzzification | Result |
|-------|--|--------------|-------|---|-----------------|----------|
| | | L | M | U | | |
| Var4 | Description of specific duties of each department (federations) | 0.3 | 0.794 | 1 | 0.722 | Accepted |
| F3 | Foundation and participation | | | | | |
| Var5 | Attention to sports at basic levels (with an emphasis on school sports) | 0.3 | 0.878 | 1 | 0.764 | Accepted |
| Var6 | Attention to sports at the club level | 0.3 | 0.889 | 1 | 0.770 | Accepted |
| F4 | Talent identification and development system | | | | | |
| Var7 | Providing a proper identification and monitoring system to discover and cultivate elite sports talents | 0.3 | 0.900 | 1 | 0.775 | Accepted |
| F5 | Athletic and post-career support | | | | | |
| Var8 | Ensuring the job security of athletes | 0.3 | 0.811 | 1 | 0.730 | Accepted |
| F6 | Training facilities | | | | | |
| Var9 | Providing suitable facilities to athletes | 0.3 | 0.840 | 1 | 0.745 | Accepted |
| Var10 | Using technologies and benefiting from new training methods | 0.3 | 0.855 | 1 | 0.752 | Accepted |
| F7 | Coaching provision and coach development | | | | | |
| Var11 | Employing quality and expert trainers with commitment | 0.3 | 0.858 | 1 | 0.754 | Accepted |
| Var12 | Provide adequate salaries to the coaches | 0.3 | 0.755 | 1 | 0.703 | Accepted |
| F8 | (inter)national competition | | | | | |
| Var13 | Mental and physical preparation of the athlete in the conditions of simulating competitions | 0.3 | 0.728 | 1 | 0.689 | Accepted |
| F9 | Scientific research | | | | | |
| Var14 | Employing scientific and executive experts | 0.3 | 0.811 | 1 | 0.730 | Accepted |

4.2. Development of Structural Self-Interaction Matrix (SSIM)

The ISM approach uses an expert's point of view to figure out how factors relate to each other in a given situation (Moradi et al., 2022). The experts were well-versed in issues about elite sports. During the meeting, the experts figured out how the factors interact. To explain this, they used a textual connection of the type "influence." A questionnaire was created to determine the relationship between the two variables (i and j). Four different symbols describe how well two parts of a compound (i and j) stick together. If the answer is A, then actor j aids element i. If the answer is X, details I and j aid in accomplishing both objectives, and if the answer is O, there is no relationship between elements I and j. From Table 4, you can see that SSIM is calculated by considering how each of the nine variables is related.

Table 4. Structural Self-Interaction Matrix (SSIM).

| Variables | F2 | F3 | F4 | F5 | F6 | F7 | F8 | F9 |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| F1 | A | V | V | V | V | V | V | V |
| F2 | | V | V | V | V | V | V | V |
| F3 | | | V | A | A | O | O | A |
| F4 | | | | A | A | A | O | A |
| F5 | | | | | O | O | O | O |
| F6 | | | | | | X | X | O |
| F7 | | | | | | | O | A |
| F8 | | | | | | | | A |

4.3. The creation of the Initial Reachability Matrix (IRM)

An IRM is created using the SSIM produced in the previous phase. Table 5 shows how to factor i is related to factor j. The SSIM matrix makes an IRM by turning the matrix into binary (0,1) form. Figure 2 illustrates the principles for converting symbols into binary digits.

Table 5. Initial reachability matrix.

| Factors | F1 | F2 | F3 | F4 | F5 | F6 | F7 | F8 | F9 |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| F1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| F2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| F3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| F4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| F5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| F6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| F7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| F8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| F9 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

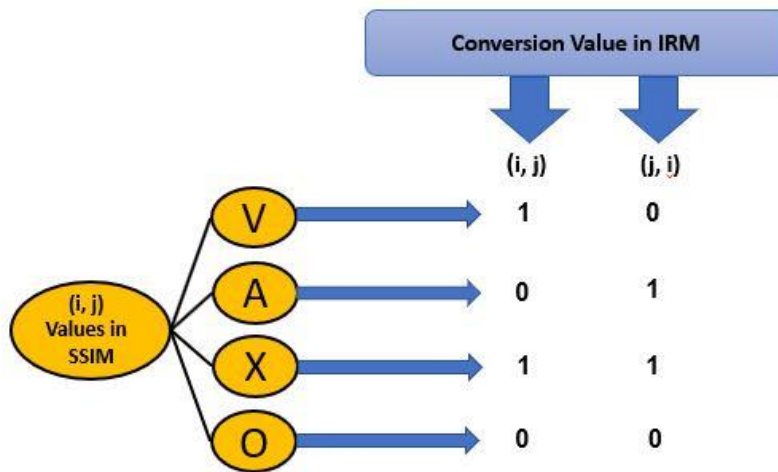


Figure 2. Converting the matrix into binary form (0,1).

4.4. Final Reachability Matrix (FRM)

To create the final reachability matrix, it is necessary to consider transitivity. Transitivity is a critical component of the final reachability matrix. Due to the use of transitivity, some of the IRM cells are filled by inference. Transitivity shows a connection between three things: if A is linked to B and B is connected to C, then A and C must also be attached. As shown in Table 6, adding 1* to each column or row gives the driving and dependent powers.

Table 6. Final Reachability Matrix (FRM).

| Factors | F1 | F2 | F3 | F4 | F5 | F6 | F7 | F8 | F9 | Dri P |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| F1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| F2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| F3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| F4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| F5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| F6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| F7 | 0 | 0 | 1* | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1* | 0 | 5 |
| F8 | 0 | 0 | 1* | 1* | 0 | 1 | 1* | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| F9 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1* | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Dep P | 2 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 3 | |

4.5. Level partitions

Level partitioning puts different parts in a hierarchy and considers how they connect (Warfield, 1974). The final reachability matrix can determine how many prior sets and

how far each component can reach. Access and intersection factors ensure the top level of the ISM table. The set of attainable factors, the antecedent set, the intersection set, and the initial and final levels of each element are all shown in Table 7. Finally, six iterations were required to complete the surface evaluation process.

Table 7. Level partitioning.

| Factors | Reachability Set | Antecedent Set | Intersection Set | Level |
|---------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-------|
| F1 | 1 | 1, 2 | 1 | 5 |
| F2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| F3 | 3 | 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 | 3 | 2 |
| F4 | 4 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 | 4 | 1 |
| F5 | 5 | 1, 2, 5 | 5 | 3 |
| F6 | 6, 7, 8 | 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 | 6, 7, 8 | 3 |
| F7 | 6, 7, 8 | 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 | 6, 7, 8 | 3 |
| F8 | 6, 7, 8 | 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 | 6, 7, 8 | 3 |
| F9 | 9 | 1, 2, 9 | 9 | 4 |

4.6. Formation of ISM-based model

The results of the level partition (see Table 7) are used to make a digraph, and the results of the FRM (see Table 6) show how the factors are linked. Figure 3 shows an ISM model with a hierarchical structure that shows how different parts work together and depend on each other.

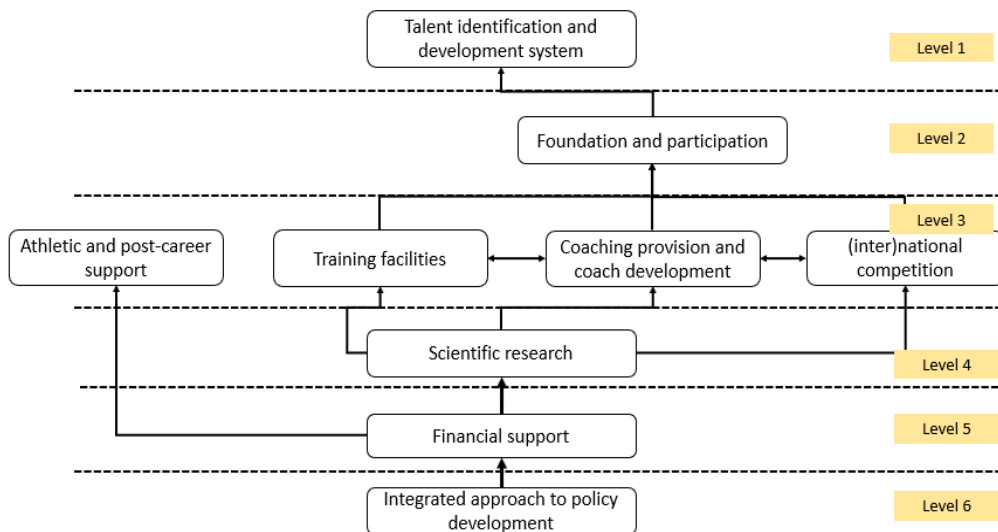


Figure 3. ISM model of factors affecting the ES in Iran.

Analysis of MICMAC data shows that there are four main groups of variables and that their relative importance depends on how much they depend on each other and how much they drive each other (see Figure 4).

Autonomous cluster: The first cluster is independent. These factors have low driving and dependent power, and as a result, they have little influence on the whole system. The element "Athletic and post-career support" (F5) is included in this cluster.

Dependent cluster: Variables with a weak driving force but a robust dependence power is included in the dependent factors category. In this cluster, the factors "Foundation and participation" (F3) and "Talent identification and development system" (F4) are included.

Linkage cluster: This cluster contains 'linkage' variables with high 'dependency power' and robust 'driving power', indicating that they are highly interconnected. There are three factors in this cluster, which are: Training facilities (F6), Coaching provision and coach development (F7), and (inter)national competition (F8).

Independent cluster: The critical factors in this cluster are the ones with high driving power and low dependency power. They are grouped as essential factors." Financial support (F1), An integrated approach to policy development (F2), and Scientific research (F9) are the most important criteria to consider, and it is essential to take each of these elements into account to execute the ES in Iran successfully.

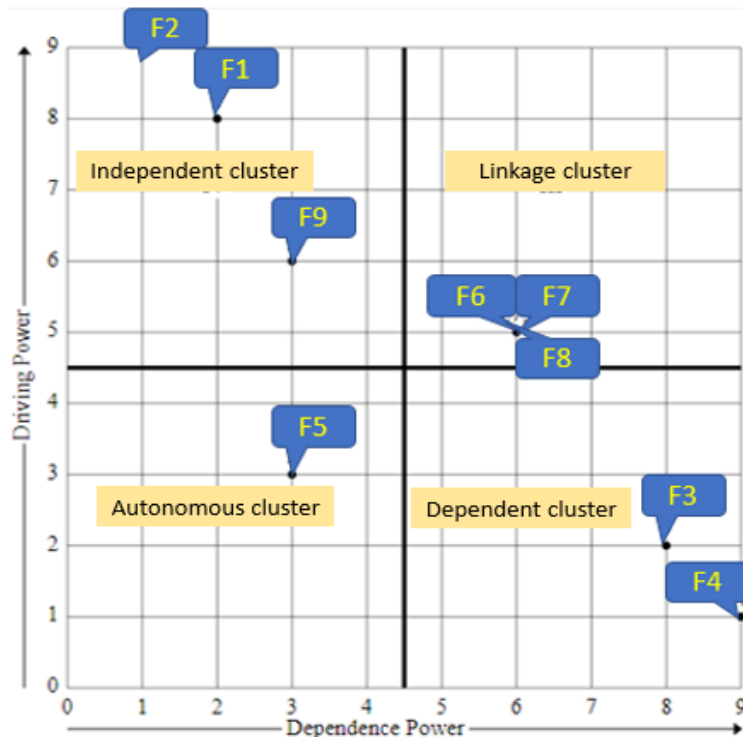


Figure 4. MICMAC analysis results.

5. Managerial implications

Taking advantage of the model developed for the future of Iran's ES, it will be necessary to make preparations, including the following: The application of active diplomacy in sports (with an emphasis on championships and professional sports) by those who are involved and responsible for the issue; redesigning the country's sports structure for excellence and success in international arenas; There is a need to modify the goals and policies of ES to make them more coordinated with the specific goals and programs that correspond to the different scenarios that could occur: alterations to budget allocation and distribution to medal-rich and medal-prone sports; Also needed is a talent search system that is integrated and can be used to search for talents.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Focusing on ES in Iran allowed us to understand its effects better. An integrated approach allowed us to achieve this goal. Research results are discussed in the following. Using the ISM method, a structured model was made to determine and model the things that affect ES in Iran. The model that was developed has six levels. Level 1 factors are more likely to be impacted by higher-level factors because they are at the top. Depending on how the proposed model is set up, these variables are called "dependent factors." This is because they are affected by other variables. [Figure 4](#) shows the "Talent identification and development system" as the only level 1 factor.

One of the main questions of the research was designed based on this axis: what components does the hierarchical structural model of Iran's elite sports include, and what are the relationships between each one? The interpretive structural modeling approach was used to answer this question. The output of this technique was formed because other variables influence the identification and development of talents at a level 1 variable. On the other hand, governance, policy-making, and structure as last-level variables somehow affect all variables. So, for a system to work well, it needs to pay special attention to these last-level variables that serve as the base. In the following, we will look at and talk in-depth about each of the model's dimensions.

6.1. Level 1: Talent identification and development system

When young people decide to play a sport regularly, it is a big part of the planning process for organizations that sponsor the sport to make sure they can find and help young talent. [De Bosscher et al. \(2008\)](#) acknowledges that the "international battle for medals" needs a high-performance system that leads to consistently better performance and lets talented athletes keep improving until they reach the elite level. From the talent search process perspective, this program's influence begins with identifying a talented athlete. Talent monitoring tools, robust talent identification methods that reduce attrition, and well-organized search mechanisms are all required for this goal ([Ronkainen et al., 2022](#)). Talent identification (i.e., monitoring systems are based on criteria identifying young talents).

Talent search (i.e., the processes to attract young talents). The process of choosing young talent for things like competitions and educational activities should work well and be part of an integrated system. So, if the best sport in the country is to grow and get better, it seems essential and necessary to make a system for finding and developing talent that works together.

6.2. Level 2: Foundation and participation

Sivrikaya et al. (2018) state that all over the world, development organizations and non-governmental organizations are using sports more and more to achieve their goals in social, cultural, physical, educational, and economic development. Public participation in sports is also associated with increased social connections, reduced involvement in risky behaviors, and better mental health (Edwards & Rowe, 2019). These issues have made sports, in general, a tool for policies, although the ever-increasing costs of public participation in sports, lack of access to equipment, and unequal access to sports activities can help improve people's health. They have created obstacles in the way of popularising sports to enhance the health of society. Obstacles have made many researchers realize that this goal can only be reached through management and strategic planning (Berg et al., 2015; Eggleston et al., 2020; Eime et al., 2014).

Because of the importance of making sports the most popular and recreational activity for leisure in societies, especially among teenagers and young adults, the United Nations, the International Olympic Committee, the International Association of General Sports, and the World Health Organisation all advocate sports participation as a method of enhancing community health. For instance, the International Olympic Committee has said the following about the value of sports for youth: "Sports, in today's world, play a more important role in solving crises related to global health and reducing deaths caused by diseases and physical inactivity of teenagers and young adults" (Vella et al., 2019).

6.3. Level 3: Athletic and post-career support

Many young athletes have visions of becoming professional athletes, but the chances of turning these visions into reality are meagre (Coakley, 2020). In addition, elite sports are very short-lived. This means that after an athlete's championship career is over, they have a long way to go. At each stage of their careers, athletes face different challenges. These challenges must be understood from a "start-to-finish" or life-span perspective and must consider the changes that athletes face in other areas of development (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Athletes must deal with the mental challenges of growing up, like forming and losing identity and getting smarter. Psychosocial development, however, is linked to changes in social networks, such as the relationships and roles of parents, athletes, coaches, and peers. Lastly, the academic or professional level is linked to the move to higher education, a professional career, or graduate school. Knights et al. (2019) acknowledge that when athletes are in this stage, they often work harder to ensure they are safe and have enough money.

Elite-level athletes must make many physical, mental, emotional, financial, and social commitments. Because of this, they do not have much time to work on self-development and self-efficacy, which are important for making good decisions outside of sports (Gordon & Lavallee, 2004). So, athletes may not be ready for life after winning a championship and may have upsetting reactions after leaving sports (Lally, 2007; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007). In this regard, Taylor and Ogilvie (1994), in their overview of research related to retired athletes, identified four main reasons that lead to the end of a sports career in the form of (a) injury, (b) age, (c) retirement and (d) stated voluntarily. According to Wylleman and Lavallee (2004) and Eggleston et al. (2020), athletes must plan for life after their sport (retirement) during their sports career to do their best and have the least amount of trouble adjusting to life after a championship sports career. Career development programs provide three main types of services: (a) career management, (b) training management, and (c) training in life skills. These are platforms that managers and sports practitioners of any country can use to benefit from these funds (Henriksen et al., 2010).

6.4. Level 3: Training facilities

Another essential part of elite sports is that athletes can access good sports facilities and infrastructure. Past researchers have named this component as one of the significant elements in a country's sports success (Andersen & Ronglan, 2012; Green & Houlihan, 2004; Houlihan & Green, 2008). Ensuring that athletes, especially those competing at the elite level, have suitable facilities and infrastructure can help them do better. On the other hand, athletes who use inadequate or non-standard facilities are more likely to get hurt, and their performance will worsen. Therefore, it is necessary for those involved in the matter to take appropriate steps by using their current knowledge to equip training facilities for the success of the country's ES in the international arena. For example, building sports centers that are good at what they do could be a top priority in this direction.

6.5. Level 3: Coaching provision and coach development

There is a common understanding that a coach is a manager or leader in the sporting arena (Newman et al., 2021; Surujlal & Dhurup, 2012). Many sports researchers, like (Kent & Chelladurai, 2001) and (Surujlal & Dhurup, 2012), use the words "coach" and "leader" interchangeably. This "reinforces the assumption that coaches are leaders," says (Loughead & Hardy, 2005). As Loughead et al. (2006) state, the coach makes important decisions, like choosing the team, making game plans, putting strategies and tactics into place, and overseeing other team members. Even though the coach must deal with the organization's administration, the governing body of the sport, sports federations, and the media, their relationship with the players they teach is likely the most mentally challenging. Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) note that the coach's leadership significantly affects how well the athletes and teams do. In addition to helping overall sports performance, the coach also plays a vital role in athletes' physical and mental development (Gould et al., 2002). Coaches play an undeniable role in athletes' success in the international arena; this claim is also supported by

evidence. [Mozaffari et al. \(2012\)](#) stated that creating a new coaching system is one way to improve Iran's championship sports system. This key point was also stressed in this research. Therefore, those in charge must pay special attention to this matter. However, it should also be noted that trainers are chosen based on their qualifications and skills, which gives them an advantage over others.

6.6. Level 3: (inter)national competition

[Crespo et al. \(2003\)](#); [Green and Houlihan \(2004\)](#), and [Oakley and Green \(2001\)](#) all state that competition is an integral part of how athletes grow and improve. This lets athletes and teams see how they stack up against their competitors and encourages them to participate in events that are seen as the pinnacle of achievement, like the Olympic Games. Athletes' success and performance at the championship level can be improved by allowing them to participate in international preparatory competitions ([Bernard & Busse, 2004](#); [Crespo et al., 2003](#); [Reid et al., 2007](#)). In addition, it also helps to improve his skills. Therefore, those involved in ES should consider the necessary fields to implement these measures with coherent and written planning if they seek to gain a favorable position in the international arena.

6.7. Level 4: Scientific research

Over the past few decades, scientific research has become essential for elite sports development systems to gain a competitive edge. In this way, countries have come up with long-term plans to do well in sports on the international stage. A sharkskin swimsuit or an aerodynamic board in winter sports are good examples of how innovative engineering can make a difference. Countries that invest structurally in these activities have the edge over others. These are the only examples that show how creative scientific research can be used in high-level sports and how it can help the winners. [De Bosscher et al. \(2015\)](#) agree that countries that make good decisions about the value of scientific research and back these decisions with the right amount of funding over time are likely to do better than countries that rely on static macroeconomic variables like population. If they rely on national wealth, they will have a competitive advantage.

Over time, society's attention and interest in sports have increased, and technology plays a valuable role in sports activities and the sciences ([Kos et al., 2018](#)). New sciences and technologies have contributed significantly to sports development to promote and expand their influence and maintain sports justice ([Ross & Sharpless, 1999](#)). Unsurprisingly, people who care about sports are often involved in making, putting in place, and using technology. For this reason, there are many challenges and discussions regarding technology and innovation in sports. For example, did the Fastkin suit change the nature of swimming by reducing the contact of the skin with the water or, according to his argument, improve the swimmer's performance level? Is it possible to accept video refereeing in football, or will this technology reduce the human effect and entertainment of sports and make them machine-made? Also, one of the critical challenges in boxing is whether professional boxers should fight with a (safety) helmet like beginners ([Loland, 2002](#)). In 2015, ([Karimi Kasvai & Hashemzadeh Khorasgani, 2015](#)) looked at 50 Iranian

martial arts coaches and athletes as part of a study called *The Role of Modern Technologies in Elite Sports (Case Study: Martial Arts)*. They concluded that using new technologies and preparation improves sports judgment and decision-making. In general, they found that using new technologies made judges more motivated, gave them more self-confidence, helped them prepare better, made practice more fun, and helped them come to better conclusions and decisions.

6.8. Level 5: Financial support

Financial support is key to national sports policy (De Bosscher et al., 2006; De Bosscher et al., 2015). It means that the government or the private sector gives money to develop (elite) sports and puts money into them. This is why this element (financial support) is considered one of the most important influential factors in success at the national and international levels from the point of view of athletes, coaches, and other stakeholders active in the field of sports (Peake, 2019). In this way, De Bosscher et al. (2019) stressed how important it is for the success of a country to pay attention to the financial support for elite sports. They proved their point by giving examples of some countries that are doing well in sports on an international level. Also, some other researchers have considered the provision and use of targeted funds in the distribution of the elite sports budget as one of the pillars of success (De Bosscher et al., 2008; Green & Houlihan, 2004; Houlihan et al., 2010). Shibli et al. (2013) looked at an approach that works well for developing elite sports.

By examining the contending countries in elite sports, it is possible to realize a significant increase in the budget allocated to this part of the country's sports compared to the past. Because of this, the overall performance of athletes at international games has gotten a lot better. Spain, for instance, has increased the budget share for some of its sports to 28.6% to stay competitive. As a result of the dramatic uptick in investment, Japan's situation is looking better than it did before. The country's strategic planning between 2002 and 2010 led to a significant increase in its medal haul at the winter games. Another example is the United Kingdom, which during the Olympic periods (2008 and 2012), increased its position from thirteenth to fourth place in the Olympic Games by investing significantly in the championship and professional sports (Houlihan & Zheng, 2013). In addition to allocating a performance-based budget, Britain has given additional funding to some specific sports with significant potential for success in the international arena.

According to De Bosscher et al. (2015), countries with elite sports spend a disproportionately large percentage of their GDP on those sports. Studying relevant statistics and information in this area proves this claim. As a percentage of the total budget for top sports, Australia spends 14.9% on swimming, 12.1% on judo, 16% on athletics in Estonia, and 13.9% on handball in Denmark. Also, in Great Britain, the four sports that receive 44.2% of the championship budget account for 59% of the country's success, and in Australia, 65.9% comes from the top three performances of four sports, which is a total of 44.6 percent of elite sport funding (De Bosscher et al., 2019). However, as Patatas et al. (2018) also said, there should be enough oversight of the budgeting process to prevent wasted resources. So, the best athletes in the country can improve their chances of winning

a medal by looking at how special funds are given to sports with the potential to do well on the international stage.

6.9. Level 6: An integrated approach to policy development

The elite sport needs to receive a significant amount of funding. However, how sports are organized and structured and how they work with the community makes it possible to use these resources to improve the chances of success at the championship level. Organizational success or failure is directly related to the quality of management and policies in place, including but not limited to cross-departmental coordination, planning, stakeholder participation, employee management and leadership, communication, decision-making, and cooperation with business partners. Even though there is research, professional sports administrators and academics have different ideas about the best way to make and enforce rules and policies for professional sports. In their discussion of the elite sport system, [Andersen and Ronglan \(2012\)](#) contrast the centralized approach taken by the Danish cycling organization with the decentralized approach taken by Sweden's tennis and golf federations. The authors believe both are viable options for constructing a championship sports system, each best suited to a different organizational context and period. However, according to various researchers, no single formula, approach, or strategy has provided a coherent and integrated structure. And policies for the success of elite sports ([De Bosscher et al., 2008](#); [Houlihan & Green, 2008](#)) because the adoption of procedures depends on the structure and various factors within the organization.

Trustees ought to be the ones to take the lead strategically when it comes to creating policies and organizational frameworks. The question of whether authority over coordination, guidance, and leadership should be centralized remains an important one. A well-integrated and comprehensive framework is necessary for effective resource management. In this regard, [Oakley and Green \(2001\)](#) state that determining the responsibilities of different sports organizations is particularly important. For this reason, any country that seeks success in the international arena must pay special attention to good governance, integrated policy, and an agile organizational structure. This is an essential point that those involved in ES in Iran should consider.

This study aimed to fill the research gap in the field of ES in Iran. A list of questions will need to be made for this goal. This study sought to answer the first and most important question: "Which variables influence ES in Iran?" The FDM was used to resolve this issue and determine the critical components. Using the FDM, we have discussed and analyzed the criteria that were found in the literature review to determine whether they are relevant and whether or not they are complete. A group of 17 industry and academic experts agreed on 14 of the 25 primary criteria using a set of standards that had been defined (degree of education, area of competence, experience, and kind of activity). The ISM approach was used to determine how the components depend on each other and how they work together. Based on the results obtained using this method, one can construct a model made up of a collection of components discovered in the first stage of the study (FDM). The 14 components were separated into six discrete levels using the ISM approach. The

conclusion that can be reached using this method is based on the idea that the identification and development of talents at level 1 are affected by other factors.

On the other hand, governance, policy-making, and structure are considered last-level factors because they affect all other variables in some way. So, for a system to work well, it needs to pay special attention to the final-level variables that serve as its foundation. In conclusion, we used the MICMAC analysis to show all the driving factors and dependencies linked to the essential variables (the function of the criterion). The MICMAC study found that three variables were independent, two were dependent, three were linked, and one was found to be autonomous.

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چگونه ورزش نخبگی در ایران می‌تواند به ارتقای کسب و کارهای صنعت ورزش منجر شود؟ یک رویکرد ISM-MICMAC

رسول نوروزی سید حسینی^{۱*}، عرفان مرادی^۲، مریم امینی^۳

^۱ دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی، گروه علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس، تهران، ایران.

^۲ دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، گروه علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس، تهران، ایران.

^۳ دانشجوی دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه شهید چمران، اهواز، ایران.

کلیدواژه

ورزش نخبگی
دلفی فازی
مدل ساختاری تفسیری
صنعت ورزش
کسب و کار

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: پژوهش حاضر به بررسی عوامل تعیین کننده ورزش نخبگی و تأثیرگذاری این عوامل بر صنعت و کسب و کارهای ورزش ایران پرداخته است. تحقق این امر با استفاده از یک رویکرد یکپارچه دنبال شد. **روش:** بدین منظور تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها این مطالعه در سه مرحله انجام شد. از روش دلفی فازی، به منظور دریافت خبرگان (اجرایی و علمی) و از مدل‌سازی ساختاری تفسیری برای طبقه بندی مولفه‌ها و ایجاد یک مدل سلسله مراتبی استفاده شد. تجزیه و تحلیل MICMAC نیز به منظور تعیین نفوذ و وابستگی هر یک از عوامل بکار گرفته شد.

یافته‌ها: ۱۴ عامل کلیدی مرتبط با ورزش نخبگی در ایران شدند. مدلی که توسعه داده شد دارای شش سطح است. همچنین، تجزیه و تحلیل MICMAC نشان داد که در هر یک از خوشه‌های مستقل، وابسته، پیوندی و خودمختار به ترتیب ۳، ۲، ۳ و ۱ متغیر جای گرفتند.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: طرح تحقیق ارائه شده در این مقاله اولین تلاش برای تحلیل سلسله مراتبی این عوامل و ایجاد مدلی چند سطحی برای ورزش نخبگی در ایران است که می‌تواند منجر به ارتقای صنعت کسب و کارهای ورزشی شود. دست‌اندرکاران و متولیان ورزش ایران لازم است بر مبنای آن اقداماتی را انجام دهند تا بتوان شاهد تعالی صنعت کسب و کارهای ورزشی ایران در عرصه‌های بین‌المللی بود؛ این موارد عبارت‌اند از: دیپلماسی فعال در ورزش (با تمرکز بر قهرمانی و ورزش حرفه‌ای)؛ بازطراحی ساختار ورزش کشور در جهت تعالی و موفقیت در عرصه‌های بین‌المللی؛ نیاز به اصلاح اهداف و سیاست‌های ورزش نخبگی؛ اصلاح نظام تخصیص و توزیع بودجه به ورزش‌های مدال‌آور و مستعد مدال و نیز طراحی یک نظام یکپارچه استعدادیابی.



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Brand Equity in Sports Product Advertisements and Recommending to Consumers

Mohammad Saeid Kiani^{1*} , Leila Nazari² 

¹ PhD Student, Department of Sports Management, Kermanshah Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran.

² PhD Student, Department of Sports Management, Kurdistan University, Sanandaj, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This research aimed to study brand equity in product advertisements and its recommendation to other consumers.

Methodology: The statistical population of the research consists of all physical education students of Kermanshah province who were consumers of sports goods. Four hundred people were selected by random sampling, and the data were analyzed by Pearson correlation and structural equation modeling.

Findings: The results showed a direct and significant relationship between the attitude towards advertisements with brand equity and the purchase recommendation. Also, brand equity positively and directly correlates with the purchase recommendation. Considering the importance of brand value and purchase recommendation, commercial organizations can use the strategy of endorsement by famous athletes. In this way, better conveying the concepts in advertising messages can be more successful in attracting customers.

Originality: In this research, the researcher has investigated the critical challenges companies face to remain in today's competitive and turbulent world and create and maintain a reliable brand name. We have found that the effect of advertising to reach and maintain this competitive advantage is significant.

Keywords

Brand Equity
Competitive Advantage
Endorsement
Sports Management
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1. Introduction

In today's world, the nation's brand is considered a scientific concept in marketing, which includes a wide range of sciences and academic disciplines and different organizations of a country to use branding techniques. It is considered a relatively new phenomenon. However, it is a concept that, despite the increasing global competition that countries face in domestic and foreign markets, more attention has been paid to it. Increasingly, they increase their conscious efforts to develop and improve the branding of their country. The purpose of country branding is to enhance the image and popularity of a country to gain benefits such as attracting foreign investment, developing tourism, and promoting exports. This happens when that actions are responsible and adequately communicated to others.

In a general sense, once a country can have a powerful reputation and image, that takes appropriate and significant actions for the image. It explains and interprets these actions with strength and, of course, carefully notices its feedback. Therefore, a strong and positive country brand provides a significant competitive advantage for countries to understand how it is seen by the public around the world and its achievements and failures. It is essential to how their assets, liabilities, people, and products are reflected in their brand image (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). The brand structure of the country has a multifaceted nature. The critical components of a country's brand identity, such as history, sports, region, signs, and local literature, represent the stable essence of a country (Dinnie, 2008), and sports, like its symbols/signs and visions, are a unique representative and indicator of identity. It is considered a rich source for modernizing the country's brands. In addition, smaller or developing nations and countries with limited financial resources focus on national culture, including music, film, literature, language, and sports, instead of launching expensive advertising programs. They can play an essential role in determining and embedding a country's existing image and mentality (Tie, 2003).

Due to its positive social, cultural and economic impact, the sports industry has become one of the largest industries in the world. For most countries, this industry is one the main source of economic activities is income generation, employment and international trade (Nazarian Madavani et al., 2022). Without exaggeration, sport is a full-view mirror in which nations, societies, men, and women can present and see themselves. This reflection is sometimes bright, sometimes dark, sometimes distorted, and sometimes magnified. This mirror is a metaphor for collective vitality versus depression, security versus insecurity, pride versus humiliation, and alienation. Therefore, participation in sports can be considered a sign of a country's civilization, health, and happiness (Ramzaninejad et al., 2020). Sports are not only a tool to express the national identity or an image of the progress of a country, but in some cases, a positive reputation and reputation in sports can raise that country's position on the world stage. Some researchers also believe that the use of sports in branding the country and as a tool for positioning a country has been neglected (Rein & Shields, 2007).

As an advertising institution that can have an effective role on the opinions and purchase behavior of the audience, the author has always been the focus of the marketers of the companies. Recently, many athletes have spread their influence beyond the field of

competition and sports by participating in social and commercial activities (Bahrami et al., 2021a).

Concerning country branding, there is a fundamental belief that if a country does not actively define and identify itself, others will do so in a harmful and destructive way, mainly with the help of metaphors and legends (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). If the brand of the country is supposed to have a comprehensive reflection and a deep connection with the whole society, social practices and phenomena related to this concept, of which sport is an important part, should be taken into consideration and its results applied (Tie, 2003). Famous personalities have valued that others cherish, and They respect them. In other words, due to having different characteristics from social norms, such as a unique lifestyle, individual attractiveness, or special skills, these people have the power to attract the attention of others to the category they enter to a high position (Mukherjee, 2009).

With the increase in the number of competitors, they no longer accept any kind of goods or services. Today's customers are looking for a product or service that best meets their needs, desires and tastes and has the right quality and price. One of the factors that can play a role in attracting more customers and using the results, and it is necessary to pay more attention to the manufacturers of sports products, is to pay attention to the environmental characteristics and the quality of the product (Bahrami et al., 2021b).

Most companies tend to use sports stars to validate their brand; Because athletes are more present in the media than other famous people, and because of their extraordinary capabilities and performance, they create a lot of attraction for customers (Doyle et al., 2014). Research shows that a positive emotional response to an advertisement has a positive and direct relationship with brand recognition and a positive attitude toward the brand and customers' purchase intentions (Khosravilagh & shahbandarzadeh, 2015). Before buying a commercial brand, the consumer selects a brand that matches his values. Therefore, the range of products and services should be such that it enables consumers to compare themselves with the symbolic value of the brand (Askariyan & Akbarzadeh, 2016). A strong brand can be considered the most asset of a business organization because it allows higher profit margins, better cooperation channels, and other benefits (Olson, 2008).

The development of technology and the increase in living standards have increased the expectations of sports products. People expect better durability, design, style, performance and comfort from sports products (Saatchian et al., 2021). The comfort of sports goods and clothing is associated with the increase in people's living standards, so research in this field has attracted both researchers and manufacturers (Ahmadi Bonabi & Javani, 2021).

Recommending a purchase to others is a type of informal communication about the characteristics of a business or a service in a society where customers convey marketing information related to products and services to other customers (Bradlow et al., 2017). Customers need information about that company and organization to choose a product or service. They continuously collect data from mass media, including television, satellite, internet, etc. Although the above sources provide valuable information to the individual, customers prefer to receive a significant part of the information they need from informal sources such as relatives, friends, acquaintances, and other people (Silverman, 2011). (Pasquali, 2022) showed that although word-of-mouth creators can be close friends,

family, or acquaintances, these people may also be strangers or acquaintances with weak relationships. Famous people are welcomed by society because of their fame, popularity, honors, and other achievements, and organizations use these people to encourage consumers to buy their products (Abdolvand & Hoseinzadeh Emam, 2014). Many researchers have also addressed advertising and authentication in the last two decades. Also, Alcañiz et al. (2010) investigated the role of famous sports personalities in advertising and introduced advertising through famous and famous athletes as a suitable tool to attract customers. The more attractive advertisement creates more hedonistic beliefs and more positive attitudes in consumers (Hosseini et al., 2009).

Kotler and Pfoertsch (2007) considered the purchase recommendation to others as one of the most desirable validation results. Also, recommending purchases to others as one of the most effective communication tools has been approved by researchers. Çifci et al. (2016) showed that recommending purchases to others reduces people's risk in purchasing, improves their understanding and mental state/trust, and increases their enthusiasm to buy products and services. Gives. Alexandris et al. (2007) concluded that people with a positive attitude toward the author recommend their products to others. Also, celebrity endorsements increase brand recall and advertising (Smilansky, 2009). Dehghan and Peymanfar (2021) showed that attitude toward advertising significantly affects brand loyalty. Also, Jalilian et al. (2013) showed that Word-of-mouth advertising is effective on the four dimensions of brand equity. Shahhoseini et al. (2011) argued that word-of-mouth advertising significantly affects purchases, brand equity, and loyalty. Loyal customers can attract new customers through word-of-mouth advertising (recommendation to others) and frequent king purchases, leading to increased brand purchases and, as a result, improving the brand's particular value (Gilaninia & Mousavian, 2009).

In addition, research has shown that 15% of advertisements aired on television for the first time use these characters. And 80% of ads with the highest recall rate in the audience's minds are related to advertisements that use famous characters (Amos et al., 2008). Recently, in Iran, we have seen advertisements through sponsors, among which we can mention the advertisement of Roxona through the famous athlete Seyed Mohammad Mousavi. Since the companies seek to understand the customers' needs in the market and seek to know about the consumer products of their customers, validated products can help to understand the valuable and clearness of the customers. Therefore, using a research approach following scientific and logical bases is necessary. To be aware of the interests, tastes, and preferences of consumers and to be able to establish a meaningful connection between the features of advertisements, selected characters, and the message conveyed to the audience because, according to the nature of ads, it is something essential and motivating for the consumer and influences his behavior. Therefore, it is considered necessary to conduct research that connects companies' needs with customers' requirements. This research, which has specifically focused on the product endorsed by Seyed Mohammad Mousavi, will answer the question of what effect there will be on the attitude of the customers regarding the endorsement of athletes on the products by seeking to increase their knowledge and recommending it to others.

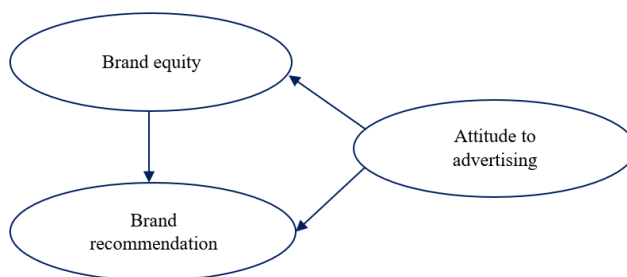


Figure 1. Conceptual model of research.

2. Methodology

The statistical population of the research consists of all physical education students of Kermanshah province in all grades in two national and Azad universities. A random sampling method was used to collect data. Due to the uncertainty of the statistical population, according to Cochran's formula, the sample size was 400 people. Content validity was approved for the questionnaires given to 10 experts to provide their expert opinions on how to write the questions, the number of questions, the content of the questionnaires, and the relationship between the questions and the options. And to declare the coordination of the questions with the objectives of the research and to determine the construct validity of the questionnaires, the confirmatory factor analysis method was used, and the main factors of the questionnaires were confirmed. The following three questionnaires were used to collect data:

Liu (2002)'s advertisement attitude questionnaire consists of 30 questions on a five-point Likert scale and five dimensions of social belief, economic belief, moral belief, legal belief, and personal usefulness. Khosravilaghab and shahbandarzadeh (2015) evaluated its validity and reliability, and it was reported at an acceptable level (0.77). The present study calculated its reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90.

Yoo and Donthu (2001)'s brand value questionnaire consists of 14 questions on a five-point Likert scale and four dimensions of brand awareness, loyalty, perceived quality of the brand, and the mental image of the brand. Abedi samakosh and Kalate Seyfari (2017) established the validity and reliability of this tool were evaluated and reported at an acceptable level (0.82). The present study calculated its reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient equal to (0.79). Rageh Ismail and Spinelli (2012) purchase recommendation questionnaire has five questions on a five-point Likert scale. The validity and reliability of this tool were evaluated by Soltani et al. (2016), and it was reported at an acceptable level (0.85). The present study calculated its reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient equal to (0.80).

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data, Pearson's correlation coefficient test was used for the inferential data analysis, and structural equation modeling was used to determine the relationships between variables in the form of a causal model. SPSS 21 and Amos 22 statistical software were used to perform the above tests.

3. Results

Since the main foundation of structural equation modeling is the correlation matrix, the correlation between research variables is presented in Table 1. As seen in the Table 1, the results of Pearson's correlation coefficient indicate a positive and significant relationship between all the variables of attitude towards endorsement advertisements and brand equity and purchase recommendation. Also, there is a positive and meaningful relationship between the subscales of talent management and emotional intelligence with job satisfaction.

Table 1. Correlation matrix of research variables.

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|--|--------|--------|---|
| 1 Attitude toward authentic advertisements | 1 | | |
| 2 Brand equity | 0.61** | 1 | |
| 3 Recommend buying | 0.59** | 0.67** | 1 |

.It is significant at $p \leq 0.01$ level **

The correlation only determines the degree of relationship between constructs, and to better understand the direct and indirect effects as well as the effect of the mediating variable among constructs, the structural equation model was used.

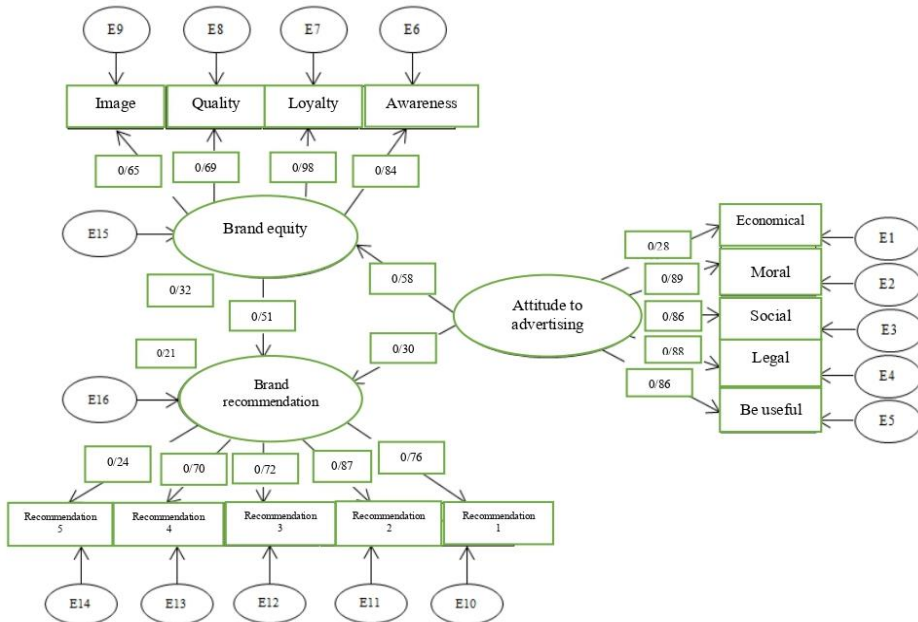


Figure 2. Structural equation model.

After running the model Figure 2, the most essential model fit indicators are reported in Table 2. Due to the general and general lack of agreement among structural equation modeling experts on the best estimation fit indices, in the present study, among the

parsimonious fit indices, the relative chi-square index (CMIN/DF) and the root mean square approximation index (RMSEA) were used. And the absolute fit index (GFI) and among the comparative fit indices, the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and the normalized fit index (NFI) were used, which were suggested by Meyers et al. (2012). Is. Non-significant chi-square (X^2) with P more significant than (0.05), CFI, GFI, TLI, and NFI greater than (0.90), indicating good model fit and 0.80 to 0.89 indicating appropriate fit. It is a model. Also, RMSEA smaller than (0.08) and relative chi-square (X^2/DF) smaller than 3 show a good fit of the model (Meyers et al., 2012). After running the model with Amos 22 software, Table 2 shows the most critical fit indices of the model. CFI, TLI, GFI, and NFI indices are more significant than (0.90), indicating good model fit, and (0.80 to 0.89), indicating appropriate model fit.

Table 2. Standard coefficients of the effect of attitude towards authentic advertisements and brand equity on purchase recommendation.

| CMIN/DF | RMSEA | GFI | TLI | NFI | CFI |
|---------|-------|------|------|------|------|
| 2.01 | 0.02 | 0.89 | 0.88 | 0.90 | 0.91 |

According to the above table, the model is in good condition regarding explanation and fitting, and the indicators indicate the model's suitability with the observed data. The critical values reported in the Table 3 show that all three paths have a significant effect (≥ 1.96). The structural equation modeling analysis showed that the attitude towards endorsement ads has a direct and consequential impact on brand equity and purchase recommendation. Also, a significant effect was observed between brand equity and buying advice.

Table 3. Standard coefficients and critical values related to all paths.

| Critical value | The standard deviation | Standard coefficient | Routes | | |
|----------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|---|--|
| 10.96 | 0.05 | 0.58 | Brand equity | ← | Attitude toward authentic advertisements |
| 2.79 | 0.11 | 0.3 | Recommend buying | ← | Attitude toward authentic advertisements |
| 7.48 | 0.15 | 1.12 | Recommend buying | ← | Brand equity |

In this part, first, the direct effects, then the indirect effects, and finally, the total results are discussed. According to the Table 4, it can be stated that the attitude towards advertising is a validating variable that has a significant effect directly on brand equity and purchase recommendation and indirectly on purchase recommendation. Considering the direction of the path coefficient of these variables, it can be said that these effects are increasing. Also, the brand equity variable directly and significantly affects the buying recommendation. Finally, the results listed in the total effects column showed that the attitude towards the sponsor's advertisements had the most significant effect on the brand value. As can be seen in the research model, respectively, 32% of the variance of the brand equity variable can be explained by the variable of attitude towards the endorser's advertisements. Also, 21% of the variance of the purchase recommendation variable can be explained by the variables of attitude towards the endorser's advertisements and brand equity.

Table 4. Direct, indirect, and total effect in the research model.

| The coefficient of determination | Effect of variables | | | Variables | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------|--------|-------------------------|----|--|
| | Total | Indirect | Direct | | | |
| 0/32 | 0.69 | --- | 0.69 | Brand equity | <- | Attitude toward authentic advertisements |
| 0/21 | 0.55 | 0.17 | 0.37 | Purchase recommendation | <- | Attitude toward authentic advertisements |
| | 0.54 | --- | 0.54 | Purchase recommendation | <- | Brand equity Brand equity |

4. Discussion and conclusion

Advertising is an essential communication tool to achieve important goals of organizations, such as branding and increasing sales of a particular product (Pyun & James, 2011). The expansion of competitive markets and the emergence of new marketing and advertising approaches have exposed consumers to various options and offers. Adopting creative methods and creating exciting and motivating images is an indispensable policy for managers and marketers. From this point of view, organizations turning to famous people to participate in advertising programs requires market knowledge and knowledge of consumer preferences and behavior (Abdolvand & Hoseinzadeh Emam, 2014). Therefore, to be successful in this field, companies should use different methods compared to their competitors to be more successful in competing with others, which is one of the effective methods of using validation. Based on this, the current research investigates the attitude toward authentic advertisements and the brand's unique value by recommending the purchase to others. For this purpose, Seyyed Mohammad Mousavi's character was explored in Roxona product advertisements. The results of the statistical analysis showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the attitude toward authentic advertisements and the unique value of the brand. This result is consistent with the findings of Mahmoudi et al. (2017), who stated in their research that when a brand name is associated with the name of a prominent person, a positive attitude towards the brand and a distinguished personality is created for it. Also, this result is consistent with the findings of Kim et al. (2014). It seems that in the highly competitive conditions of the current markets, advertisements are continuously exposed to the eyes of the audience through television, radio, newspaper, internet, billboards, and other media. They make them towards the desired goods and services, gaining a suitable position in the consumer's mind so that the consumer is loyal to the company, which is very important. One factor that effectively reaches such a position in the customer's mind is the endorsement of athletes. Since the fans or audience of the endorsed athlete has a positive view of him, it transfers positive concepts of performance and personality from the endorser to the product. It causes their favorable attitude toward advertisements; Therefore, it seems logical that they have more value than authentication products. Therefore, the audience's acceptance of the expertise and credibility of the authorized athlete can increase their doubts and suspicions about the advertisement and its unique value.

Perhaps in recent years, many companies have turned to the endorsement of athletes in order not to fall behind their competitors. In general, a validator can create a more practical attitude in customers; Because the people of the society welcome famous people

due to their fame, popularity, honors, and other achievements, organizations can improve the exceptional value of the brand by improving the attitude of customers. When the audience chooses a specific brand under the influence of the author's advertisement, he has acquired a positive attitude towards that advertisement. So, his perception of the value and quality of the company's products affects the brand. Therefore, company managers are advised to use sports endorsements to increase the value and credibility of their brand and, in this way, improve people's attitudes toward their advertisements. A positive and significant relationship exists between the attitude toward authentic advertisements and buying recommendations to others. This result is consistent with the findings of Brenda et al. (2013), Kotler and Pfoertsch (2007) Pitts and Stotlar (2013), Alexandris et al. (2007), and Çifci et al. (2016). Endorsement of the product by a famous person makes customers associate with the famous person before buying it. Customers believe that famous people share essential values with them and want to be like them (Cianfrone & Zhang, 2006).

Finally, the research findings showed a positive and significant relationship between brand equity and buying recommendations to others. This result is consistent with the findings of (Jalilian et al., 2013) and (Kim et al., 2014). Today, the focus of new marketing thought. Instead of looking for customers for manufactured products, the practice is to provide satisfaction and create value for the customer so that they are attracted to the manufactured product or the service that can be supplied (Raisifar et al., 2013). In the highly competitive conditions of the current markets, it is imperative to get the proper position in the consumer's mind so that the consumer is loyal to the company. On the other hand, there is an intense psychological relationship between the fans and the sports star. Because once he approves the product, it can effectively convince fans to buy the desired product (Keshtkar Rajabi, 2016). Advertising, as one of the essential communication tools in marketing activities, plays an indispensable role in creating knowledge and awareness among customers. When customers' understanding of a particular brand increase, they will have a better value for that brand. The specific value of the brand is due to the high confidence that customers have in the brand and its competitors. Companies can strengthen the brand's unique value by increasing the quality and variety of products and gaining consumers' trust and confidence. This confidence appears in the form of a positive attitude towards the brand and its recommendation to others for the brand. As a result, when a positive advertising tool is used, it causes a deep value and a positive attitude of customers toward the product. As a result, they recommend using that organization's goods and services for their relatives.

One of the critical challenges facing companies to survive in today's competitive and turbulent world is to create and maintain a reliable brand name. Meanwhile, the effect of advertising in reaching and maintaining this position can be significant. Advertising is a bridge between companies and consumers. When a brand uses a famous person and strengthens its relationship with its customers through this powerful communication tool, it can differentiate itself from other products or services in the market. The authorized person expresses the company's message differently and distinctively, creating a strong and positive attitude and exceptional value towards the brand, which ultimately leads to an increase in the recommendation to buy among customers. Therefore, in line with the research, by better understanding the buying behavior of customers and knowing the way of purchasing current

and potential customers and the factors affecting their attitude, it is possible to provide better services to maintain and satisfy them and provide continuous loyalty. Therefore, it is suggested that the companies provide the necessary conditions to benefit as much as possible from the benefits of certification to attract more customers to buy their products and increase their positive and practical attitude towards their products. And in this way, promote the unique value of the brand and recommend the brand to others.

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ارزش ویژه برند در تبلیغات محصولات ورزشی و توصیه آن به مصرف کنندگان

محمد سعید کیانی^{۱*}، لیلا نظری^۲

^۱ دانشجوی دکتری گروه مدیریت ورزشی، واحد کرمانشاه، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، کرمانشاه، ایران.

^۲ دانشجوی دکتری، مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه کردستان، سنندج، کردستان، ایران.

کلیدواژه

ارزش ویژه برند
بازاریابی دهان به دهان
صحه گذاری
مزیت رقابتی
مدیریت ورزشی

نوع مقاله:

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: هدف از پژوهش حاضر مطالعه نقش ارزش ویژه برند در تبلیغات محصولات ورزشی و توصیه آن به مصرف کنندگان دیگر بود.

روش: جامعه آماری پژوهش شامل تمامی دانشجویان تربیت بدنی استان کرمانشاه که از مصرف کنندگان کالاهای ورزشی بوده‌اند تشکیل شده که از این میان به صورت نمونه گیری تصادفی ۴۰۰ نفر انتخاب شدند. داده‌ها با آزمون‌های آماری همبستگی پیرسون و مدل‌سازی معادلات ساختاری تحلیل شدند.

یافته‌ها: نتایج نشان داد بین نگرش به تبلیغات با ارزش ویژه برند و توصیه خرید ارتباط مستقیم و معناداری وجود دارد. هم‌چنین ارزش ویژه برند ارتباط مثبت و مستقیمی بر توصیه خرید دارد. با توجه به اهمیت ارزش ویژه برند و توصیه خرید، سازمان‌های تجاری می‌توانند از استراتژی صحه گذاری ورزشکاران مشهور استفاده کنند و از این طریق با انتقال بهتر مفاهیم پیام‌های تبلیغاتی، در جذب مشتریان، موفق‌تر عمل کنند.

اصالت و ابتکارمقاله: محقق در این پژوهش به بررسی چالش‌های مهم پیش روی شرکت‌ها به منظور باقی ماندن در جهان رقابتی و پرتلاطم امروز و ایجاد، حفظ یک نام تجاری معتبر است پرداخته و دریافت که در این میان تأثیر تبلیغات در رسیدن و حفظ این مزیت رقابتی می‌تواند قابل توجه باشد.

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تماس با نویسنده مسئول: محمد سعید کیانی mohammadsaeidkiani@gmail.com



The Partial Role of Relationship Marketing Dimensions in Attracting Females to Football Academies (Case Study: Female Football Academies in Kerman)

Mina Ghasemizdeh Nugh¹, Akbar Jaber^{2*}, Esmail Sharifian³

¹MSc in Sport Management, Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Kerman, Iran.

²Assistant Professor in Sport Management, Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Kerman, Iran.

³Associate Professor in Sport Management, Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Kerman, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Because of the importance of attracting females to football academies and the prosperity of academies in the sustainable development of female sport, the current study aimed to study the partial role of relationship marketing dimensions in attracting females to football academies in Kerman.

Methodology: This field study was descriptive-survey research and a practical one. The research population included all the females in football academies in Kerman, and 150 females were studied through total sampling. Data was collected using a researcher developed scale for measuring Relationship Marketing components as well as attracting customer questionnaire developed by Geib et al. (2005). The reliability of the tools was confirmed based on Cronbach's alpha, and the validity of the research tools was confirmed by conducting face validity, content validity, and construct validity.

Finding: The research findings, by applying structural equation modeling, demonstrated that the relationship marketing dimensions, including Trust, Commitment, Communication, Conflict management, Loyalty, and Quality, have a positive and significant effect on attracting females to football academies in Kerman. According to the research finding, focusing on relationship marketing and its dimensions can attract females to football academies, which could ultimately lead to a boom.

Originality: This research is one of the few studies conducted in attracting women to football academies, emphasizing the role of relational marketing that can effectively develop women's football and the prosperity of football academies.

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1. Introduction

In the present era, where sport and its various dimensions are proliferating with specialized and technical approaches, training athletes and their growth will also be possible through academic and educational channels (Da Costa et al., 2021). The growth and development of academies related to sports education can play a vital role in the development and promotion of sports at various levels of public and championship fields (Aljaloud et al., 2022). Attention to sports academies and colleges will be even more critical when these institutions act as a center for identifying, attracting, and developing sports talents in training athletes (Nikander et al., 2022). Strengthening sports training centers requires special attention to the various pillars of sports and marketing. In these centers, in addition to encouraging athletes to attend these academies, the academies can also access more financial resources and income generation that, finally, leads to providing a proper condition for active presence in the field of talent education. Although the company of females in social activities has become much more prominent than in the past, the presence of females in sports activities is still limited. Memari et al. (2021) argued that the importance of the human resources index, managerial expertise, marketing, software, and legal and economic infrastructure in football schools and academies are the factors influencing the promotion of club franchise power. Thus, human resources are considered essential internal resources (Memari et al., 2021).

Sport is a means for the existence of females in society, and the more females are present at high levels of sport; the importance and role of females in culture and sports becomes apparent (Benar et al., 2013). On the one hand, more people interested in Football academies can help educate players. On the other hand, it can provide the basis for strengthening the financial strength of academics so that they can operate with more power and strength. The prosperity of the female football academy market requires the recruitment and retention of females in different age groups. Therefore, the efficient use of related marketing strategies can pave the way for attracting more females to football academies.

Given that female sports, particularly female soccer, have been considered a growing field in Iran, relationship marketing is one of the key concepts in modern marketing that helps more females become interested in football academies. Therefore, the efficient use of relationship marketing is a strategic step in enjoyable female sports and football academies. Furthermore, relationship marketing involves developing long-term and cost-effective communication between organizations and their customers to create mutual benefits for both parties (Afchangi et al., 2013). Also, relationship marketing aims to build long-term, cost-effective communications between organizations and their customers to create mutual benefit. Marketing strategies have related to the development and aim to foster strong relationships with customers (Ranjbarian & Barari, 2010), which establishes long-term relationships with customers and is one of the most essential and unavoidable issues in the new marketing industry (Afchangi et al., 2013). Therefore, applying marketing strategies should be taken in granted for developing sports industry in different field in Iran (Ganjkanloo et al., 2021).

For this reason, understanding and predicting consumer behavior is critical to success in business planning and management (Alishiri et al., 2012). Stavros et al. (2008) have

shown that the components of relationship marketing include trust, commitment, communication satisfaction, love, reciprocity, intimacy, and self-communication (Stavros et al., 2008). From the beginning of the research process, the concept of relationship marketing, several dimensions such as trust, commitment, conflict management, satisfaction, communication, financial benefits, social benefits, structural links, empathy, and other factors have been introduced and measured by various researchers. Trust refers to the extent to which an organization believes in the goodwill and credibility of the organization (Palmatier et al., 2006). when one of the parties believes in the importance of the relationship and does her best to maintain and promote the ties, commitment will be formed (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Communication is another aspect of relationship marketing that builds trust by helping to resolve disputes and meet expectations (Sin et al., 2002). The management of dealing with disputes and inconsistencies by managers and how conflicts are handled are other related elements that help to reduce disputes in the customer relationship process (Alishiri et al., 2012). Loyalty is another aspect of relationship marketing that refers to the intention or method to return. Another pillar is the quality ratio, which refers to the customer's overall service performance evaluation (Ng et al., 2011). Since competitive pressures and customer acquisition costs for organizations are increasing, personalizing customer relationships, and building deep relationships with them can provide organizations with a sustainable competitive advantage. Such a competitive advantage of sustainability is possible only in a stable relationship through establishing long-term buyer-seller relationships (Palmatier et al., 2006). Relationship marketing refers to establishing long-term and reciprocal relationships with individuals, organizations, and stakeholders, and its basis is establishing effective and desirable communication to maintain the customers (Alishiri et al., 2012). With the passage of the traditional economy and the intensification of competition in new dimensions, the customer is considered the central pillar and axis of all activities of the organization; Competitively, the survival and continuity of organizations depend on identifying and attracting new customers and retaining existing customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). Sports organizations are no exception to this rule. It has always been one of their essential needs to retain and satisfy customers. Therefore, it is necessary to take basic and operational steps for this important matter. Due to the growing popularity of football academies, these centers need to be aware of the critical factors in successfully implementing relationship marketing, customer relationship management, value creation, satisfaction, and loyalty. So, using relevant marketing components and the subsequent presence of customers to meet such needs is becoming increasingly important and necessary for conducting this research.

More studies on relational marketing and its relationship with various marketing variables have been conducted in the research literature. Saatchian et al. (2013) have found a positive and significant relationship between service quality variables with loyalty, satisfaction, and intention to attend fitness and aerobics centers. Seyed Javadin et al. (2014) showed that social and unique behavior benefits positively and significantly affect customer loyalty and satisfaction. Kalantari and Dolatyari (2018), examined the effect of advertising on the recruitment of adolescents to football schools in Zanjan and showed that advertising based on the Ida model has effectively attracted male adolescents to

football schools in Zanjan. Hosseini et al. (2020) found that only three tactics of virtual social networks, websites, and preferential behavior affect customer appreciation. Darvish (2012) examined the effect of customer relationship quality on customer loyalty, according to the relationship marketing approach, and found that trust, commitment, and perceived quality of services (components of customer relationship quality) had a positive effect on customer loyalty. Bahrami et al. (2021) found that there is an important relationship between customer satisfaction and the components of perceived factors, reliability, responsiveness, reliability and empathy in sport centers. Alishiri et al. (2012) showed that the members of relational marketing, trust, communication, commitment, and conflict management, play a role in customer loyalty. Bee and Kahie (2006) showed that relationship marketing positively affected the quality of buyers' relationships with companies. Buhler and Nufer (2012) found that marketing activities related to performance, satisfaction, new product success, and competitive advantage lead to increased profitability, reduced costs, sales, and advertising. It has led to positive word of mouth and employee retention. Van Tonder and Petzer (2018) found that customer satisfaction positively affected emotional commitment and trust, and customer-perceived value positively impacted passionate commitment and trust.

Relationship marketing seems to be a good strategy for the satisfaction and retention of sports customers. Therefore, relationship marketing and the satisfaction of sports customers and their desire to attend have attracted the attention of researchers and marketers (Seyed Javadin et al., 2014). Female sports in traditional sports and local games have existed in the past. With the start of the new Olympic Games, there were good opportunities for females to engage in modern sports. Today, the development of international sports organizations has made the necessity of creating opportunities for females and engaging in sports a condition (Najaf zadeh et al., 2012). The growth and prosperity of female sports have faced significant limitations and problems for various reasons. In recent years, football academies have expanded in different cities in Iran, but this expansion has been very limited in female soccer. However, females have performed better in recent years than in the past in football and futsal, and female football has witnessed better and more national and international competitions. Kerman province is one of the leading provinces in developing female football, which has achieved significant success in various categories of female football in recent years. But an overview of the number of female football academies in Kerman province reveals a bitter truth. Despite the high popularity of Kerman females in football, only three football academies are officially operating in different cities of the province, which can serve as a serious alarm for the future of female football in Kerman province. While in recent years, the female soccer teams of Kerman province have had a strong presence in various female soccer competitions, and Kerman province can be named as one of the poles of female soccer in the country. The existence of a small number of football academies in this province is not a pleasant event. This study can be of particular importance in two ways.

On the one hand, attracting more females to football academies could lead to support for female football, which is currently in its infancy. On the other hand, the quantitative and qualitative development of female football academies is one of the undeniable necessities to cover a more significant target community. This is important when the

tendency to these academies is greater among the audience. With more income, these academies can continue their activities by strengthening their infrastructure with higher motivation. Today, with the increase of studies in sports marketing and many of the challenges facing sports, it has become clear that relational marketing has had beneficial results and effects on increasing the commercial and sports performance of sports clubs and teams (Afchangi et al., 2013). Given the role of sports in society, identifying essential and practical factors to attract people to sports fields and examining the critical factors in the continuation of their participation in sports provides the opportunity to focus on opportunities in sports and by identifying Expect people to provide good service (Seyed Javadin et al., 2014).

Despite the importance of the subject, a review of the research literature also shows that no specific research has been observed on the presence of females in the field of sports with a focus on marketing. This is one of the few studies that has examined the components of relationship marketing concerning attracting females to football academies. Therefore, considering the importance of relationship marketing in attracting female soccer players to football academies, the current study aimed to study the partial role of relationship marketing in attracting females to Kerman (Figure 1).

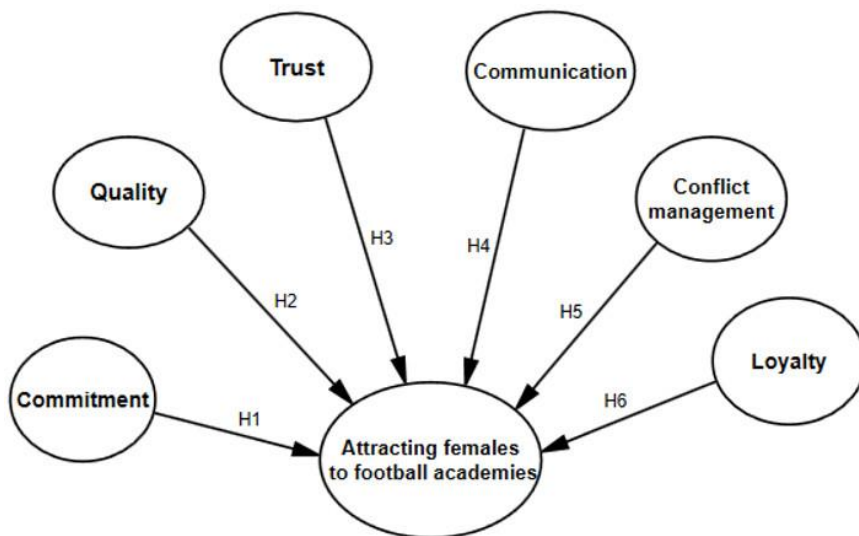


Figure1. The conceptual research models.

2. Methodology

The research is descriptive and cross-sectional research. Because of the nature of the study, its review section has been done by reviewing related sources. In the other section, data collection was done through the survey through a questionnaire. At the time of this research, Kerman province officially had three female football academies. The study's statistical population included all females participating in the province's football

academies, including Kerman, Sirjan, and Bam. The statistical population had 150 female soccer players participating in football academies, all selected as a statistical sample using the total number sampling method. The research instruments were a relational marketing questionnaire and a questionnaire for attracting females to football academies, which were designed and used based on the Likert scale, based on a researcher-developed scale (relationship marketing dimensions) and (Geib et al., 2005) questionnaire (attracting customer scale). The tool consisted of 3 sections that were appropriate to the subject and objectives of the research, including a cover letter, personal information form, related marketing components, and attracting females to football academies.

In the attached letter, the purpose of distributing the questionnaire and the need for the cooperation of the respondents, as well as instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, were stated. The components of relationship marketing included quality, commitment, trust, conflict management, communication, and loyalty, measured by 30 items. The variable of attracting females to football academies also had seven items. Five sports marketing management experts confirmed the face and content validity of the questionnaires. Also, to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability, a questionnaire prototype was distributed among 30 research community members, and its reliability was obtained using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha method and combined reliability were used to ensure the instrument's reliability. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha method in a pilot study on a sample of 30 academy clients. A higher alpha value of 0.7 and a value of hybrid reliability indices higher than 0.8 for the research variables indicate the optimal reliability of the research tool, which is shown in Table 1. Formal, content and structural validity were used to evaluate the instrument's validity. The content validity of the research tool was reviewed and confirmed based on a survey of five sports marketing experts and experts, and based on these comments, and slight changes were made in the sentences and writing the statements of the tool. Confirmatory factor analysis and convergent validity were used to evaluate the validity of the instrument structure. In confirmatory factor analysis, factor loads higher than 0.5 indicate the validity of the research tool, which confirms the results of factor analysis in the number one table of instrument validity. Convergent validity was also estimated by calculating the mean of extracted variance. The variance extracted for the research tool in Table 1 was higher than the suggested value (0.5). These indicators also indicate the convergent validity of the research tool. The results of confirmatory factor analysis values, combined reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and mean-variance extracted are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha values, reliability Combined variance and mean were extracted.

| Variable | Objects | Confirmatory factor analysis | Composite reliability | Cronbach's alpha | Mean-variance extracted |
|------------|---------|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Commitment | Q1 | 0.86 | 0.86 | 0.88 | 0.73 |
| | Q2 | 0.83 | | | |
| | Q3 | 0.79 | | | |
| | Q4 | 0.80 | | | |
| | Q5 | 0.81 | | | |
| Quality | Q6 | 0.85 | 0.89 | 0.87 | 0.75 |
| | Q7 | 0.86 | | | |
| | Q^A | 0.78 | | | |
| | Q9 | 0.77 | | | |

| Variable | Objects | Confirmatory factor analysis | Composite reliability | Cronbach's alpha | Mean-variance extracted |
|--|---------|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Trust | Q10 | 0.81 | 0.88 | 0.89 | 0.76 |
| | Q11 | 0.83 | | | |
| | Q12 | 0.86 | | | |
| | Q13 | 0.79 | | | |
| | Q14 | 0.86 | | | |
| Communication | Q15 | 0.81 | 0.90 | 0.87 | 0.79 |
| | Q16 | 0.83 | | | |
| | Q17 | 0.88 | | | |
| | Q18 | 0.86 | | | |
| | Q19 | 0.81 | | | |
| Conflict management | Q20 | 0.80 | 0.86 | 0.85 | 0.77 |
| | Q21 | 0.84 | | | |
| | Q22 | 0.82 | | | |
| | Q23 | 0.79 | | | |
| | Q24 | 0.81 | | | |
| Loyalty | Q25 | 0.89 | 0.84 | 0.82 | 0.76 |
| | Q26 | 0.78 | | | |
| | Q27 | 0.85 | | | |
| | Q28 | 0.91 | | | |
| | Q29 | 0.87 | | | |
| Attracting females to football academies | Q30 | 0.88 | 0.88 | 0.89 | 0.78 |
| | Q31 | 0.88 | | | |
| | Q32 | 0.80 | | | |
| | Q33 | 0.86 | | | |
| | Q34 | 0.79 | | | |
| | Q35 | 0.83 | | | |
| | Q36 | 0.82 | | | |
| | Q37 | 0.88 | | | |

The results in [Table 1](#) confirm the validity and reliability indicators of the surveys. Data collection was conducted by distributing 150 questionnaires via email and google form. A total of 130 questionnaires were returned, and among the returned questionnaires, 119 valid questionnaires were used in the data analysis process. SPSS version 23 and AMOS version 21 were used for data analysis.

3. Results

So, all measurement models were first examined to determine the acceptable level of each index for measurement models. First, seven measurement models related to the seven research variables were tested separately. [Table 2](#) presents the general fit indices for the measurement models.

Table 2. Fit indicators of measurement models.

| Index name | CMIN/Df | GFI | AGFI | NFI | CFI | RMSEA |
|---------------------|---------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Commitment | 2.23 | 0.91 | 0.91 | 0.92 | 0.91 | 0.056 |
| Quality | 2.42 | 0.93 | 0.92 | 0.93 | 0.92 | 0.064 |
| Trust | 2.29 | 0.92 | 0.91 | 0.92 | 0.93 | 0.043 |
| Communication | 2.11 | 0.91 | 0.94 | 0.94 | 0.95 | 0.031 |
| Conflict management | 2.68 | 0.92 | 0.91 | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.049 |
| Loyalty | 2.74 | 0.93 | 0.91 | 0.92 | 0.93 | 0.058 |

| Index name | CMIN/Df | GFI | AGFI | NFI | CFI | RMSEA |
|--|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Attracting females to football academies | 2.33 | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.068 |
| acceptable | Three> | 0.90< | 0.90< | 0.90< | 0.90< | 0.10< |

According to the results of Table 2, it can be concluded that the measurement patterns have a good fit and the general indicators confirm that the data support the patterns well. After reviewing and confirming the measurement patterns in the first step, structural equation modeling was used in the second step to test the relationships. Table 3 presents the general indicators of fit of the structural equation model of the research model.

Table 3. General indicators of research model fit.

| Index name | CMIN/Df | GFI | AGFI | NFI | CFI | RMSEA |
|-------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Final model | 2.40 | 0.93 | 0.92 | 0.91 | 0.93 | 0.068 |
| acceptable | <3 | >0.90 | >0.90 | >0.90 | >0.90 | 0.10< |

According to table three, it can be concluded that the general indicators show a good fit of the model by the data. In other words, the collected data supported the model well. The structural equation model of the research, along with the regression coefficient, is presented in Figure 2.

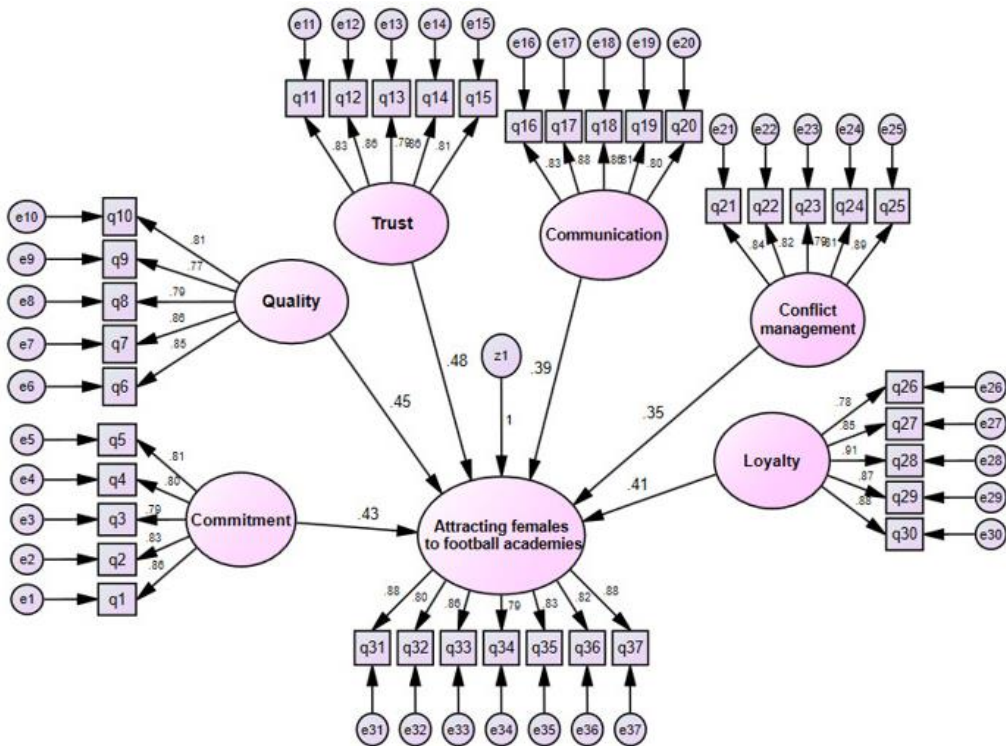


Figure 2. Structural equation model of research.

After reviewing and confirming the model, two partial indicators of critical value and p have been used to test the significance of the relationship. The critical value is obtained by dividing the "regression weight estimate" by the "standard error." Based on the significance level of 0.05, the critical value should be greater than 1.96. Less than this value, the relevant parameter in the template is not considered necessary. Also, values less than 0.05 for p value indicate a significant difference between the calculated value for regression weights with a value of zero at the confidence level of 0.95. [Table 4](#) shows the relationships related to the research model, regression coefficients, and the values of partial indicators related to each connection.

Table 4. Regression coefficients and test results of relationships.

| Number | Exogenous variable | Direction | Endogenous variable | Beta coefficient | Critical value | Meaningful | Result |
|--------|---------------------|-----------|--|------------------|----------------|------------|-----------|
| 1 | Commitment | → | Attracting females to football academies | 0.43 | 13.96 | *** | Confirmed |
| 2 | Quality | → | Attracting females to football academies | 0.45 | 17.63 | *** | Confirmed |
| 3 | Trust | → | Attracting females to football academies | 0.48 | 16.87 | *** | Confirmed |
| 4 | Communication | → | Attracting females to football academies | 0.39 | 13.11 | *** | Confirmed |
| 5 | Conflict management | → | Attracting females to football academies | 0.35 | 11.89 | *** | Confirmed |
| 6 | Loyalty | → | Attracting females to football academies | 0.41 | 14.23 | *** | Confirmed |

According to the results and indicators obtained in [Table 4](#), the relationships drawn in the research model have been confirmed.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The prosperity of female football academies and the attraction of more fans to the sport can be significant in two ways. On the one hand, from a marketing perspective, the development of enthusiasts as the main customers of football academies can provide the necessary grounds for strengthening the financial strength of academies and training centers in this field. This increase in revenue can lead to the development and strengthening of infrastructure in female football education. On the other hand, the prosperity of female soccer centers and academies can be a promising window for developing talent that will somehow affect the future performance of female soccer in the field. This aspect becomes more important than the development of football academies when females face significant cultural, social, and hardware constraints on participating in various aspects of the sport and no doubt address related concepts. The presence of females in multiple sports fields can facilitate the conditions for the presence of females. In this regard, the general purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of relational marketing components on attracting females to football academies in Kerman province.

Some of the findings of this study showed that trust as one of the dimensions of relationship marketing has a positive and significant effect on attracting females to football academies in Kerman province. In other words, with the increase in the level of trust, it can be expected that the recruitment of females to football academies will also increase. Trust is one of the most critical requirements between customer retention and academia because customers pay close attention to the other party's promises and the values received. In a study by [Darvish \(2012\)](#), trust as one of the components of customer relationship quality positively affected customer loyalty. [Sin et al. \(2002\)](#), also argued that higher levels of trust between users and service providers will increase the likelihood of continuing the relationship. The findings of [Alishiri et al. \(2012\)](#) also showed that the components of relational marketing, including trust, affect customer loyalty, which is consistent with the present study. The findings of [Jamshidian \(2015\)](#) also indicated the positive effect of trust on customer loyalty. According to the results, it is possible to increase trust by eliminating mistrust and thus increase the attraction of females to football academies. Also, careful training, keeping the players' secrets, paying full attention to the activities, and implementing the services promised by the managers and officials of football academies will provide the necessary conditions to attract more females to football academies. Therefore, the managers and owners of football academies must insist on fulfilling the obligations and promises they give to the players. Also, providing quality services because this action has gained the trust and confidence of people; as a result, customer loyalty to football academies will increase. Attracting customers, attracting customers' attention and trust should be considered significant. So, managers and officials of football academies should pay close attention to the benefits of confidence in the process of attracting more females, and on the other hand, by creating a reasonable and appropriate atmosphere, trust to develop players to help attract new players and retain old ones. Given the social and cultural conditions that govern females' activities, the importance of providing the requirements to gain their trust to participate in sports programs is much more colorful.

The finding of this study showed that commitment as another component of relationship marketing has a positive and significant effect on attracting females to football academies in Kerman. In other words, mutual commitment increases the attraction of females to football academies. Commitment is an important factor in building a long-term relationship with the customer that encourages people to attract and continue to work in their favorite sport. Football academies' commitment to their various social, cultural, and sporting missions, and their committed response to females' expectations and demands, create a commitment-based relationship between them as service providers and females as the clients of these academies will be established. This mutual commitment will provide the conditions for attracting and continuing the activities of females in football academies. [Morgan and Hunt \(1994\)](#), considered relationship commitment as an important factor in the success of relationship marketing and introduced it as an important variable to predict customer attraction. [Van Tonder and Petzer \(2018\)](#) also showed that emotional commitment positively affects customer engagement. In line to the results of this study, [Shajarian et al. \(2018\)](#), also found a significant relationship between commitment and service quality. Also, [Alishiri et al. \(2012\)](#) showed that commitment had

a significant relationship with customer loyalty. In research by [Darvish \(2012\)](#), committing to the customer causes customer retention and, as a result, mutual commitment. Applying and designing new services based on the player's needs and paying attention to them, correct behaviors when providing services, and responding to problems are the main elements in showing the commitment of football academies to attract females to them. Mutual commitment between players and football academies ultimately leads to academy profitability and player satisfaction.

Academies achieve the direct effect of commitment on customer acquisition by valuing the needs and wants of customers. It seems that football academies should strive to provide the best service to customers; Because today, customers pay attention to special and superior services and consider it a criterion for their choice. Therefore, if the managers and staff of football academies can show more flexibility and perform better in serving and fulfilling their obligations, they can see more loyalty from their players. This study also showed that communication has an effective role in attracting females to football academies in Kerman province. In other words, with the increase in the communication index, the attraction of females to football academies increases. [Sin et al. \(2002\)](#) also believes that when there is an effective relationship between the organization and its customers, a better relationship will be established, and customers will be more easily attracted to the organization. [Buhler and Nufer \(2012\)](#), in a study, concluded that there is a significant relationship between communication and employee satisfaction that is consistent with the present study. However, it is inconsistent with the results of [\(Ranjbarian & Barari, 2010\)](#). This mismatch can be due to different fields and statistical populations in these two studies. Effective communication networks can help females gain more confidence in football academies by creating more transparency. Communication can strengthen trust by helping to resolve disputes and meet expectations [\(Sin et al., 2002\)](#). Relationship benefits are an important and effective variable on how the customer perceives the services provided and his interactions with the organization. Indeed, the benefits of the relationship create a lot of value for customers in the service experience [\(Ng et al., 2011\)](#). Concerning gender, the concept of effective communication becomes more important for females. Due to their gender nature, females prioritize communication in their relationships and interactions. From this perspective, paying attention to the issue of communication can affect females' decisions and tendencies to participate in various sports. The more confident relationships are formed, the more confident females will be in different sports. According to the research results, communication and complete information are provided to the relevant managers and officials at the right time to be informed and to be able to help the players at the right time to help and provide them. Managers and staff of football academies while paying more attention to the requests and suggestions of customers and by providing useful and reliable information through the public relations department of football academies and, in general, establishing a strong relationship and respectful behavior with the client. Customers can retain their customers and attract new customers. Therefore, the managers and officials of football academies should pay more attention to the mentioned component to retain more customers and make them loyal to the club, consequently bringing more profitability to the club. Also, in case of dissatisfaction and complaint from the player, the problem can

be solved intelligently through communication to regain the customer's satisfaction, which is important for this component.

The findings of the fourth hypothesis showed that conflict management plays an influential role in attracting females to football academies in Kerman province. In other words, by strengthening the control and management of conflict in the relations of football academies with their customers, the attraction of females to football academies increases. This section aligns with [Ranjbarian and Barari \(2010\)](#) research results. [Jamshidian \(2015\)](#) results also showed that handling complaints positively affects customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. According to [Oly Ndubisi and Kok Wah \(2005\)](#), the service provider's ability to manage conflict directly affects customer attraction and loyalty. According to the results of this research, the managers and officials of the academies should try to allocate time commensurate with the player's requests to listen to their questions and problems. Also, when announcing the rules or responding to the players, there should be no conflict or congestion to cause dissatisfaction. Therefore, the managers and staff of football academies should manage potential conflicts by controlling them and preventing any possible problems, as well as resolving them by discussing the issues and conflicts that have arisen. Today, customers are looking for a calm and peaceful atmosphere. They are far from challenging to satisfy their sport's needs. The managers and staff of football academies must pay attention to these points in the discussion of services and use them to achieve their goals of attracting females. The ability to solve problems and manage conflict can hugely impact pact on player recruitment, and managers and staff of football academies need to pay attention to this point when discussing service delivery.

We indicated that loyalty has a positive and significant role in attracting females to football academies in Kerman province. With the development of the loyalty component, females' recruitment in football academies increases. Loyalty refers to having a sense of belonging and a desire to be maintained in a group. [Hosseini et al. \(2020\)](#), in their research, measured marketing tactics related to customer appreciation loyalty. The loyalty variable has a significant relationship with customer retention and is consistent with the present study. [Stavros et al. \(2008\)](#) believe that relationship marketing focuses on the customer. Its primary benefits in the sports sector include customer attraction, customer retention, increasing loyalty, reducing the organization's marketing costs, and profitability. Academies' loyalty to their players and expressing this loyalty in practice can attract the attention of females and provide a basis for attracting and retaining them. Undoubtedly, the academies' loyalty to their players has led to a two-way interaction between them, which can lead to stronger and closer relationships in the long run. According to the research results, managers and officials of football academies should provide players with appropriate information about new sports methods and techniques, as well as changes made in this field and the fields of counseling and following the conditions of individuals. Act more actively so that participants feel special attention has been paid to them. Since relational marketing tries to attract, maintain, and strengthen relationships with customers, the managers, and officials of football academies in Kerman province can use this approach to reach loyal customers. Also, this indicator of maintaining the customer is directly affected by the high levels of customer loyalty. Football academies can provide services to cardholders by anticipating discounts on payments, giving loyalty cards, giving

discounts and special services, or by forming associations and holding special celebrations. Attract, retain and increase customer loyalty.

We showed that the quality component also has an influential role in attracting females to football academies in Kerman province. This finding means that by increasing the quality of football academy services, the recruitment of females to these centers will improve. Quality of service refers to the main expectations of a customer that meets their expectations and maintains their satisfaction. This part of the findings is consistent with [Ranjbarian and Barari \(2010\)](#). [Hunt et al. \(2006\)](#) have introduced the quality of service delivery as one of the factors influencing the success of relational marketing strategy. [Saatchian et al. \(2013\)](#) also found a positive and significant relationship between service quality variables with loyalty, satisfaction, and the future presence of sports customers. Perceived service quality as one of the components of customer relationship quality in [Darvish \(2012\)](#) research has positively affected customer loyalty. According to the research results, quality is one of the essential elements in relational marketing that attracts and retains females to football academies. Therefore, managers and officials of football academies must plan the quality of their services at the highest level with careful and appropriate planning to facilitate customer attraction. It can be said that the quality of services of football academies today is a vital tool to gain a competitive advantage among these centers. Due to the constant changes in the market and the addition of other competitors, the managers of football academies should try to improve the knowledge of their staff in dealing with customers in different parts of the academies, such as admission, sports counseling, nutrition, management, and other items. Satisfy people. When the football academies improve the quality, there will be positive and effective results in attracting and retaining customers, which will result in the prosperity of the football academies and the increase in the tendency of females to play football. Given that quality is directly related to customer tastes, football academies should strive to monitor individuals' expectations. And desires and provide their services following these demands to improve the perceived quality of services offered. Today, competition in various industries, including sports, is increasing. Because sports service organizations, like football academies, provide similar services to customers, competition for customer acquisition and, most importantly, customer loyalty among them also intensifies. Therefore, relationship marketing in the dimensions of trust, commitment, communication, conflict management, loyalty, quality, customer relationship development, infrastructure, and customer orientation can increase the number of customers. Considering the findings of the present study, they indicate that by applying the relationship marketing approach in football academies of Kerman province, the number of users can be increased.

Relationship marketing seeks to establish long-term relationships with customers that lead to positive behaviors from customers ([Bee & Kahie, 2006](#)). On the other hand, due to the competitiveness of all markets, this competition and understanding the importance of attracting and retaining customers has led organizations to gradually move towards establishing and maintaining long-term relationships with customers, which according to researchers, is appropriate relationship marketing. The best option is to achieve this ([Seyed Javadin et al., 2014](#)). Accordingly, managers and owners of football academies in Kerman province can use the relationship marketing approach and by using components such as trust, commitment, communication, conflict management, loyalty, quality to

attract more customers. Take a step. Performing actions such as fulfilling obligations on time, respecting the tastes of players, fulfilling promises, promises and contracts, providing quality services, observing environmental health, creating a happy and fun atmosphere in the complex, planning the use of football academies services, Effective and valuable advertising, providing accurate information about customer preferences and football academies, responding to customer needs and wants, using new and up-to-date services, service innovation, flexibility in changing services, preventing potential conflicts and resolving And the conflict season can help attract more customers and build long-term relationships.

Conducting various research with quantitative and qualitative approaches to study different aspects of attracting females in other sports can provide the necessary grounds for a more active presence of females in different levels of sports. Due to the additional restrictions, females face in participating in various sports, addressing concepts that simultaneously contribute to the economic prosperity of females' sports venues and contribute to a greater tendency of females to enter the sports field can be a priority in executive and research strategies. Due to the cultural, social, economic, and geographical diversity and the presence of females in terms of quality and quantity in sports in different provinces, it is recommended to study the concepts related to attracting female athletes in other regions and sports.

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نقش نسبی مؤلفه‌های بازاریابی رابطه‌مند در جذب بانوان به آکادمی‌های فوتبال (مطالعه موردی: آکادمی‌های فوتبال بانوان استان کرمان)

مینا قاسمی‌زاده نوق^۱ ID، اکبر جابری^۲ ID*، اسماعیل شریفیان^۳ ID

^۱ کارشناسی ارشد مدیریت ورزشی، گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه شهید باهنر کرمان، کرمان، ایران.
^۲ استادیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه شهید باهنر کرمان، کرمان، ایران.
^۳ دانشیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه شهید باهنر کرمان، کرمان، ایران.

کلیدواژه

ارتباطات
بازاریابی رابطه‌مند
زنان
کیفیت
وفاداری

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: با توجه به اهمیت جذب بانوان به آکادمی‌های فوتبال و همچنین رونق آکادمی‌ها در راستای توسعه پایدار ورزش بانوان، هدف کلی این پژوهش مطالعه نقش نسبی مؤلفه‌های بازاریابی رابطه‌مند در جذب بانوان به آکادمی‌های فوتبال استان کرمان بود.

روش: تحقیق حاضر از نظر هدف کاربردی و از نظر ماهیت از نوع تحقیقات توصیفی-پیمایشی بود که به صورت میدانی انجام گرفت. جامعه آماری این پژوهش شامل تمامی بانوان در آکادمی‌های فوتبال استان کرمان بودند که با استفاده از روش نمونه‌گیری تمام شمار تعداد ۱۵۰ نفر به عنوان نمونه آماری مورد مطالعه قرار گرفتند. اندازه‌گیری مؤلفه‌های بازاریابی رابطه‌مند با پرسشنامه محقق ساخته و اندازه‌گیری جذب بانوان به آکادمی‌های فوتبال با اقتباس از پرسشنامه **گیب و همکاران (۲۰۰۵)** انجام گرفت. پایایی ابزار بر اساس آلفای کرونباخ و روایی ابزار با استفاده از روایی صوری، محتوا و روایی سازه تأیید گردید.

یافته‌ها: یافته‌های پژوهش نشان داد که مؤلفه‌های بازاریابی رابطه‌مند (اعتماد، تعهد، ارتباطات، مدیریت تعارض، وفاداری، و کیفیت) بر جذب بانوان به آکادمی‌های فوتبال تأثیر مثبت و معناداری داشته‌اند. با توجه به یافته‌ها، تمرکز بر بازاریابی رابطه‌مند و مؤلفه‌های آن می‌تواند زمینه لازم را در جهت جذب بیشتر بانوان به آکادمی‌های فوتبال و در نتیجه رونق این مراکز فراهم نماید.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: این پژوهش از محدود پژوهش‌هایی محسوب می‌شود که در حوزه جذب بانوان به آکادمی‌های فوتبال با تأکید بر نقش بازاریابی رابطه‌مند انجام گرفته است و می‌تواند در توسعه فوتبال زنان و رونق آکادمی‌های فوتبال تأثیرگذار باشد.

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Sports Sellers' Psychological Capacity Effect on Sales Amount and Client Satisfaction

Hassan Gharehkhani^{1*} , Behzad Izadi², Ziba Nasiri³

¹ Assistant Professor, Sport Science Department, Faculty of Humanities, University of Zanjan, Zanjan Iran.

² Associate Professor, Sport Science Department, Faculty of Humanities, University of Kurdistan Sanandaj, Iran.

³ Sport Management Graduated, Sport Science Department, Faculty of Humanities, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aimed to evaluate the effect of the psychological capacity of sports sellers on sales amount and client satisfaction mediated by Client-centred behavior.

Methodology: The research was applied correlational. Iranian leading sports sellers were selected as a sample. Data were collected using the Lussier and Hartmann (2017) questionnaire (reliability 0.7). The PLS Smart software was used to analyse the data.

Findings: The highest correlation was observed between the variables of psychological capacities and customer-oriented behavior (0.835). The lowest correlation was between customer satisfaction and sales performance (0.211). There was a positive and significant relationship (0.79) between psychological capacities and the seller's client-centered behaviors. Client-oriented behavior effect of sports sellers on sales amount (0.78) and client satisfaction (0.65) was also positive and significant.

Originality: Considering the impact of sports sellers' customer-oriented behavior on sales and customer satisfaction, it is recommended that sports sellers pay special attention to learning and applying customer-oriented behaviors.

Keywords

Client-Oriented Behavior
Client Satisfaction
Psychological Capacities
Sales Amount
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1. Introduction

The products of specialized stores are sold in a specific field. Therefore, these centers need sellers with knowledge, skill, and flexibility in the field of specialized products (Iqbal & Sharma, 2012). Depending on the type of goods and products and how they are sold, the role of sellers in improving the performance of stores is more prominent (Sachdeva & Goel, 2015). Vendors play an essential role in the store and consumer relationship when shopping (Hagberg et al., 2016). Vendors provide short-term and long-term benefits to customers and retailers (Spreer & Rauschnabel, 2016). They can create value through a friendly and honest approach, ability, and knowledge to introduce the product (Edirisinghe et al., 2020). Face-to-face communication with the customer is essential for stores' profitability and strategic benefits (Lieven, 2016). Chang and Hung (2018) showed that customer-centric sales behavior directly affects customer trust and satisfaction, and these two variables also directly affect customer loyalty (Chang & Hung, 2018).

Highly skilled salespeople create positive customer experiences, increase the likelihood of repurchasing, and increase store sales (Yurchisin & Park, 2010). Successful salespeople are equipped with various sales skills, such as knowing customer needs, adapting to customer-changing conditions, identifying new opportunities, and introducing a product and information about its exceptional features (Nielson & Border, 2016). Business men are increasingly required to have the right strategy to meet sales volume targets. Moreover, given the increasingly dynamic development of technology, humans are needed quickly and appropriately to act not to be less competitive. This qualitative research uses a questionnaire to collect the data (Ilyas & Mustafa, 2022). Terho et al. (2015) investigate the sales strategy's impact on performance concerning the client-centric mediating role. Findings showed that sales strategies (segmentation, prioritization, and value-based) are related to sales performance. Segmentation strategies directly and prioritization and value-based strategies indirectly affect sales performance through customer-centric impact (Terho et al., 2015). Bande et al. (2015) showed that promoting emotional skills is an excellent way to reduce work stress and increase sales by considering the feelings and desires of the salesperson regarding the effects of emotional intelligence and flexibility (Bande et al., 2015). However, Frank and Park found no relationship between vendors' customer-centric behaviors and their performance (Franke & Park, 2006).

According to social exchange theory, creating and maintaining a strong relationship between sellers and customers plays an essential role in the performance of business-to-business sales organizations, and a positive relationship between sports sellers and customers, in the long run, will increase sales and market share (Palmatier et al., 2007). Mansouri et al. (2022) examine the relationship between sellers' ethical behavior and customer loyalty. The mediating effect of trust and satisfaction in the relationship between ethical behavior and loyalty was also assessed in the sportswear industry. Data were collected from 265 consumers. There is a significant influence between sellers' ethical behavior and consumers' loyalty. Also, satisfaction and trust mediate the relationship between sellers' ethical behavior and consumers' loyalty. Trust is also found as the most proximal antecedent to customer loyalty.

Today new technologies and high competition have created a complex environment in stores (Flaherty & Gassenheimer, 2016), so 50 percent of sellers don't achieve their sales amount goals (Ahearn et al., 2013). Therefore, sports shops are looking for ways to increase the performance of their vendors (Groza et al., 2016). Theoretical foundations of sales show that direct and face-to-face communication between the seller and the buyer is strategically essential because sellers help specialty stores to differentiate themselves from competitors (Koistinen & Järvinen, 2016). There may also be increased customer skepticism in direct buyer-seller communication, and online shopping increases to avoid confrontation (Son et al., 2017). In addition, according to different perceptions of customers, vendors' behavior in stages before and during the purchase and in repurchase can be other. Therefore, vendors need to understand the customer better and change their behavior to create and maintain a lasting advantage (Edirisinghe et al., 2020).

Customers sometimes collect product information from online information sources such as social media, so stores may incur costs in selling their products directly by not being able to use an asset called sellers (Kim et al., 2016). Client-oriented behavior is designed to enhance seller-customer relationships and increase customer satisfaction. Vendors with client-centric behaviors are more committed to realizing and providing client requests (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). These people care for their clients (Jaramillo & Grisaffe, 2009) and use other methods besides the problem/solution method (Homburg et al., 2011). Also, customer-centric vendors regularly provide their information to the customer and pay close attention to their requests so that they can identify a solution that benefits both parties (Jaramillo & Grisaffe, 2009). In addition, customer-centric vendors tend to focus on understanding customer needs and adopting behaviors that strengthen relationships (Periatt et al., 2004). According to the results of Edirisinghe et al. (2020), The first step in customer-centric sales focuses on customer needs. Although many aspects of a store, such as location, product, and price, may create a competitive advantage, skilled and trained salespeople are essential in promoting sales. Because with such vendors, customers' online shopping is minimal, and most enjoy in-store experiences (Edirisinghe et al., 2020).

In the present article, two new aspects were considered: **The first** was the psychological effect of skills on client-centered behaviors of sports salespeople and the relationship between the two variables. Because psychological capacities such as optimism and resilience can be developed (Bande et al., 2015; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). The results showed that psychological skills have a positive effect on client-oriented behaviors. Client-centered behaviors also affect sales amount and client satisfaction. Funk (2017) introduced the framework of sports experience by examining the behavior of sports consumers. The results of his research showed that this framework with a comprehensive and stimulus-based approach includes cognitive, organizational, and physical factors and increases customer satisfaction and productivity by promoting the enjoyment of sports experiences (Funk, 2017). **The second** was client-centered behaviors impact the sales of sports vendors and customer satisfaction. Sales studies show a positive relationship between vendors' client-centric behaviors and sales amount (Brady & Cronin, Jr, 2001; Homburg et al., 2011; Korschun et al., 2014; Wachner et al., 2009). The impact of customer-centric behavior on customer satisfaction has also been proven (Brady & Cronin, Jr, 2001). Hence, a lot of investment is made in promoting customer-oriented

behaviors (Homburg et al., 2011). Lussier and Hartmann examined psychological skills, client-centric behaviors, sales amount, and client satisfaction relationships.

Therefore, the notability of mechanisms and procedure needed for the marketing effectiveness relation understanding (Palmatier et al., 2007) was also considered. In addition, the mediating role in the relationship between psychological capacity and sales performance was investigated. Finally, the mediating role of client-centered behaviors in the relationship between psychological ability and client satisfaction has also been investigated. Undoubtedly, the results of this article will contain important information for stores and managers of sports production industries. Also, sports sellers can use the findings of this article to increase the efficiency of the salesforce, return on investment, and customer satisfaction.

2. Methodology

The research was applied in terms of purpose and descriptive correlation based on the data collection method. In terms of time, it was a part-time survey. Zanzan leading sports sellers (N=93) were selected as the research sample. The data collection tool was the Lussier and Hartmann (2017) questionnaire consisting of 23 closed-ended questions with a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, combined reliability (above 0.7), and its validity was established through convergent and divergent validity based on Fornell and Larcker index. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and confirmatory factor analysis. The research model was presented using the structural equation modeling technique in PLS software version 3. The model was fitted in 3stages. First, external model evaluation, and second, evaluation of the internal or structural model (path coefficients, coefficient of determination, predictive criteria, and effect size) was calculated. The general research model was fitted in the third stage using Theta, NFI, and SRMR RMS indices. Finally, the hypotheses were tested.

3. Results

Due to the importance and necessity of displaying these tables and to prevent the length of the content in the findings section, descriptive results and the most important cases have been refrained from presenting the tables. 75% of the statistical samples were male, and 25% were female. 31% of the statistical models were single, and 69% were married. 9% were under 20 years old, 21% were under 25, 44% were under 35, 13% were under 45, 4% were under 55, and 9% were over 55 years old.

3.1. Fitting the Proposed Model

3.1.1. Step 1: External model measurement

In the first step, validity and reliability were measured. According to the results, both convergent validity conditions were confirmed Table 1. Fornell and Larcker indexes were

used for diagnostic validity. According to the results, divergent validity was also confirmed [Table 2](#). Reliability was also confirmed [Table 3](#).

Table 1. Factor loads and AVE value of each question.

| Psychological capacities | | Customer-centered behavior | | Sales performance | | Customer Satisfaction | | AVE | |
|--------------------------|----|----------------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|----------------------------|-------|
| 0.611 | Q1 | 0.713 | Q9 | 0.710 | Q14 | 0.672 | Q19 | Psychological capacities | 0.503 |
| 0.504 | Q2 | 0.562 | Q10 | 0.576 | Q15 | 0.672 | Q20 | Customer-centered behavior | 0.524 |
| 0.751 | Q3 | 0.619 | Q11 | 0.609 | Q16 | 0.718 | Q21 | Sales performance | 0.523 |
| 0.709 | Q4 | 0.871 | Q12 | 0.693 | Q17 | 0.619 | Q22 | | |
| 0.864 | Q5 | | | | | | | | |
| 0.809 | Q6 | 0.709 | Q13 | 0.717 | Q18 | 0.687 | Q23 | Customer Satisfaction | 0.502 |
| 0.685 | Q7 | | | | | | | | |
| 0.748 | Q8 | | | | | | | | |

Table 2. Variance extracted from structures and their correlation.

| Variable | Psychological capacities | Customer-centered behavior | Sales performance | Customer Satisfaction |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Psychological capacities | <u>0.704</u> | | | |
| Customer-centered behavior | 0.342 | <u>0.824</u> | | |
| Sales performance | 0.421 | 0.502 | <u>0.632</u> | |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.408 | 0.487 | 0.418 | <u>0.702</u> |

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha values and combined reliability.

| Variable | Cronbach's Reliability | Combined Reliability |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Psychological capacities | 0.733 | 0.739 |
| Customer-centered behavior | 0.901 | 0.903 |
| Sales performance | 0.841 | 0.847 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.899 | 0.904 |

The correlation matrix between the research variables is shown below. This matrix shows how much each variable is related and correlated with other variables. The highest correlation was observed between the variables of psychological capacities and customer-oriented behavior ($r=0.835$), and the lowest correlation was observed between the variables of customer satisfaction and sales performance ($r=0.211$) ([Table 4](#)).

Table 4. Matrix of correlation coefficients between research variables.

| Variable | Psychological capacities | Customer-centered behavior | Sales performance | Customer Satisfaction |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Psychological capacities | 1.00 | | | |
| Customer-centered behavior | 0.835 | 1.00 | | |
| Sales performance | 0.230 | 0.801 | 1.00 | |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.299 | 0.713 | 0.211 | 1.00 |

3.1.2. Step 2: Evaluation of the internal (structural) model

Three indicators of determination coefficient, predictive criteria, and effect size were measured in evaluating the internal model. The determination coefficient of R² values equal to 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are considered weak, medium, and significant, respectively. In the study of predictive power, Q² values above zero are acceptable, and the closer it is to number 1, the higher the predictive power is. Values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate low, medium, and strong predictive power, respectively. According to the results, all values are strong, and the values of predictive power are acceptable [Table 5](#).

Table 5. Values of R² and Q².

| Variable | Determination Coefficient | The adjusted coefficient of determination | Q ² |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---|----------------|
| Customer-centered behavior | 0.624 | 0.622 | 0.067 |
| Sales performance | 0.454 | 0.451 | 0.181 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.356 | 0.354 | 0.076 |

In the study of effect size, F² values equal to 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate one structure's low, medium, and strong effect on another, respectively. All values obtained are above average [Table 6](#).

Table 6. F² values.

| Variable | Customer-centered behavior | Sales performance | Customer Satisfaction |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Customer behavior | - | 0.426 | 0.252 |
| Psychological capacities | 0.511 | 0.161 | 0.040 |

3.1.3. Step 3: Overall Model Fitting

Three RMS Theta, NFI, and SRMR indexes were used in the overall model fitting. The value of the SRMR index (Criteria for the average difference between data) is between 0 and 1. The value of 0.08 is the red line of this index, and in larger values, the model has fundamental defects. Theta RMS index is the practical value of the residual covariance matrix from the remainder of the outer model. In this index, a value of less than 0.12 is considered desirable. In the NFI index, the acceptable value is more significant than 0.9.

According to Table 7, all values of fit indexes were acceptable, and the model's overall fit was confirmed.

Table 7. Model fitting.

| Fit indicators | Optimal amount | Obtained value |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| SRMR | Less than 0.08 | 0.074 |
| RMS Theta | Less than 0.12 | 0.107 |
| NFI | More than 0.9 | 0.927 |

The variance-based structural equation modeling method is used to evaluate the effect of model variables. The results of the research path model are presented in two modes of standard coefficients Figure 1 and significance coefficients Figure 2, and the hypotheses test results are presented in Table 8. The values obtained for the impact coefficients in the structural model are evaluated in terms of sign, quantity, and significance. The coefficient of determination is also clear. However, the coefficients of determination of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 have been considered weak, medium, and strong values, respectively. Its optimal value depends on the research position on the one hand and the number of latent exogenous variables related to that endogenous variable, on the other hand, whose coefficient of determination has been calculated.

The diagram shows that most of the obtained coefficients show strong and medium values. However, psychological capacities and sales performance (0.15) and psychological capacities and customer satisfaction (0.21) have weak values. The path coefficient of psychological capacities with customer-oriented behaviors of sports sellers has (0.79). Therefore, the effect of psychological capacities on positive and significant customer-oriented behaviors and the first hypothesis was approved (See Figure 1 and 2).

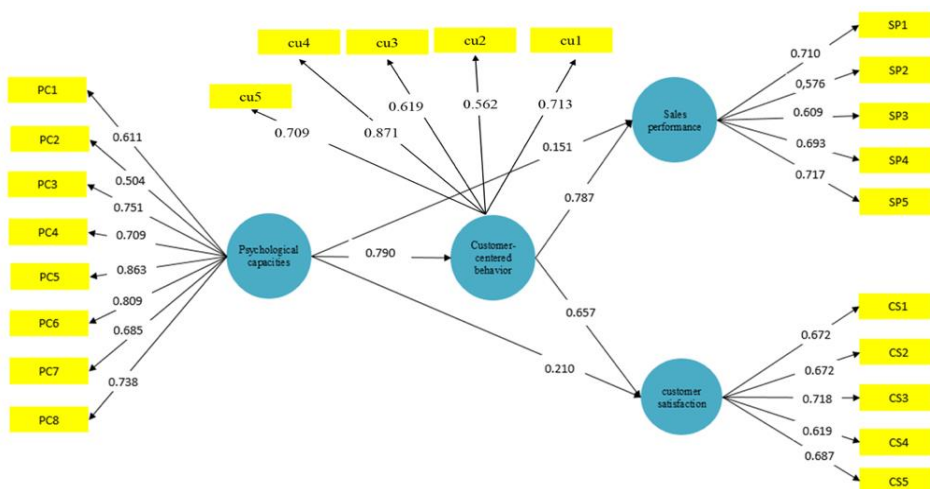


Figure 1. Research path model (standard coefficients).

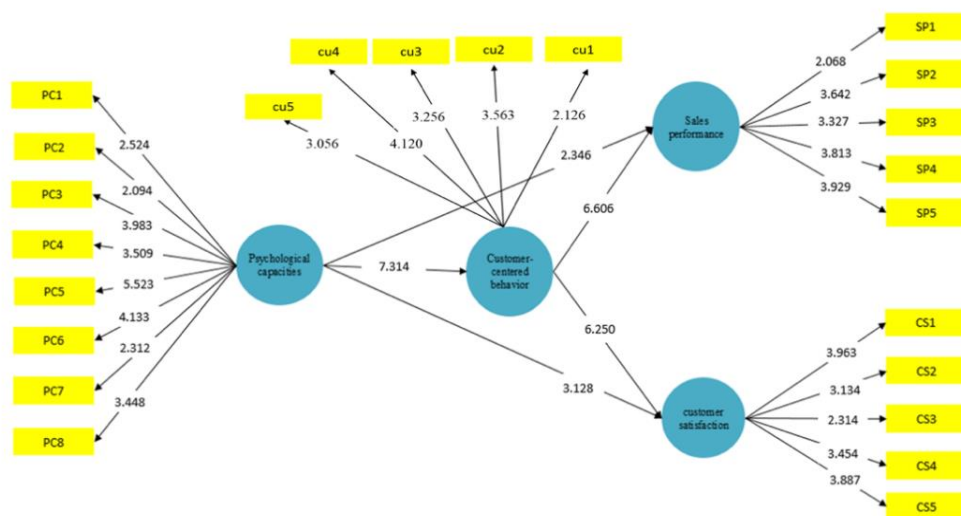


Figure 2. Research path model (significant coefficients).

The value of the path coefficient, the effect of client-oriented behavior of sports sellers on sales performance, was obtained (0.78). Therefore, the effect of client-oriented behavior of sports sellers on positive and significant sales performance and the second hypothesis was confirmed. The value of sellers' client-centered behavior path coefficient on client satisfaction was (0.65). Therefore, the client-oriented behavior of sports sellers has a positive and significant effect on client satisfaction Table 8.

Table 8. Results of research hypotheses.

| Hypothesis | Path coefficient | t-value | p-value | Hypothesis results |
|---|------------------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| psychological capacities, → customer-oriented behaviors | 0.790 | 7.314 | 0.001 | Confirmed |
| customer-oriented behaviors, → Sales performance | 0.878 | 6.606 | 0.001 | Confirmed |
| customer-oriented behaviors → Customer Satisfaction | 0.657 | 6.250 | 0.001 | Confirmed |
| psychological capacities, → Sales performance | 0.151 | 2.346 | 0.001 | Confirmed |
| psychological capacities, → Customer Satisfaction | 0.210 | 3.128 | 0.001 | Confirmed |

All three mediation conditions (direct, indirect, and total effect) of client-centered behaviors of sports salespeople in psychological capacity and sales amount and client satisfaction relationship were confirmed Table 9. VAF analysis was used to determine the intensity of these relationships. This statistic is a value between 0 and 1. The closer this value is to 1, the stronger the effect of the mediating variable. The intensity of mediation of customer-centered behaviors of sports salespeople about psychological capacities with sports sales performance was 80%. Finally, the intensity of mediation of customer-centered behaviors of sports vendors in the relationship between psychological capacity and customer satisfaction was 71%.

Table 9. Investigating the mediating role of customer-oriented behavior of sports vendors

| Variables | Effect type | Path coefficient | t-value | p-value | Results |
|--|-------------|------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------|
| Effective variable: psychological capacities Mediating variable :customer-oriented behaviors Dependent variable: Customer Satisfaction | direct | 0.151 | 2.340 | 0.040 | Condition1 Confirmation |
| | indirect | 0.142 | 2.093 | 0.045 | Condition2 Confirmation |
| | total | 0.283 | 11.83 | 0.000 | Condition3 Confirmation |
| Effective variable: psychological capacities Mediating variable :customer-oriented behaviors Dependent variable: Customer Satisfaction | direct | 0.210 | 3.128 | 0.006 | Condition1 Confirmation |
| | indirect | 0.174 | 2.891 | 0.0012 | Condition2 Confirmation |
| | total | 0.383 | 16.509 | 0.000 | Condition3 Confirmation |

4. Discussion and conclusion

The results of the first hypothesis showed that the value of the path coefficient of psychological capacities with customer-oriented behaviors of sports vendors was (0.79). Therefore, the effect of psychological capacities on positive and significant customer-oriented behaviors and the mentioned hypothesis were confirmed. Consistent with this finding, [Lussier and Hartmann \(2017\)](#) showed that psychological skills positively affect customer-centered behaviors. Perhaps this is due to having positive moods such as optimism and resilience. Because these two important dimensions of psychological skills can play a role in increasing customer-centric behaviors. The findings of [Youssef and Luthans \(2007\)](#) also confirm this possibility. They found that positive moods, such as optimism and flexibility, lead to the development of adaptation mechanisms and problem-solving approaches. Because optimism increases the likelihood of focusing on failures as an opportunity to achieve the desired results by increasing commitment and influencing people's interpretation of situations. Also, optimism encourages a positive perception of the situation and the chance to consider them. As a result, it creates sustainable, diverse, exploratory, and client-centric behaviors. In other words, successful salespeople have a wide range of sales skills, such as knowing customer needs, adapting to changing customer conditions, identifying new opportunities, and introducing the product and information about its exceptional features ([Nielsen & Border, 2016](#)).

Also, optimism encourages people to know the impact on results and increases motivation to act. Accordingly, sellers with a higher level of optimism may experience better results in their interactions with customers. In addition, flexibility helps sellers be more resilient to problems and more prepared to face change. Therefore, a higher level of flexibility will allow vendors to perform client-oriented behaviors when faced with inconsistencies, challenges, and problems that occur to them regularly ([Schulman, 1999](#)). In addition, flexibility can enhance people's resilience in the face of inconsistencies, challenges, and failures ([Schulman, 1999](#)). Flexibility also encourages individuals to be pragmatic, strategic, and enlightened in response to failure ([Luthans et al., 2006](#)).

According to the results of the second hypothesis, the value of the path coefficient is the effect of the customer-oriented behavior of sports sellers on sales performance (0.78). Therefore, the impact of customer-oriented behavior of sports sellers on positive and significant sales performance and the second hypothesis was confirmed. Most sales studies' results indicate a positive relationship between vendors' customer-centric behaviors and sales performance. Recent Findings are aligned with the Results of (Brady & Cronin, Jr, 2001; Homburg et al., 2011; Lussier & Hartmann, 2017; Terho et al., 2015; Wachner et al., 2009). Also, Yabalooie et al. (2022) said that to develop the productivity of professional football clubs in Iran, marketing, supportive propellants, planning, and talent development are compelling and influential practical factors. So, these factors should be on the agenda of Iranian clubs' sports managers to reach a professional level. However, it contradicts the results of Franke and Park (2006), who did not find a relationship between vendors' customer-centric behaviors and their performance.

Terho et al. (2015) showed that sales are indirectly affected by customer-centric and value-based sales. Lussier and Hartmann (2017) showed that a vendor's client-centric behavior has a positive relationship with sales amount. Palmatier et al. (2007) also pointed out that establishing and maintaining strong relationships between vendors and customers plays the most important role in the performance of organizations. Therefore, most investments are spent on promoting customer-centric behaviors. According to social exchange theory, a positive relationship between sports sellers and customers, in the long run, will increase their sales and market share. Also, establishing and maintaining strong relationships between vendors and customers plays a vital role in the performance of business-to-business sales organizations (Palmatier et al., 2007). Given that the results of most studies on the subject of sales indicate a positive relationship between client-centered behaviors of salespeople and their sales amount, it can be said that customer-centered behaviors of salespeople are the main factor in increasing their sales because sellers can create value through actions such as being friendly and honest, having the knowledge, and the ability to introduce the product (Edirisinghe et al., 2020). Highly skilled salespeople also increase customer support, store support, and sales by creating positive experiences (Yurchisin & Park, 2010).

The result of the third hypothesis showed that the value of the coefficient of the customer-centered behavior of the sellers on customer satisfaction is (0.65). Therefore, the effect of the customer-oriented behavior of sports sellers on customer satisfaction was positive and significant, and this hypothesis was confirmed. Rabbani Nik et al. (2021), in the relationship between sensory marketing and customer satisfaction and loyalty in luxury sports clubs, showed factors such as the product's appearance should be considered because aesthetic features affect both emotions and perceptions of quality. Sensory marketing, consisting of sensory, emotional, behavioral, mental, and social experiences, has a vital role in customer satisfaction (Rabbani Nik et al., 2021). Perhaps this finding is because customer-centric behaviors include a wide range of actions aimed at promoting "customer satisfaction and building long-term bilateral relationships." Customer-centered behaviors include searching, assessing potential needs and solutions, providing valuable suggestions, overcoming barriers, and providing support and support throughout the sales process (Saxe & Weitz, 1982).

The impact of customer-centric behavior on customer satisfaction has also been confirmed by previous research. This finding is consistent with the results of many studies, including (Brady & Cronin, Jr, 2001) and (Lussier & Hartmann, 2017). Chang and Hung (2018) showed that relationship-based sales behavior directly affects customer trust and satisfaction. Edirisinghe et al. (2020) showed that Customer-centred sales are primarily focused on meeting customer needs. Perhaps the outstanding commitment of sellers to understanding and meeting the needs and wants of customers (Saxe & Weitz, 1982) is the reason for this finding. Increased customer care, exchange of information, and careful listening to customer feedback are also effective in discovering solutions that benefit both parties (Jaramillo & Grisaffe, 2009). Homburg et al. (2011) also showed that salespeople put less pressure on customers with customer-centric behaviors and increase their satisfaction.

Vendors play an essential role in the relationship between stores and consumers when shopping (Hagberg et al., 2016). Vendors are the main facilitators of increasing sales in specialty stores and creating customer satisfaction (Lieven, 2016). Undoubtedly, customer-centric salespeople strive to understand clients better and adopt behaviors that enhance client relationships. They also positively affect client satisfaction by identifying potential problems and solutions that the customer wants (Periatt et al., 2004). In examining the fourth hypothesis about the mediating role of client-centered behaviors of sports salespeople in the relationship between psychological capacity and sales amount, all three mediation conditions (direct, indirect, and total effect) were confirmed. The results of the VAF analysis indicated that the intensity of mediation of customer-centered behaviors in the relationship between psychological capacity and sales performance of sports vendors is 80%.

Also, in the fifth hypothesis, client-centered behaviors mediating the role of sports vendors in the relationship between psychological capacity and client satisfaction were investigated, and the above three conditions were confirmed. The intensity of mediation of client-centered behaviors of sports vendors in the relationship between psychological capacity and client satisfaction is 71%. These findings are consistent with (Bahrami et al., 2021). They showed a significant relationship between physical and quantitative characteristics and service quality with customer satisfaction. Also, there is an important relationship between customer satisfaction and the components of perceived factors, reliability, responsiveness, reliability, and empathy. In addition, the variables of physical and quantitative characteristics and quality of services are significant predictors of the variable of customer satisfaction. In that case, it can lead to customer satisfaction and more customer membership in that sports space. Also, Terho et al. (2015) examined the impact of sales strategy on performance concerning the mediating role of customer-centric and value-based sales. Findings showed that the three sales strategies (segmentation, prioritization, and value-based) are related to sales performance and directly or indirectly affect it. Classification strategies directly and value-based prioritization strategies indirectly affect sales performance by influencing customer-centricity. In addition, Lussier and Hartmann (2017) also examine psychological skills, client-centric behaviors, sales amount relationships, and client satisfaction. According to the results, client-oriented behaviors are affected by psychological skills. Client-oriented behaviors also affect sales

amount and client satisfaction. Client-centered behaviors play a mediating role in the impact of psychological skills on sales amount and client satisfaction.

Chang and Hung (2018) also showed that relationship-based sales behavior directly affects customer trust and satisfaction. Customer behavior in the pre-purchase, purchase, and repurchase stages can vary according to their perceptions. Therefore, customer perception and behavior change should be done by sellers because they are essential in creating and maintaining a lasting advantage (Edirisinghe et al., 2020). According to the results, the highest correlation between psychological capacities and customer-oriented behavior was (0.835). The lowest correlation between the variables of customer satisfaction and sales performance was (0.211). Also, a high correlation ($r = 0.801$) was seen between sales performance and customer-oriented behavior. Therefore, it can be said that by strengthening customer-oriented behaviors, sales performance can be improved. The correlation between customer-oriented behaviors and customer satisfaction is also high ($r = 0.713$), so it is possible to create more customer satisfaction by putting customer-centered behavior at the forefront.

According to the result, psychological capacities have a positive and significant effect on customer-oriented behaviors. Perhaps this is due to having positive moods such as optimism and resilience. Because these two essential dimensions of psychological skills can increase customer-centric behaviors, it is suggested that sports store managers pay more attention to these two psychological criteria (flexibility and optimism) in choosing the sales force. Also, considering the possibility of strengthening and promoting these factors, sales managers can increase sales and client satisfaction by providing the necessary training. According to the results, client-oriented behaviors are affected by psychological skills. Client-oriented behaviors also affect sales amount and client satisfaction. Client-centered behaviors play a mediating role in the impact of psychological skills on sales amount and client satisfaction. Therefore, it can be said that by strengthening customer-oriented behaviors, sales performance can be improved. The correlation between customer-oriented behaviors and customer satisfaction is also high, so it is possible to create more customer satisfaction by putting customer-centered behavior at the forefront.

Considering the impact of customer-oriented behaviors on sales performance and customer satisfaction, the training and application of these behaviors by sports salespeople are emphasized. According to the research results, sellers' customer-oriented behavior is the main factor in increasing their sales. Because customer-oriented behaviors include a wide range of actions to promote "customer satisfaction and build long-term mutual relationships." Therefore, activities such as identifying, evaluating, and meeting customer needs, providing valuable suggestions, solving customer problems, and providing the necessary support during the sales process are critical.

The research results showed that psychological capacities have a positive and significant effect on the customer-oriented behavior of salespeople. So that characteristics such as optimism and flexibility of salespeople as two psychological skills play an influential role in improving the level of their customer-oriented behaviors. Therefore, it is suggested that managers of sports stores pay attention to these two criteria in selecting and employing a sales force. Of course, considering the possibility of strengthening and

improving these two variables, sales and customer satisfaction can be increased by providing the necessary training in this field. Also, we showed that customer-oriented behaviors mediate the influence of psychological skills on sales and customer satisfaction. Therefore, it can be said that sales performance can be improved by strengthening customer-oriented behaviors. The correlation between customer-oriented behavior and customer satisfaction is also high, so it is possible to create more customer satisfaction using customer-oriented behavior.

Finally, due to the impact of customer-oriented behaviors on sales performance and customer satisfaction, training, and application of these behaviors by sports sellers are emphasized. The customer-oriented behavior of sellers is the main factor in increasing their sales. Because customer-oriented behaviors include a wide range of actions to promote "customer satisfaction and create long-term mutual relationships." Therefore, activities such as identifying, evaluating, and meeting customer needs, providing valuable suggestions, solving customer problems, and providing the necessary support in the sales process are significant.

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نقش ظرفیت روانشناختی فروشندگان ورزشی بر میزان فروش و رضایت مشتریان وفادار

حسن قره‌خانی^{۱*}، بهزاد ایزدی^۲، زیبا نصیری^۳

^۱ استادیار، گروه علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه زنجان، زنجان، ایران.

^۲ دانشیار، گروه علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه کردستان، سنندج، ایران.

^۳ فارغ التحصیل مدیریت ورزشی، گروه علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه کردستان، سنندج، ایران.

کلیدواژه

رضایت مشتریان
رفتار مشتری محور
ظرفیت روانشناختی
میزان فروش
نظریه تبادل اجتماعی

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی

چکیده

هدف: این مطالعه با هدف بررسی تأثیر ظرفیت روان‌شناختی فروشندگان محصولات ورزشی بر میزان فروش و رضایت مشتری با میانجی‌گری رفتار مشتری محور انجام شد.

روش: پژوهش از نوع همبستگی کاربردی بود. نمونه‌های تحقیق شامل تمام فروشندگان ورزشی استان زنجان بودند که به‌طور کل شمار انتخاب شدند ($N=93$). داده‌ها با استفاده از پرسشنامه لوسیه و هارتمن (۲۰۱۷) جمع‌آوری شد (پایایی ۰.۷). برای تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها از نرم افزار PLS Smart استفاده شد.

یافته‌ها: بیشترین همبستگی بین متغیرهای ظرفیت‌های روانشناختی و رفتار مشتری مداری (۰/۸۳۵) مشاهده شد. کمترین همبستگی بین متغیرهای رضایت مشتری و عملکرد فروش (۰/۲۱۱) بود. بین ظرفیت‌های روان‌شناختی و رفتار مشتری محور فروشندگان رابطه مثبت و معناداری (۰/۷۹) وجود داشت. تأثیر رفتار مشتری مداری فروشندگان ورزشی بر میزان فروش (۰/۷۸) و رضایت مشتری (۰/۶۵) نیز مثبت و معنادار بود.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: این مطالعه به تفاوت مشتریان گاه‌وبیگاه و مشتریان وفادار، توجه نموده و از این منظر توصیه نموده تا فروشندگان محصولات ورزشی، با توجه به این تفاوت، برنامه ویژه‌ای برای یادگیری رفتارهای مشتری محور داشته باشند.

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Customers' Buying Intention on Sports Products Domestic Brands

Seyed Jalal Hasanzadeh¹ , Farzad Nobakhat^{2*} , Mohammad Zare Abandansari³

¹ Master's Student in Sports Management, Mohaghegh Ardabili University, Ardabil, Iran.

² Associate Professor of Sports Management, Mohaghegh Ardabili University, Ardabil, Iran.

³ PhD Student in Sports Management, Mohaghegh Ardabili University, Ardabil, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article identifies and ranks the influential factors in increasing customers' buying intention on domestic sports products.

Methodology: The current study is practical and field-based, and its statistical population includes customers, sellers, manufacturers, athletes, and sports coaches in Mashhad. Due to the total statistical population, 384 people were selected by emphasizing Morgan's sample size table for the entire population. We collected the necessary information by interviewing experts and sports marketing experts and studying their backgrounds. Then, based on the interviews, we made a questionnaire. After collecting the data, spssv23 software was used to organize and analyze the data, and we used Friedman's test to rank these factors.

Findings: In this research, the factors that have the most significant impact on the purchase of domestic brand sports products include products quality with an average rating of "5.63", products price with an average rating of "5.04", appearance and packaging with an average rating of "4.88", domestic brand loyalty with an average rating of "4.60", fashion and variety of products with an average rating of "4.40", social factors with an average rating of "4.20", brand awareness (advertisements) with an average rating of "3.97" and accessible to products access with an average rating of "3.28".

Originality: We identify and rank the factors affecting the willingness to buy domestic sports products, which can be critical to manufacturers and sports products.

Keywords

Brand Awareness
Brand Loyalty
Customer Preferences
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1. Introduction

Today's motivation for participating in sports activities is not to reach high levels and win a championship but to gain health, well-being, vitality, social relations, and avoid diseases, among the important reasons for participating in sports (Ganj Khanloo et al., 2021). Also, nowadays, the concept of the brand is of great importance in consumers' purchases. Some experts recognize the brand as a complete product and believe that customers and consumers buy that brand instead of buying a product. As a result, it is essential to identify the influencing factors in choosing and examining the specific characteristics of a brand. It is necessary to conduct research in this field (Samiei Nasr et al., 2011).

In most countries, brands are considered examples and symbols of consumers in society. Brands show their power by advertising and guaranteeing consumers, so a close and inseparable connection between people and brands is considered. Therefore, sports brands also have a unique role in this connection. Most consumers and buyers of sports brands, which also convey values for intergenerational issues, participate in their existence. Sports brands are at the center of popular consumer brands. This means they represent a world language with codes, sources, words, and their representative (Bouchet et al., 2013). Also, the preference for domestic goods over foreign goods causes the growth of the country's domestic economy. In such a situation, based on a series of emotional and normative criteria, the customer prioritizes purchasing domestic products, and banning the purchase of foreign goods has a positive effect on the domestic economy. The country says that, especially in the economic embargo situation, the importance of promoting domestic products doubles (Bahmani, 2012).

The concept of success globally can be pointed to the fact that consumers can choose between foreign and domestic products more than ever before. With the rapid growth of international marketing, various countries worldwide export multiple goods, which causes challenges for the countries of origin. In the meantime, free trade between countries has caused consumers to encounter many foreign goods and products. As a result, buyers' view of the brand owner's country and whether the product is foreign or domestic is one of the concerns of foreign companies and researchers who conduct research in consumer behavior (Neghabi et al., 2016). Also, the undeniable role of the sports economy in the macroeconomics of developing countries and its role in employment is essential. Furthermore, the need to inform experts, industries, brands, legislative authorities, and policy makers in this nascent field and the active sector should benefit from obtaining legal capacities, receive expert advice from legal experts, and support the sports industry (Nazarian Madavani et al., 2022).

According to the consumers of sports products, most sports goods made abroad are marketed with specific standards, better quality, and durability—also, the weakness of domestic sports manufacturers' advertisements related to the characteristics of their sports products. The main reasons for reluctance to buy domestic goods can be. From the point of view of the buyers, the high price of raw materials increases the cost of domestically produced goods compared to cheap foreign manufactured goods. The incorrect culture of "foreign goods being better" and the weakness in consuming domestic products are among

the factors that can be considered as factors of inclination. Consumers pointed to goods made abroad (Ganjali et al., 2015).

To grow and survive in economic competition, companies and organizations should pay special attention to customer orientation and increase their relationship with buyers of goods. In new business processes, obtaining customer satisfaction has a significant and vital place in companies' goals. Senior managers know that their success in achieving company goals depends on customer satisfaction. On the other hand, it cannot be said that all customers have the same role in the company's success. Therefore, satisfying key customers will be more sensitive. On the other hand, service quality is one of the variables directly related to customer satisfaction (Bahrami et al., 2022).

Therefore, considering the internal and external situation of Iran's economy, including heavy economic sanctions on the one hand and issues. They include the unemployment crisis, the need to pay serious attention to domestic production, including sports goods, and investing in expanding these productions inside the country doubled (Askarian et al., 2019). In fact, with the existence of foreign manufactured goods, significant damage is done to the country's economy, which is considered an excellent challenge for domestic products. Therefore, in this research, factors affecting the willingness to buy Iranian sports products (domestic brands) have been discussed, and finally, the ranking of these factors has also been discussed. As a result, we should consider what factors can increase the desire of customers to buy domestic brand sports products.

In this dynamic market, the consumer expects the producer to offer the best qualities at the most reasonable prices, and whether the product is sports or non-sports, it does not matter if it cannot meet the consumer's needs. It will not be requested. Due to the unique internal and external situation of Iran's economy and the day-by-day increase in the import of foreign sports goods and heavy economic sanctions, and the preference for foreign brands over domestic brands, etc., cause concerns in the industry. Production of domestic sports products. Arrangements should be made to expand investment and increase the production of sports products in domestic sports brands to overcome these concerns. The review of previous studies showed that limited research had been done regarding domestic sports brands and the factors affecting the purchase of domestic sports brands.

Considering there has been little research on domestic sports brands, we are trying to identify and rank the factors that increase customers' desire to buy sports products from domestic brands. The results of this research can be helpful for producers and suppliers of domestic sports products.

2. Theoretical background

In research entitled "Development of the paradigm model of the role of advertising on the desire of customers for sports products," they concluded that the implementation of the development process of the paradigm model of advertising through social media to influence the desire of customers for sports products, social development and economic development and development of purchase and socio-economic beliefs in the form of action (Bahrami et al., 2022).

Chung and Welty Peachey (2022) showed that brand experience affects golfers' uncertainty about other brands. In other words, when consumers experience sensory, emotional, behavioral, and intellectual interactions with a brand, doubts about the brand will decrease. Interestingly, brand experience does not influence golfers' satisfaction (Chung & Welty Peachey, 2022).

Mazhari et al. (2021) showed that brand love, packaging, and price positively and significantly affect repurchase intention. Therefore, sportswear manufacturing companies should pay special attention to the love of the brand, packaging, and cost of their products. And based on that, strengthen the emotional connection and interest between customers and products so that in this way, customers have a sense that their favorite brands have commitment and loyalty, and finally become customers' intention to buy again and achieve a more significant share of the market than other brands (Mazhari et al., 2021).

Ghasemi Siani et al. (2021) showed that emotional advertising significantly affects attitudes toward advertising and the intention to purchase sports products. The results also showed that logical appeals are more effective for beneficial sports products and emotional appeals are more effective for hedonic sports products. However, there was no significant effect for gender as a moderating variable (Ghasemi Siani et al., 2021).

Adam et al. (2021) suggested that Adidas should improve its shoes' quality at lower prices to increase loyalty. Also, to compete in today's comfortable shoe industry, Adidas shoes should pay more attention to variables such as brand awareness and loyalty. This is because this survey ultimately shows brand awareness and loyalty. Therefore, it can directly or indirectly improve consumer purchasing decisions (Adam et al., 2021).

Savadi (2019) presented 12 strategies in four psychological, validation, cultural and unconscious stimulation categories. Most of the techniques were related to the psychological category. Also, six consequences were identified for sports advertisements based on emotions in sports products produced in Iran. The most important consequences that result from the extracted strategies are attracting people to see sports advertisements, long-term impact on people's minds, and more desire for domestically produced sports products. Also, more loyalty of people to domestically produced products due to the variety of cultural advertisements, unconscious imagery in the customer's mind, and the association of the sports product and, ultimately, the sale of more sports products are domestically produced (Savadi, 2019). Namazi et al. (2020) argued that raising the quality of sports goods, advertising, and the culture of appropriate use, organizing sports companies, donating commemorative plaques in competitions and online shopping are the main components of encouraging athletes to buy domestic sports goods (Namazi et al., 2020). Keshkar et al. (2016) showed that among the features of packaging, the essential feature is the design of sports shoe packaging, which plays a role in persuading athletes to buy shoes, while the feature of informing is the least important. Among different groups of athletes, design and maintenance features are more important in women than men and athletes with under-diploma education more than bachelor athletes in persuading them to buy sports shoes (Keshkar et al., 2016).

3. Methodology

Current research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive survey in terms of strategy, and its data has been collected. This research also seeks to identify and rank factors affecting the increase in customers' desire to buy sports products from domestic brands. The statistical population of this study also includes customers, sellers, producers, athletes, and sports coaches in Mashhad. Therefore, the size of the statistical population was large and uncertain, so a random cluster sampling method was used. Due to the total population, this research's statistical sample was selected by emphasizing Morgan's sample size table for 384 people.

This study is used to express the theoretical foundations of library resources (articles, theses) and to identify and identify the factors affecting the purchase of domestic brand sports products first by interviewing experts and sports marketing experts as well as sports experts. This study collected the necessary information and was used in the next step after the researcher -made the questionnaire. After collecting the questionnaires, SPSS^{v23} software was used to organize and analyze the collected data. Two descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze information. The data use descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and percentage), and inferential statistics use the skewness & kurtosis test to determine the expected data and the Friedman test to rank these factors.

4. Results

In the descriptive statistics section, there are eight questions related to the demographic characteristics of the subjects, which include variables such as gender, marital status, age, level of education, job status, history of sports activities, and the amount of money spent on buying products. Sports and choosing the type of brand purchased by the respondents were asked. According to the descriptive findings of the research for the gender variable, most respondents are men at 57.7%, and the least respondents are women at 42.2%. For the marital status variable, most respondents are married 57%, and the lowest are single 43%. Related to the age group of the respondents, the highest frequency is related to the age group of 26 to 35 years, with 39.3%, and the lowest frequency is associated with the age group above 56 years, with 6.8%.

Regarding the respondents' level of education, the highest frequency is related to the post-baccalaureate degree and above, with 31.8 percent, and the lowest frequency is associated with the diploma degree, with 9.1 percent. For the occupational status of respondents, the highest frequency is related to employees with fixed income, at 31.8%, and the lowest is about students, at 9.1%. For the history of sports activity of the respondents, the highest frequency is related to five years and above, with 34.9%, and the lowest frequency is connected to one to two years, with 18.8%. For the money spent on sports products by the respondents, the highest frequency is related to purchases of less than 500 thousand tomans per year, with 32.3%. The lowest frequency is related to purchases of more than 5 million tomans per year, with 7%. For Choosing the type of brand purchased by the respondents, the findings show that 60.7% of Iranian brand sports goods customers and 39.3% of customers prefer foreign sports goods. The variables were

investigated in the skewness and kurtosis test, and considering that the amount of skewness and kurtosis of the factors is between +2 and -2, the normality of the distribution of the variables is confirmed [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Kurtosis and skewness test results.

| Factors of willingness to buy domestic brand | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|--|----------|----------|
| Loyalty to domestic brands | -1.01 | 0.74 |
| Product prices | -1.18 | 1.17 |
| Product Quality | -1.15 | 1.6 |
| Product appearance and packaging | -0.61 | 0.09 |
| Fashion and a variety of products | -0.59 | -0.37 |
| Brand awareness (advertising) | -0.34 | 0.7 |
| Social Factors | -0.43 | -0.33 |
| Easy access to products | 0.59 | 0.42 |

[Table 1](#) shows that the value of observed skewness for the variables "loyalty to the brand of domestic production" is equal to -1.01, "price of products" is equal to -1.18; "quality of products" is equal to -1.15; "appearance and packaging of products" are equal to -0.61; "fashion and product variety" is equal to -0.59, "brand awareness (advertising)" is equal to -0.34; "social factors" is equal to -0.43 and "easy access to products" is equal to 0.59. Also, they are in the range (of +2 and -2). It means that the variables are standard, and their distribution is symmetrical. Also, the observed kurtosis value for the variables "locally produced brand loyalty" are equal to 0.74, "product price" is equal to 1.17, "product quality" is equal to 1.6, "product appearance and packaging" is equal to 0.09, "product fashion and variety" is equal to 0.37. -, "brand awareness (advertising)" is equal to -0.7, "social factors" is equal to -0.33, and "easy access to products" is equal to 0.42 and they are in the range (+2 and -2). The results show that the distribution of the variables has a standard curve. Friedman's test has been used to organize, prioritize, and rank factors affecting customers' willingness to buy domestic brand sports products. Here, first, the descriptive results and then the inferential effects are examined:

The descriptive results of Friedman's test are as follows: 8 factors affecting the willingness to buy sports products with a domestic brand have been mentioned, summarized in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Descriptive results of the Friedman test.

| Factors of willingness to buy domestic brand | mean | Std. Deviation | Mean Rank |
|--|------|----------------|-----------|
| Product Quality | 4.14 | 0.66 | 5.63 |
| Product prices | 3.90 | 0.92 | 5.04 |
| Product appearance and packaging | 3.83 | 0.83 | 4.88 |
| Loyalty to domestic brands | 3.80 | 0.90 | 4.60 |
| Fashion and a variety of products | 3.72 | 0.92 | 4.40 |
| Social Factors | 3.64 | 0.91 | 4.20 |
| Brand awareness (advertising) | 3.56 | 0.97 | 3.97 |
| Easy access to products | 3.38 | 0.64 | 3.28 |

The results of the Friedman test showed that a higher average rating and more influential factor is the quality of sports products, with a mean rank of "5.63". The price

of sports products with a mean rank of "5.04" have the highest rank. Easy access to products, with a mean rank of "3.28" and the factor of brand awareness (advertisements), with a mean rank of "3.97" have the lowest ratings. The results of the Friedman test are shown in [Table 3](#):

Table 3. The results of Friedman's inferential test.

| Research question | N | Chi-Square | df | .Sig |
|--|-----|------------|----|-------|
| Factors affecting the increase in the desire to buy domestic brand sports products | 384 | 248.943 | 7 | 0.000 |

The value of the significance level is equal to 0.000, so the observed difference between the weighted average of the factors affecting the increase in the desire to buy domestic brand sports products is statistically significant. In other words, there is a considerable difference between the average ratings of factors affecting the willingness to buy domestic brand sports products. The average ratings are not the same but, in the order, listed in [Table 2](#).

5. Discussion and conclusion

Various factors can also affect the purchase of sports products, especially since the effect of these factors can encourage the customer to buy domestically produced sports products. Therefore, accurate planning and reliable investment in this field can play a significant role in the success and progress of production workshops and centers that provide sports products. In this article, we identify and rank the factors affecting the willingness to buy domestic sports products, which can be very important to manufacturers.

[Namazi et al. \(2020\)](#) showed that the statistical population covered the quality of sports products, the prices of sports products, the appearance and packaging of sports products, and the components of purchasing domestic brand sports products ([Namazi et al., 2020](#)).

Product quality was the first and most important factor in buying domestic brand sports products in the research community. In this regard, [Namazi et al. \(2020\)](#) in their research on "Developing a Model of encouraging athletes to buy domestic sports goods," concluded that enhancing the quality of sports goods is the main component of encouraging athletes to buy domestic sports goods. Also, [Ramezaninejad et al. \(2018\)](#) concluded that price, quality, design, and nationalism models were designed to use the brand and had a positive and significant relationship. Therefore, it can be said that it is in line with the present study of the quality of the product.

Product prices can be the second most influential factor in buying domestic brand sports products in the research community; In this context, [Mazhari et al. \(2021\)](#) and colleagues, in their research on "Providing the Model of Brand Love, Packaging and Price on the intention to buy customers from the sports apparel industry" concluded that the brand love, packaging and price The intention to repurchase has a positive and significant impact. So, the price also affects the intention of re-purchasing customers, which results in the present study. [Adam et al. \(2021\)](#) suggested that the Adidas brand must increase the quality of shoes to increase loyalty. To improve their own at lower prices, the price

component is one of the most critical factors in the present study's results. Ramezanijad et al. (2018) concluded that factors (price, quality, design, and nationalism model) were a desire to use a brand. It had a positive and significant relationship. Therefore, its results are in line with the present study (Ramezanijad et al., 2018).

Packaging Sports Products is another influential factor in the purchase of domestic brand sports products in the present study, in this field and colleagues, in their research on "providing the model of brand love, packaging and price. Customers' intention to repurchase from the sports apparel industry" failed that packaging also had a positive and significant effect on the intention of re-purchasing; Therefore, it can be said that it is relatively consistent with the packaging and appearance of the products of this research and the present study. Also, on the packaging of sports products, Keshkar et al. (2016) in their research on "The role of sneakers' packaging as a media in encouraging different athletes to buy sneakers," is the most crucial feature of packaging products that package sneakers packaging in encouraging athletes to buy shoes, they have pointed out that the present study also followed the results.

Loyalty to the domestic brand can be another influential factor that affects the purchase of domestic brand sports products in the researched society. In the same context, Dorsazan et al. (2021) concluded that the results of consumer ethnocentrism and consumer nationalism variables were able to directly affect the amount the preference of domestic brands over foreign ones among students have a significant effect. Therefore, the result of the present research regarding loyalty to the domestic brand can be considered consistent with the results of the investigation by (Dorsazan et al., 2021). Also, Ghobadi et al. (2021), in his research on the topic of "analysis of factors affecting the development of sportswear brand" concluded that diversity in production, selection of target market, strategic planning, design according to market needs, and ranking of sportswear in vertical development. And the use of new technologies in the production of goods is also effective in the horizontal development of domestic sportswear brands. Therefore, concerning the variety of products, the findings are also in line with Qobadi's research.

In general, the findings of the present study showed that, the practical factors for increasing the desire to buy sports products include quality of sports products, price of sports products, appearance and packaging of sports products, loyalty to the domestically produced brand, fashion, and variety of products, social factors, easy access to products and advertising of products. The findings are in line with the research conducted in this field, there is a relative similarity between the components and indicators identified for the factors affecting the purchase of sports products with other components of other researchers, and this similarity is more in the field of features because it is quality, price, advertising, and brand loyalty. Various factors can influence the purchase of sports products, especially since these factors can encourage the customer to buy domestically made sports products. Therefore, careful planning and investment in this field can play a significant role in the progress and success of production workshops and centers providing sports products.

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عوامل موثر بر افزایش تمایل مشتریان محصولات ورزشی نسبت به خرید از برندهای داخلی

سیدجلال حسن‌زاده^۱، فرزاد نوبخت^{۲*}، محمد زارع آبندانسری^۳

^۱ دانشجوی کارشناسی ارشد مدیریت ورزشی، دانشگاه محقق اردبیلی، اردبیل، ایران.

^۲ دانشیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشگاه محقق اردبیلی، اردبیل، ایران.

^۳ دانشجوی دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، دانشگاه محقق اردبیلی، اردبیل، ایران.

کلیدواژه

آگاهی از برند
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مد
وفاداری به برند

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی

چکیده

هدف: این پژوهش برای شناسایی و رتبه‌بندی عوامل موثر بر افزایش تمایل مشتریان محصولات ورزشی شهر مشهد بر خرید از برندهای داخلی انجام شده است.

روش: پژوهش حاضر از نظر هدف، کاربردی و به صورت میدانی می‌باشد که جامعه آماری آن شامل مشتریان، فروشندگان، تولیدکنندگان، ورزشکاران، مربیان ورزشی در شهر مشهد می‌باشد. به دلیل نامحدود بودن جامعه آماری، با تاکید بر جدول حجم نمونه مورگان برای جامعه نامحدود، ۳۸۴ نفر انتخاب شد. برای تعیین و شناسایی عوامل موثر بر خرید محصولات ورزشی برند داخلی در مرحله اول با انجام مصاحبه از صاحب نظران و متخصصان بازاریابی ورزشی و نیز مطالعه پیشینه، به جمع‌آوری اطلاعات لازم پرداخته شد. سپس، با ساخت یک پرسشنامه محقق ساخته شده و جمع‌آوری پرسشنامه‌ها از نرم‌افزار SPSS 23 برای سازماندهی و تحلیل داده‌ها استفاده شد. از آزمون فریدمن برای رتبه‌بندی عوامل پدیدار شده استفاده شد.

یافته‌ها: در این پژوهش عواملی که بیشترین تاثیر در خرید محصولات ورزشی برند داخلی دارند شامل کیفیت محصولات با میانگین رتبه‌ای «۵.۶۳»، قیمت محصولات با میانگین رتبه‌ای «۵.۰۴»، ظاهر و بسته‌بندی محصولات با میانگین رتبه‌ای «۴.۸۸»، وفاداری به برند تولید داخل با میانگین رتبه‌ای «۴.۶۰»، مد و تنوع محصولات با میانگین رتبه‌ای «۴.۴۰»، عوامل اجتماعی با میانگین رتبه‌ای «۴.۲۰»، آگاهی از برند (تبلیغات) با میانگین رتبه‌ای «۳.۹۷» و دسترسی آسان به محصولات با میانگین رتبه‌ای «۳.۲۸» بودند.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: در این مقاله ما عوامل موثر بر تمایل به خرید محصولات ورزشی داخلی را شناسایی و رتبه‌بندی نمودیم که می‌تواند برای تولیدکنندگان محصولات ورزشی از اهمیت بالایی برخوردار باشد.

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Identifying and Analysing Factors Affecting Rough Set Theory-Based Iranian Sports Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

Nahid Darooghe Arefi¹ , Hassan Bahrololoum^{2*} , Reza Andam² , Ali Akbar Hasani³

¹ PhD Student in Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education, Shahrood University of Technology, Shahrood, Iran.

² Associate Professor Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education, Shahrood University of Technology, Shahrood, Iran.

³ Associate Professor Industrial Engineering, Department of Industrial Engineering and Management, Shahrood University of Technology, Shahrood, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to identify the factors affecting the Rough Set Theory-Based Iranian Sports Entrepreneurship Ecosystem and their prioritization in terms of Rough Set Theory.

Methodology: This study is a type of mixed research. Thirteen experts in the field of entrepreneurship participated in the qualitative phase, and 15 experts in the field of entrepreneurship who were selected in a targeted method participated in the quantitative phase. A semi-structured interview served as the data collection method for the qualitative part of the study. The researcher created a questionnaire to gather data for the quantitative section.

Findings: In the qualitative section using the theme analysis method, 193 basic themes, 25 organizing themes, and six inclusive themes were found. The inclusive themes covered market possibilities, money, business, legal infrastructure, physical infrastructure, entrepreneurial sports prospects, and business environment quality. The results of the quantitative part of the study revealed that the commercial and legal infrastructures are more significant than other identified themes and that the quality of the business environment is the minimum considerable factor influencing the entrepreneurial sports ecosystem.

Originality: Using the theme analysis approach and Rough Set Theory-based AHP, the current research aims to identify and prioritize the elements impacting the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Iranian sports. According to this study, a wide range of variables may contribute to the Iranian sports' entrepreneurial ecosystem growth.

Keywords

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1. Introduction

The modern world is the era of entrepreneurship. Since entrepreneurship has evolved into the most crucial and strategic economic tool for societies, the development of entrepreneurship is a complicated, protracted, and all-encompassing process that significantly impacts nations' economic growth and development. To put it another way, entrepreneurial growth is essential for national and economic advancement (Liao et al., 2009; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003; Urbano et al., 2019). From a practical and objective standpoint, sports are viewed as an economic sector that contributes significantly to the creation and consumption of commodities, the provision of sports services, and the economic growth of many communities. Sports' economic value arises from making sports-related products, hosting events, offering sports services, and engaging in sports (Afshari, 2016). Several sports events offer numerous prospects for professional growth. In other words, the rise of entrepreneurial activities in sports and sporting events has spawned many brand-new employment prospects (Jones & Bill, 2009). Numerous chances exist for sports entrepreneurs due to the size of the sports industry's financial transactions, the shifting leisure habits of people, the expansion of national, regional, continental, and international events, professional sports and championships, etc. (Zare et al., 2016).

Sports are seen to be one of the most advantageous sectors for making positive economic and social improvements and have a great potential to cope with entrepreneurial issues (Miragaia et al., 2017). It is worth noting that a suitable foundation in various cultural and social fields, educational systems, administrative and financial structures, and supporting institutions is necessary for developing entrepreneurship. To encourage entrepreneurship effectively, it is essential to take a systematic approach and create an environment for it (Ghambarali et al., 2014). The term "entrepreneurial ecosystem" refers to the external factors, people, organizations, or institutions that influence or limit an individual's decision to become an entrepreneur or the likelihood that he will succeed in launching a firm (Isenberg, 2012). The growth of entrepreneurship depends on considering many challenges from various perspectives and elements that make it clear that the ecosystem approach must be used. The EE method places a strong emphasis on the societal, organizational, and individual components required to encourage and support entrepreneurial activities (Berger & Kuckertz, 2016; Roundy et al., 2017; Spigel, 2017). An essential component of building a flexible economy based on entrepreneurial innovation is the ecosystem (Amolo & Migiro, 2015).

On the other hand, the ecosystem, in the form of economic rules, is one of the techniques for job creation and economic growth (Etzkowitz, 2006). According to Entezari (2015), efforts should be taken to increase the efficacy and efficiency of the government while also liberalizing the economic system to promote entrepreneurship in Iran's economy (Entezari, 2015). Iran is ranked 183rd out of 184 nations in terms of how simple and appropriate it is to conduct business because a sectoral view rather than a systemic one has been used to track the growth of entrepreneurship. Due to the ineffectiveness of sectoral policies in fostering entrepreneurship, an ecosystem strategy

with intertwined linkages between its components has become necessary (Nadgrodkiewicz, 2013). To stimulate the synergy of entrepreneurial mindsets, find new entrepreneurial possibilities, and enable the transformation of ideas into business plans, the success of an entrepreneurial ecosystem requires a dynamic connection between its essential components and variables (Temko, 2009).

There are several entrepreneurship hurdles in Iran's business climate. It has proven difficult to utilize this technique's potential in the best possible way to explain entrepreneurial phenomena using a component-oriented approach. The government usually tackles one or two components of the ecosystem for entrepreneurship, indicating that many of its efforts won't have the desired impact. Contrarily, Iran still views sports as enjoyment, unlike the rest of the world, which views them as a business and exploits them to further their economic objectives (Mohammadi et al., 2016). Despite the advancements achieved in recent years, specific crucial components of the entrepreneurial environment remain lacking and undeveloped. Numerous ecosystem components must be considered simultaneously to foster and grow entrepreneurship (Ghambarali et al., 2014). The assessment of Iran's entrepreneurial environment shows a critical need for the expansion of entrepreneurial activity (Faghih & Zali, 2018). The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2018) reported that Iran's situation has been satisfactory in the physical infrastructure and the dynamics of domestic markets. Still, the environment of Iran's entrepreneurial ecosystem is not very supportive of entrepreneurial activities at the global level (Jafari Sadeghi et al., 2019).

Many established and emerging nations view entrepreneurship as a fundamental strategy for resolving domestic problems and crises and surviving in the global marketplace because of its benefits and outcomes. A more thorough investigation of the dimensions and identification of the determinants of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Iranian sports appears essential because various factors influence the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in society. The critical question is what the elements of the entrepreneurial sports ecosystem are. It has been attempted to prioritize the highlighted components using Rough Set Theory to answer this question while studying the literature on the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

2. Theoretical background

An entrepreneurial ecosystem is made up of several elements that can influence a business, such as organizational factors, manager training, accountability and strategic agility of laws, access to financing, management, and human resource capacity, marketing, and technological capacity, banking facilities, data and information management and information systems, investments, financial and non-financial facilities and support, strategies to increase salespeople, developing public relations, etc. These elements are crucial to entrepreneurship's growth and development (Asa & Prasad, 2015; Getachew Regasa, 2015; Salimzadeh et al., 2013). Davari et al. (2017) reported that the effectiveness of an entrepreneurial ecosystem is influenced by several aspects, including support, human capital, markets, culture, politics, and funding (Davari et al., 2017).

According to [Ghambarali et al. \(2014\)](#), the support component was deemed less significant than other dimensions, and the policies of the development program did not pay equal attention to the ecosystem's aspects. The entrepreneurial ecosystem, which consists of policy, financial resources, support, markets, human capital, and culture, was also presented by [Liguori et al., 2019](#)). It should be noted that the elements of an entrepreneurial ecosystem vary based on their origin and intended use, as well as their type, size, and shape, which vary depending on the circumstances ([Mazzarol, 2014](#)). [Spigel \(2017\)](#) emphasizes the connections between the elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. These components include free markets, a supportive culture, financial resources, networks, advisers and role models, legislation, support services, and physical infrastructure ([Spigel, 2017](#)).

The primary features of entrepreneurial ecosystem systems in the economic, technological, and social aspects have also been introduced by [Audretsch et al., 2019](#)). [Fisher et al. \(2020\)](#) classify the entrepreneurial ecosystem's dimensions as follows: science and technology, human capital, a dynamic market, trade, and infrastructure ([Fisher et al., 2020](#)). The research analysis revealed that the ecosystem of sports entrepreneurship is impacted by some variables, including the legal system, the economy, and the institutionalization of the culture of demand for sports ([Niazy et al., 2020](#)). On the other side, the six critical aspects of politics, support, local and global markets, culture, financial capital, and human capital may be prioritized concerning the elements of the sports entrepreneurship ecosystem ([Negahdari et al., 2019](#)).

Accordingly, [Farahmandmehr et al. \(2019\)](#) identified the entrepreneurial environment, people capital, entrepreneurial leadership, venues, sports equipment and services, funding, and entrepreneurial infrastructure areas to develop a sports entrepreneurship ecosystem ([Farahmandmehr et al., 2019](#)). According to studies, the growth of entrepreneurship is influenced by technical, cultural, executive, educational, and research policies, as well as personal variables ([Naderian Jahromi & Pazhouhan, 2021](#)). Most entrepreneurship studies, particularly those performed in Iran, either ignore or only partially address the environmental factors that impact entrepreneurship's emergence and growth. The entrepreneurship ecosystem comprises access to capital, education in entrepreneurship, government-run entrepreneurship programs, research and development, commercial and legal policies and infrastructure, and ease of entry rules. These elements contribute to the emergence and growth of entrepreneurship through moral, financial, technological, market, social, network, government, and environmental support ([Regele & Neck, 2012](#); [Suresh & Ramraj, 2012](#)).

According to [Ratten \(2011\)](#), one of the critical influences on entrepreneurship is using technology in business ([Ratten, 2011](#)). A model of entrepreneurship development was created by [Hall and Sobel \(2008\)](#), and it included the amount of access to resources like venture capital and other entrepreneurship resources and reserves ([Hall & Sobel, 2008](#)). In addition, [Isenberg \(2011\)](#) developed a framework called the entrepreneurial ecosystem and believes that the entrepreneurial ecosystem is made up of hundreds of elements that can be categorized into six broad areas. According to this paradigm, the entrepreneurial ecosystem's essential components are the market, legislation, funding, culture, support, and human capital ([Isenberg, 2011](#)). An appropriate market structure, the availability of

funding, high-quality social and human capital, a culture that accepts failure, substantial property rights at the time of starting, exiting and selling the business, and most importantly, the desire of the government to foster an enabling environment are necessary components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Forfas, 2009). Generally, studies have shown that the elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Iranian sports have not been thoroughly categorized. As a result, identifying these elements and ranking them according to importance might provide essential information and demonstrate the need for undertaking such a study.

3. Methodology

This study is an exploratory mixed method performed in qualitative and quantitative parts. The data pieces of the qualitative stage were obtained from the related articles and interviews. Through a purposive sampling approach, the academic staff members of the faculties of entrepreneurship management and physical education and sports sciences with knowledge in business and entrepreneurship (9 people), as well as entrepreneurs and consultants in the sports sector (4 people), were selected as participants to conduct the interviews. The interviews were allotted between 20 and 60 minutes and recorded with the participants' permission.

The data pieces were analyzed based on [Braun and Clarke \(2019\)](#) principles of reflexive thematic analysis, which has been used in other qualitative studies underpinned by critical realism ([Brown et al., 2020](#)). Automatic thematic analysis is a flexible, iterative process involving moving back and forth between stages of analysis and revisiting the raw data as often as needed to refine understanding ([Braun & Clarke, 2019](#)). The critical stages of this process included data familiarization, open coding, searching for themes, reviewing, and refining themes, and defining and naming themes before developing a final report containing a selection of data extracts. The data analysis was also characterized by the process of reproduction, which is a crucial feature of critical realism and involves integrating subjective and objective knowledge ([Fletcher, 2017](#)). Thus, transcribed interviews and data pieces from the articles were carefully studied and reviewed several times to identify and extract ideas and concepts hidden in the data. Then, all primary codes related to each fundamental theme were found and gathered as arranged themes from various codes.

The primary researcher first immersed himself in the data by reading through the transcription multiple times. Initial codes and related quotes were then identified. At this point, the researcher sought to identify as many codes as possible. In addition, two research assistants read the transcriptions and developed their codes which were then discussed with the primary researcher. Each member did the coding individually, and then the team checked and confirmed the codes. The predetermined stages were meticulously carried out to ensure the reliability of the research while the research team examined the work process. The application of the developments in different contexts can be assessed based on the research's setting, how the participants were chosen, how the data were collected, and how the results were analyzed. Additionally, Cohen's kappa coefficient-based technique of agreement between two coders was employed to assess the research's

reliability. The agreement between the coders was verified by the Kappa coefficient, which was shown to be more than 0.7 in essential situations (Siegel & Castellan, 1988).

In the quantitative part of the research, the rough AHP technique was used to analyze the causal relationships between the factors identified. This decision-making method is based on pairwise factors that take advantage of experts’ judgments about the extracted elements. The Analytical Hierarchy Process can assess the compatibility of preferences and consider objective and subjective factors. The Rough Analytical Hierarchy Process was utilized since the expert opinions were ambiguous and subjective.

4. Results

4.1. Part 1: Findings from the qualitative method

The findings of the qualitative analysis of demographic data have shown that ten participants were male and three were female. Most of the participants were older than 35. Eight participants had doctorates, three had master's degrees, and two had bachelor's degrees. Four participants were business owners and consultants in the sports sector, and 9 participants have experienced entrepreneurship scholars and university professors. One hundred ninety-three fundamental themes were gleaned from interviews and textual materials analysis. The related codes were grouped according to their semantic affinity, which reduced the number of organizing themes to 25. Finally, based on the organizing themes, six inclusive themes were developed and described below [Table 1](#).

Table 1. The basic and organizing themes of the inclusive theme of the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Iranian sports.

| Main themes (inclusive) | Organizing theme | Basic themes |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Commercial and legal infrastructures | Competitive environment | The actions of both direct and indirect competitors, the potential for advantages created to be copied, alternatives—particularly in the entertainment industry—processes of globalization and localization, resource suppliers, the effectiveness of the government, the absence of economic order, price competition, competition for market share, and competition for new product development. |
| | Entrepreneurial policies | Regulatory and administrative framework for small and medium enterprises, open door policy for sponsors, contractual requirements, name rights, ownership, and workforce, development of the national model of empowerment and employment, economic stability, contraction and expansion policies of the private sector, tax and customs exemptions, simplification of administrative procedures, removal of barriers to entrepreneurship, legal incentives, amendment of laws to facilitate entrepreneurship |
| | Ease of business | The ease of starting a business, the current business-friendly policies, the simplicity of getting permits and licenses for new businesses, fundamental tax policies that do not put more financial strain on entrepreneurs, predictability, and compatibility of government laws concerning new businesses, the absence of administrative red tape, business-oriented regulations, support for retail investors, the availability of energy resources needed by the business, and bankruptcy resolution. |
| | Economic rules | Pricing system, export and import regulations, rules governing the banking system, the position of new businesses in the sports budget, rules of resource distribution among small and large enterprises, ways to cover budget deficits and possible facilities, profit subsidy quota facilities, laws related to |

| Main themes (inclusive) | Organizing theme | Basic themes |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Physical infrastructure | | promoting the technical and professional capabilities of entrepreneurs, financial supervision, processes of joining the stock exchange. |
| | Government support | Enhancing local production, putting a priority on policies that help new and expanding enterprises, government support for privatization, fostering political stability, facilitating entrepreneurs' access to information, establishing development hubs, providing legal and managerial guidance, comprehensive support for research and technology parks, assistance in fostering connections between universities and scientific institutions and business, and a program for SMEs development |
| | Technology | New communication equipment (broadband, masts, etc.), long-lasting product technologies (nanotechnology), Internet usage, e-commerce software production, new media, e-government, user-generated content, R&D in advanced technology, technology synergy. |
| Sports entrepreneurship opportunities | Construction | The availability of the physical infrastructure required to launch a company (such as sports facilities, stadiums, and commercial spaces), access to energy sources, telecommunications, and transportation, as well as science and technology parks and industrial communities. |
| | The employment rate in sports | Gross national product in the sports sector, the rate of return on investment in sports, the number of businesses with more than five employees, the amount of temporary, part-time, or permanent employment of people in jobs, incomplete employment, the number of active jobs in urban and rural areas, the contribution of the working population in sports, the developed and undeveloped job opportunities in the country's sports, the variety of products and services, the rate of self-employment, the rate of employment and dismissal of the workforce. |
| | Entrepreneurial environment | Feasibility analysis (scientific, economic, technical, and marketing) and sports investments screening, familiarity with the life cycle of the industry, the strength of sports unions and syndicates, regional and geographical features, the position of sports in the Iranian household portfolio, sports diplomacy and the relationship between domestic organizations and international organizations, challenges of international law in sports. |
| | Management policies | Enhancing administrative diplomacy, streamlining the privatization of sports, creating modern regulations, motivating the regulatory framework, Analyzing, and assessing environmental opportunities, managing salaries and wages, providing human resources, providing training and development, enhancing inter-departmental and outsourcing interactions, and authority delegation. |
| | Providing services and products | Real business cycles, product development, concept screening and application, market monitoring and testing, technical and operational elements, standard compliance, commercialization, and packaging infrastructure for goods and services. |
| | Holding sports events | Hosting domestic and international tournaments (quantity and quality), requests for cooperative hosting, training camps, hosting pre-season tours of clubs, sports tourism rates, virtual leagues. |
| | The value and validity of sports activities | Popularity and general interest in sports, the level of real wages in the field of sports, the potential of generating income from sports, the stability of national and club sports, the status of sports celebrities, the rate of attracting advertising and sponsorship by sports events, successful events (visible successes, wealth generation for founders, international reputation), financial-economic evaluation of sports projects. |
| Capitals | Intellectual Capital | Human capital (technological entrepreneurs, technical and managerial skills, business education, entrepreneurial experience, personality traits, resources, the potential of outsourcing, access to the migrant workforce), structural capital (workflow, intellectual power, information system), relational capital (job applicants, personnel, investors, networks and partners). |
| | Financial capital | Providing collective financial resources (gifts, aid, and rewards), venture capital, angel investors, supplying resources and providing financial facilities (support fund for sports entrepreneurs), the possibility of financing new |

| Main themes (inclusive) | Organizing theme | Basic themes |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Market opportunities | | businesses through the offering of shares, guaranteeing credit for acquisition and financial work, encouraging investment, financial support for entrepreneurship. |
| | Social capital | Social participation, social trust, social cohesion, willingness to invest, professional networking of companies, inter-sectorial communication. |
| | Physical capital | Production of sports equipment and supplies, spaces for professional sports services, recreational, educational, and tourism sports facilities, administrative structures, and spaces. |
| | Market value | Income, cost, profit, tax, financial market (stocks, bonds), investment rate, market knowledge |
| | Market size | Access to domestic and international customers, market share, open markets (adequate local opportunities for businesses and access to local markets). |
| | Market dynamism | Changes in customer preferences, market fluctuations, exchange rate changes, competitors' behavior changes, environmental resistance, lobbying and political sanctions, unexpected events such as diseases, war, etc., the country's relations with its neighbors, changes in the demographic pyramid, inflation rate and interests. |
| | Market capacity and demand | The rate of annual changes in the market of consumer and commercial goods and services, distribution channels, ease of entering new markets, the degree of commitment of new businesses to established businesses, effective anti-monopoly laws with high enforceability, added-value creation processes, entrepreneurial networks, and international cooperation. |
| Quality of the business environment | Entrepreneurial capabilities and attitudes | Psychological features (risk-taking, uncertainty tolerance, motivation, self-confidence, independence, success-seeking, aggressive competition, pioneering), capabilities and talents (creativity and innovation, leadership ability, money management, entrepreneurial spirit), experiences and learning (interactive perspective and teamwork, opportunism, work experience, and previous jobs, marketing experiences). |
| | Commercial space | Elimination of brokers and mediators, state of supply of primary resources, power of negotiation and bargaining, economic security, the legal and judicial system of trade, control of corruption, legal grounds and provision of investment force, the performance of money markets, quality of industries. |
| | Entrepreneurial culture | Social norms (tolerating mistakes and failures, viewing innovation), the entrepreneur's social base, role models in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs' success stories, the desire to discover opportunities, the value position of entrepreneurship in society, media support for entrepreneurship, resistance to change, perceptual resistance, reliance on the results of scientific and academic research. |
| | Entrepreneurship education | Developing educational resources and texts, attention to entrepreneurship topics in schools and universities, training of individual and self-employment skills, teaching-learning strategies, needs assessment and academic targeting, past evaluations-based design of training courses, using virtual training capacity. |

4.2. Quantitative section: Rough Set Theory-based Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP)

The descriptive findings about this group of experts' viewpoints were utilized in this part and are shown in Table 2. This section employed the perspectives of 15 experts relevant to the research topic.

Table 2. Distribution of the research experts in the quantitative section.

| Features | Options | Frequency | Frequency percentage |
|-----------|-------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Gender | Male | 13 | 86.6 |
| | Female | 2 | 13.4 |
| Age | 20-30 | 1 | 6.6 |
| | 31-40 | 6 | 40.0 |
| | 41-50 | 8 | 53.3 |
| Education | Bachelor's degree | 2 | 13.4 |
| | Master's degree | 4 | 26.6 |
| | PhD | 9 | 60.0 |

In the second section, the selected criteria were prioritized and ordered using the hierarchical approach and AHP software based on the Rough Set Theory to determine the elements impacting the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Iran's sports industry. One of the most well-known and often employed techniques for multi-indicator decision-making, the Analytical Hierarchy Process, can assess the compatibility of preferences and take both objective and subjective factors into account. The Rough Analytical Hierarchy Process was utilized since the expert opinions were ambiguous and subjective. The steps of this procedure are shown in the following section (Zhu et al., 2015).

- **Step 1:** Identifying the objective, criteria, and research options and forming a hierarchical structure.
- **Step 2:** Prepare a pairwise comparison questionnaire and collect experts' ideas.
- **Step 3:** Utilizing the concept of Rough Set Theory to convert experts' preferences into distance numbers and form a distance pairwise comparison matrix similar to equation 1:

$$\begin{bmatrix} [1,1] & [x_{12}^L, x_{12}^U] & \dots & [x_{1m}^L, x_{1m}^U] \\ [x_{21}^L, x_{21}^U] & [1,1] & \dots & [x_{2m}^L, x_{2m}^U] \\ \vdots & \vdots & & \vdots \\ [x_{m1}^L, x_{m1}^U] & \dots & & [1,1] \end{bmatrix}$$

- **Step 4:** Calculating the weight of each research criterion using Equations 2 and 3:

$$w_i = \left[\sqrt[m]{\prod_{j=1}^m x_{ij}^L}, \sqrt[m]{\prod_{j=1}^m x_{ij}^U} \right]$$

$$\hat{w}_i = w_i / \max(w_i^u)$$

The AHP approach determines the weight of the criteria in this section. First, a paired technique based on a scale of 1 to 9 in order of importance was used to assess the criteria and sub-criteria by 15 research specialists. Pairwise comparisons of expert judgments based on rough figures are provided in Table 3 using Formula 1.

Table 3. Rough’s pairwise comparison matrix.

| | A | B | C | D | E | F |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| A | (1,1) | (3.88, 7.69) | (4.45, 6.17) | (3.14, 6.70) | (2.32, 4.99) | (3.25, 5.99) |
| B | (0.13, 0.25) | (1,1) | (0.79, 1.88) | (0.49, 2.05) | (0.41, 1.67) | (0.63, 1.45) |
| C | (0.16, 0.22) | (0.53, 1.25) | (1,1) | (0.64, 2.10) | (0.43, 1.61) | (0.60, 1.01) |
| D | (0.14, 0.31) | (0.48, 2.02) | (0.47, 1.56) | (1,1) | (0.64, 2.64) | (0.86, 3.25) |
| E | (0.20, 0.43) | (0.59, 2.42) | (0.61, 2.30) | (0.37, 1.54) | (1,1) | (1.13, 4.02) |
| F | (0.16, 0.30) | (0.68, 1.57) | (0.98, 1.65) | (0.30, 1.15) | (0.24, 0.88) | (1,1) |

The ultimate weight of the sub-criteria is calculated by dividing the main criterion's weight by the sub-relative criteria's weight, which is listed in [Table 4](#).

Table 4. Ultimate weight and rank of the sub-criteria and criteria

| Criteria | Standard weight | Sub-criteria | The sub-relative criteria's weight | Substandard ultimate weight | Final sub-criterion rating |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Commercial and legal infrastructures | 0.459 | Competitive environment | 0.558 | 0.256 | 1 |
| | | Entrepreneurial policies | 0.205 | 0.094 | 2 |
| | | Ease of business | 0.108 | 0.049 | 7 |
| | | Economic rules | 0.090 | 0.041 | 8 |
| | | Government support | 0.039 | 0.017 | 15 |
| Physical infrastructure | 0.103 | Technology | 0.733 | 0.075 | 4 |
| | | Construction | 0.267 | 0.027 | 12 |
| Sports entrepreneurship opportunities | 0.093 | The employment rate in sports | 0.420 | 0.039 | 9 |
| | | Entrepreneurial environment | 0.231 | 0.021 | 14 |
| | | Management policies | 0.160 | 0.014 | 18 |
| | | Providing services and products | 0.087 | 0.008 | 22 |
| | | Holding sports events | 0.058 | 0.005 | 23 |
| Capitals | 0.122 | The value and validity of sports activities | 0.043 | 0.004 | 25 |
| | | Intellectual Capital | 0.499 | 0.060 | 5 |
| | | Financial capital | 0.309 | 0.037 | 10 |
| | | Social capital | 0.123 | 0.015 | 17 |
| Market opportunities | 0.133 | Physical capital | 0.069 | 0.008 | 21 |
| | | Market value | 0.575 | 0.076 | 3 |
| | | Market size | 0.229 | 0.030 | 11 |
| | | Market dynamism | 0.132 | 0.017 | 16 |
| Quality of the business environment | 0.089 | Market capacity and demand | 0.064 | 0.008 | 20 |
| | | Entrepreneurial capabilities and attitudes | 0.569 | 0.050 | 6 |
| | | Commercial space | 0.249 | 0.022 | 13 |
| | | Entrepreneurial culture | 0.122 | 0.010 | 19 |
| | | Entrepreneurship education | 0.060 | 0.005 | 24 |

5. Discussion and conclusion

The present study aims to identify the factors impacting the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Iranian sports and prioritize them using the Rough Set Theory-based AHP method. Based on the research's findings, the identified elements were classified into the following categories: financial resources, market potential, physical infrastructure, sports entrepreneurship prospects, and the standard of the business environment. The significance of the discovered characteristics was then assessed using the AHP approach for each inclusive theme, which contained some organizing themes. Rough Set Theory has also been employed to account for uncertainty.

Accordingly, legal, and commercial infrastructure, competitive environment, entrepreneurial policies, ease of doing business, economic laws, and government support were identified as the main themes of legal and commercial infrastructure in order of importance. These factors should be prioritized to improve the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Iran's sports sector. One way to foster an entrepreneurial spirit is to encourage competition. Taking advantage of numerous chances in a set workplace and away from a competitive atmosphere is harder. [Pakmaram and Rezaei \(2017\)](#) studied the competitive environment and its indications, which included pricing competition, marketing, and rivals' behavior ([Pakmaram & Rezaei, 2017](#)).

The competitive environment is a determinant of an economy's dynamism and efficiency, and the more robust and more developed an economy is, the better its competitiveness indices are. Competition promotes productivity and innovation by encouraging business owners and economic activists to provide clients with higher-quality goods and services while maximizing profit and market share. According to [Torabi and Kheyrandish \(2020\)](#), commercial and judicial infrastructure positively correlates with GDP. This implies that economies will expand enormously in nations with greater commercial and legal infrastructure ([Torabi & Kheyrandish, 2020](#)).

Government initiatives that offer support and services can stimulate entrepreneurship across all economies ([Mittal & Vyas, 2011](#)). The government may assist business owners by providing assistance and guidance through chambers of commerce or publically funded incubators ([Bartik, 1989](#)). [Isenberg \(2011\)](#); [Liguori et al. \(2019\)](#); [Regele and Neck \(2012\)](#) have also highlighted the importance of the commercial and legal infrastructure for the growth of the entrepreneurial ecosystem ([Isenberg, 2011](#); [Liguori et al., 2019](#); [Regele & Neck, 2012](#)). According to [Isenberg \(2011\)](#), the effectiveness of the entrepreneurial ecosystem is influenced by entrepreneurship infrastructure, government backing, and macro-policies ([Isenberg, 2011](#)). Some essential elements, such as the presence of government-run entrepreneurship programs, pro-entrepreneurship laws, a strong commercial and legal infrastructure, and entry-level regulations, have also been recognized by ([Regele & Neck, 2012](#)).

The legal system and supporting infrastructure were also analyzed by [Niazy et al. \(2020\)](#) as beneficial to the ecosystem of the sports business. Under cover of government assistance, the formation and ratification of business laws rely heavily on the commercial and legal infrastructure. The tax was first proposed by [Keuschnigg and Nielsen \(2004\)](#) as one of the fundamental regulatory mechanisms for carrying out governmental programs

(Keuschnigg & Nielsen, 2004). The research revealed that economic laws are among the most significant business and legal themes. Sports businesses can innovate and expand if appropriate financial regulations and tax rules are applied. According to Cohen (2006), economic laws should be written to promote economic transparency and comprehensive financial data databases, strengthen regulatory bodies during the export and import processes, and lower the tax burden on the economy. The absence of transparency brought on by the tax regulations will reduce investment, output, and entrepreneurship, followed by a rise in exchange prices (Cohen, 2006).

The market opportunities (market value, size, market dynamics, market capacity, and demand) are crucial factors impacting the sports entrepreneurship ecosystem, which has been ranked second. Due to the chance for entrepreneurship, job creation, innovation, and economic growth by intelligently employing money and turning it around, the market will result in the development of the business environment (Michelacci & Suarez, 2000). Chrisman and McMullan (2002) regarded market value and expertise as crucial tools for capitalizing on market opportunities (Chrisman & McMullan, 2002). The acceptance of new goods or services in the market is greatly influenced by market knowledge.

Entrepreneurs are more likely to seize opportunities if they have a dynamic market and a better understanding of consumer demand for a particular product. Market value, size, dynamics, demand rate, and industry structure drive entrepreneurial activities. The market's size and characteristics create opportunities for entry. Long-term market dynamics impact macroeconomic growth (Fitzová & Zidek, 2015). According to (Torabi & Kheyrandish, 2020), many entrepreneurial activities are available in nations whose market dynamics are changing quickly. According to the findings of Runiewicz-Wardyn (2013); Spigel (2017), market opportunities and the entrepreneurial ecosystem are positively correlated (Runiewicz-Wardyn, 2013; Spigel, 2017). Also, Khoshbakht-Ahmadi et al. (2022) considered market changes as one of the factors in creating sports entrepreneurship opportunities (Khoshbakht Ahmadi et al., 2022).

The capital was used to categorize the third factor affecting the ecosystem of sports entrepreneurship (intellectual capital, financial capital, social capital, and physical capital). The most significant aspect of money has been determined to be intellectual capital. Intellectual capital, the primary driver of competitive advantage and wealth creation in knowledge-based economies, takes many forms, including human, structural, and communication capital, which may help people find business opportunities and identify and capitalize on emerging trends (Kianto et al., 2017). Using data analysis from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Rodriguez et al. (2010) validated the importance of knowledge and intellectual capital in identifying business opportunities as the first stage in the entrepreneurial process. The discovery and exploitation of new possibilities are influenced by intellectual capital (Ramos-Rodriguez et al., 2010). As Sanchez (2012) reported, potential entrepreneurs, or human capitals, have a special place in the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Ács et al., 2014).

The development of human capabilities in sports can lead to sustainable development in the sports business (Norouzi Seyed Hossini et al., 2022). One of the central concerns with entrepreneurship is access to financial resources for business owners to take advantage of the chances they have found. Halt et al. (2017) investigated a variety of

sources of funding, including investment angels, communal finance, family and friend resources, and personal savings. Starting a business requires finance and the provision of necessary resources. A significant factor in the failure of many firms is the absence of such help, which are crucial for establishing a firm foothold in the marketplace (Halt et al., 2017). The entrepreneurial environment may also be influenced by non-economic elements such as social and physical capital and economic considerations like market and financial advantages. The emergence of creativity, ideation, and risk-taking behaviors, which are among the indications of entrepreneurship, is a social phenomenon influenced by social capital (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990).

The fourth category of the practical components of the entrepreneurship ecosystem is physical infrastructure (technology and construction). Similarly, Redford (2012) argue that physical infrastructure is crucial to developing entrepreneurial ecosystems (Redford, 2012). Physical and civil equipment problems influence the growth of the entrepreneurial sports ecosystem. The previous studies indicated that physical infrastructure is crucial for entrepreneurship (Van De Ven, 1993). By accelerating access to resources, physical infrastructure promotes entrepreneurship. Physical infrastructure is essential for beginning a firm, according to Ghani et al. (2014), who also noted that the current study's findings support their assertion (Ghani et al., 2014). Hosseini et al. (2021) have also pointed out the role of physical infrastructure, especially technology, in developing sports entrepreneurship (Hosseini et al., 2021).

According to Audretsch et al. (2015), entrepreneurship is related to a certain kind of infrastructure, like broadband (Audretsch et al., 2015). Naderian Jahromi and Pazhouhan (2021) found that the technological component was one of the influential aspects of the entrepreneurial environment. Farahmandmehr et al. (2019) offered locations, sporting goods and services, and entrepreneurship infrastructure to establish an entrepreneurial sports ecosystem. They argued that entrepreneurship, investment, and start-up success depend on physical infrastructure, including transportation, land or operating space, and communication facilities. Access to physical infrastructures, such as offices and using space, public equipment, and services, is typically necessary to launch a business, particularly in the sports industry. Such services will promote the creation of new jobs (Salimath & Cullen, 2010).

Sports entrepreneurship prospects are the ecosystem's sixth component after its constituent parts (employment rates in the sport, entrepreneurship environment, management policies, services and products, sports events, value, and credit for sports activities). Finding the opportunity is the most crucial phase in any entrepreneurial process. Indeed, the opportunity cannot be exploited unless the identification is made. The process of identifying new possibilities and taking advantage of them is called entrepreneurship (Gaglio & Katz, 2001). The more individuals establish a business, the more readily available the prospects are. The opportunity must be at the core of entrepreneurial efforts since, without a chance, entrepreneurship is nothing (Mojtavi et al., 2019).

Three different sorts of entrepreneurship-related policies have been put in place by governments to increase business prospects. First, they have improved the regulatory environment for entrepreneurship by giving money and streamlining bureaucratic rules.

Second, they have increased the nation's environmental knowledge and skill by offering programs to distribute its environmental expertise and skill. Finally, they have strengthened their normative environment via the necessary measures to enhance the community's perceptions of the entrepreneurship sector, which might increase people's drive to become entrepreneurs (Forfas, 2009). Negahdari et al. (2019) and Naderian Jahromi and Pazhouhan (2021) have included the elements of organizational and managerial policies that are effective for the growth of entrepreneurship in their analyses of their findings. For market analysts, one of the key topics is sports entrepreneurship potential. Indeed, entrepreneurship is the search for opportunity (Baron, 2008).

The quality of the business environment, which comprises entrepreneurial competencies and attitudes, business environments, entrepreneurial cultures, and entrepreneurial education, is the last factor influencing the entrepreneurial ecosystem. All efforts made by other sectors will be fruitless if sports advocates' attitudes toward the sports industry's potential for entrepreneurship are unsuitable. Naderian Jahromi and Pazhouhan (2021), argued that training entrepreneurial thinking and culture, expanding entrepreneurial research and development centers, and establishing and developing knowledge-based companies in the sports field. Also, more variables such as: holding digital entrepreneurship training workshops, electronic businesses and sports start-ups, educational and research programs of universities with entrepreneurial values, scientific cooperation with academic and research centers of developed countries, matching university courses with sports-related jobs, and developing individual factors in the direction of entrepreneurial skills can provide valuable solutions in creating entrepreneurial thinking, building new and diverse careers, and employment of sports graduates. Schools, universities, and educational institutions play an essential and significant role in sports entrepreneurship as feeders that can bring skilled, creative, and entrepreneurial individuals into the sports entrepreneurship ecosystem in the areas of sports services and products (Block & Stumpf, 1990).

Societal values and conventions significantly influence the evolution of entrepreneurship. As a result, the culture dictates the growth and advancement of innovation, and the culture determines the type of current attitudes, values, and conventions. Cultural attitudes and a culture's history of entrepreneurship are two critical aspects of the entrepreneurial environment from a cultural perspective (Spigel, 2017). Training as a career choice increases the number of entrepreneurs by giving practical knowledge for beginning a business (Clarysse & Bruneel, 2007), enhancing the capacity to comprehend and recognize entrepreneurial possibilities, and promoting risky actions (Lee et al., 2005). According to research, learning about the appeal and viability of entrepreneurship is positively correlated with entrepreneurship courses or university programs. In this regard, Torabi and Kheyrandish (2020) have also demonstrated that nations would see more economic growth when their educational systems are more effective at fostering entrepreneurial talents (Torabi & Kheyrandish, 2020).

Coordination between effective institutions and alignment of support, cultural, social, economic, and educational policies are required considering the multitude of elements that influence the entrepreneurial environment in the sports industry. When developing the entrepreneurial ecosystem, it is essential to consider the market, entrepreneurship policies,

and the competitive environment. In this regard, it is recommended that policymakers and executives focus on the many aspects of the business environment and adapt the required assistance to develop appropriate and effective policies. Additionally, they establish the required circumstances to draw domestic and international visitors to create business prospects in the market by offering a variety of chances, such as hosting regional, national, and international events. Additionally, it is advised that future researchers identify the barriers affecting the sports entrepreneurship ecosystem in various fields, including sports production and services, sports events, sports tourism, and women's sports, and that they analyze practical solutions to current problems.

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شناسایی و تحلیل اکوسیستم کارآفرینی در ورزش ایران مبتنی بر مجموعه تئوری راف

ناهید داروغه عارفی^۱، حسن بحر العلوم^{۲*}، رضا اندام^۲، علی اکبر حسینی^۳

^۱ دانشجوی دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی، دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود، شاهرود، ایران.

^۲ دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی، دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود، شاهرود، ایران.

^۳ دانشیار مهندسی صنایع، گروه مهندسی صنایع و مدیریت، دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود، شاهرود، ایران.

کلیدواژه

فضای کسب و کار

سرمایه

حمایت دولتی

پویایی بازار

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: هدف پژوهش حاضر شناسایی عوامل موثر بر اکوسیستم کارآفرینی در ورزش ایران و اولویت‌بندی آنها بر اساس روش AHP مبتنی بر مجموعه تئوری راف بود.

روش: پژوهش انجام شده از نوع آمیخته است. مشارکت‌کنندگان در مرحله کیفی، شامل ۱۳ نفر از افراد مطلع در حوزه کارآفرینی (کارآفرینان و پژوهشگران) و در مرحله کمی، شامل ۱۵ نفر از متخصصان حوزه کارآفرینی بودند که به روش هدفمند انتخاب شدند. ابزار گردآوری داده‌ها در بخش کیفی مصاحبه نیمه ساختارمند و در بخش کمی پرسشنامه محقق‌ساخته‌ای بود که عوامل آن از طریق مطالعه بخش کیفی استخراج شد.

یافته‌ها: یافته‌ها در بخش کیفی با استفاده از روش تحلیل مضمون بیانگر ۱۹۳ مضمون پایه، ۲۵ مضمون سازمان‌دهنده و ۶ مضمون فراگیر بود. مضامین فراگیر شامل زیرساخت‌های تجاری و قانونی، زیرساخت‌های فیزیکی، فرصت‌های کارآفرینی ورزشی، سرمایه‌ها، فرصت‌های بازار، کیفیت فضای کسب و کار بود. در بخش کمی نتایج نشان داد که زیرساخت‌های تجاری و قانونی از اهمیت بالاتری نسبت به سایر مضامین شناسایی شده دارد و کیفیت فضای کسب و کار کمترین اهمیت را در بین عوامل موثر بر اکوسیستم کارآفرینی در ورزش به خود اختصاص داده است.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: پژوهش حاضر تلاش کرده است با استفاده از روش تحلیل مضمون و AHP مبتنی بر تئوری راف مولفه‌های موثر بر اکوسیستم کارآفرینی در ورزش ایران را شناسایی و اولویت‌بندی کند. بر این اساس، این پژوهش مجموعه متنوعی از عوامل را پیشنهاد می‌کند که می‌توانند در توسعه اکوسیستم کارآفرینی ورزشی در ایران نقش داشته باشند.

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The Relationship between Entrepreneurial Differentiation and Promoting Manufacturing Strategies of Sporting Goods Manufacturers-The Mediating Role of the Fear of Failure

Mohammad Reza Fathi^{1*}, Mohsen Torabi², Morteza Karimi³

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Management and Accounting, College of Farabi, University of Tehran, Iran.

² Assistant Professor, Department of Management and Accounting, University of Hormozgan, Hormozgan, Iran.

³ Suhrawardi Institute of Higher Education, Qazvin, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Today, with SMEs' development, entrepreneurs' decision-making is unique in promoting the manufacturing strategy. This study investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial differentiation and fear of failure in promoting SMEs' manufacturing strategies of Sporting Goods Manufacturers.

Methodology: Regarding purpose, this study is applied research, and methodologically, it is correlational type. The research population consists of Sporting Goods Manufacturers. According to the statistics, there are 995 companies. Based on Morgan's table, the sample size was 277 firms. The questionnaires used in this study included the differentiation questionnaire developed by Skowron and Friedlander (1998), the fear of failure questionnaire adapted from Cacciotti et al. (2016), and a researcher-made manufacturing strategy questionnaire. Relevant industry experts and professors confirmed the validity of this questionnaire. Structural equation modeling was used for data analysis through SmartPLS software.

Findings: The results showed that internal and external factors affecting entrepreneurs' fear of failure could promote the manufacturing strategy by 59.2% ($R^2 = 0.592$). On the other hand, entrepreneurial differentiation could also affect the promotion of the manufacturing industry by 52% ($R^2 = 0.520$).

Originality: Although much research was done on entrepreneurship and manufacturing strategy, little was done on entrepreneurs' differentiation and fear of failure. Entrepreneurs can be among the primary beneficiaries of this research. Corporate executives and research organizations can also use research findings to plan the manufacturing industry and entrepreneurial initiatives and manage strategy and entrepreneurship.

Keywords

Decision Making
Economic Development
Manufacturing Strategies
Risk Taking
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1. Introduction

Manufacturing strategy is a sequence of decisions that enables entrepreneurs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It makes the right structural and infrastructural choices for business development. Today, with the development of SMEs, entrepreneurial decision-making has a special place in promoting the manufacturing strategy. Studies show that these industries affect economic development through entrepreneurship and innovation. As innovation and sustainable employment actors, SME entrepreneurs' behavior plays a unique role in the future development of economic activities, which requires risk-taking and the courage of an entrepreneur to take advantage of future opportunities (Mohammadi Eliassy & Notash, 2011).

Many small industries' decisions depend on entrepreneurs' personality traits. Fear of failure and differentiation are the behavioral and personality traits of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs' fear of failure as a deterrent and negative factor hinders the development of these industries and sometimes leads to loss of competitiveness with others and their failure. To be successful, SME entrepreneurs must always face the risks that sometimes come at a high cost to take these risks. Therefore, there is a fear in entrepreneurs of the unattainability of goals and failure in their work. Entrepreneurial fear of failure is an emotional state that can originate from two main parts, namely internal and external factors. It can be a significant obstacle to promoting manufacturing strategies in SMEs. Differentiation, another behavioral and personality trait of entrepreneurs, enhances an individual's autonomy and responsibility. Differentiation is a continuous process that can be examined in two parts: intra- and interpersonal. In the intrapersonal part, differentiation deals with a person's ability to balance emotions and thoughts. In another (interpersonal) part, differentiation refers to gaining experience without compromising a sense of personal autonomy. Entrepreneurs with higher levels of differentiation are less emotionally reactive, less emotionally fused with others, less likely to engage in the emotional cutoff, and more able to take personal positions than less differentiated entrepreneurs (Bowen, 1978). Recognition is a way of understanding the interdependence of the differentiation concept. People who spend most of their time maintaining relationships with others and making important decisions based on avoiding conflicts and what makes their lives fluctuate have a low level of differentiation (Gibson & Donigian, 1993).

The theoretical and empirical focus on the consequences of adverse entrepreneurial effects requires new research to analyze the antecedents of entrepreneurs' adverse effects beyond business failure and explain how entrepreneurial activities might influence the development of negative affective states (Stroe et al., 2020). The present study seeks to identify this research gap in the literature by responding to calls for research on the negative affective antecedents of entrepreneurship. In this study, researchers are trying to answer the question: What is the relationship between the variables of entrepreneurial differentiation and fear of failure in promoting manufacturing strategies of Sporting Goods Manufacturers? According to previous studies, these variables have not been studied concerning each other. Although much research was done on entrepreneurship and manufacturing strategy, little was done on entrepreneurial differentiation and fear of failure. Less attention was also paid to entrepreneurs' behavioral and personality traits.

2. Theoretical background

According to [Bowen \(1978\)](#), differentiation refers to individuals' ability to differentiate themselves from their family emotionally and logically. Bowen points to the two biological forces of cohabitation and separation. The balance that a person establishes when alone and living together is called differentiation, and the result is a balance between autonomy and constant communication with individuals ([Bowen, 1978](#)). Entrepreneurs with high and low differentiation have some characteristics as follows: Entrepreneurs with low differentiation react emotionally to others' behavior, devoting most of their energy to expression, experience, and emotion, while entrepreneurs with high differentiation may experience intense emotion, but their feeling does not weaken, and their reaction is controlled. When personal experiences or relationships are very stressful, entrepreneurs with little differentiation become emotionally distant from others, while entrepreneurs with little differentiation do not become emotionally detached from others. Such entrepreneurs have a strong identity. Entrepreneurs with little differentiation get confused when communicating with others. Entrepreneurs with little differentiation get confused when communicating with others, while entrepreneurs with high differentiation can maintain their self-definition. Undifferentiated entrepreneurs are emotionally dependent on others and can hardly think and act independently, but highly differentiated entrepreneurs are their leaders, have their own opinions and emotions, and do not challenge others' expectations ([Skowron & Friedlander, 1998](#); [Tuason & Friedlander, 2000](#)).

The history of the entrepreneurship concept dates back to two hundred years ago. Richard Cantillon first coined entrepreneurship. According to Joseph Schumpeter, entrepreneurship is a significant driver of economic development and the engine of development. The primary role of the entrepreneur is to realize new combinations or innovations, ensuring economic change. This famous Austrian economist considered the main characteristic of an entrepreneur to be "innovation". He defined an entrepreneur's work as "creative destruction" ([Deljoyshahir, 2009](#)). Criticizing, analyzing, and identifying entrepreneurship failure and success factors are necessary for industries' growth, creativity, and entrepreneurship. These critiques are constructive in preparing potential entrepreneurs with a higher probability of success, preventing an increase in apathy, absurdity, and negative beliefs, and contributing to the greater effectiveness of government support in this area. According to Ginsberg, given the importance and necessity of entrepreneurship, statistics on the failure of entrepreneurs show that only 20% of established businesses have been operating for more than three years. Previous studies have examined the terms "disappearance," "closure", "exit", and "failure". When a business is faced with failure, acquisition by another enterprise, or a merger with another enterprise, it is referred to as disappearance, and disappearance can even be the result of arbitrary closure by business owners ([Cardozo & Borchert, 2004](#)). Entrepreneurial fear of failure has been studied in two dimensions of internal and external factors, known as significant barriers to business development.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between entrepreneurial differentiation and fear of failure.

According to Bowen, emotional reactivity (ER), emotional cutoff (EC), fusion with others (FO), and I-position (IP) are the four components of differentiation. A person who is less differentiated or has emotional behavior is reactive and has realized their ability to experience and express emotion. It is difficult for these people to respond to others' feelings calmly. When there is much communication between people, less differentiated entrepreneurs may react with EC. These people differentiate themselves from others through their emotions.

On the other hand, entrepreneurs with high differentiation do not feel the need for EC. Entrepreneurs who are emotionally detached find friendships profoundly threatening and often tend to isolate themselves from others and their emotions. These people deny the importance of the family and show an unnatural view of autonomy (Skowron & Dendy, 2004). According to Bowen's theory, fusion with others is a fundamental problem in one's life, and the way out of this problem is differentiation. It has been observed that entrepreneurs with low differentiation are very involved or fused in their relationships with others (Johnson, 2005). Such entrepreneurs have an exceptional view of controlling emotions and their behavior and separating them from each other. When beliefs and emotions are not isolated, fusion occurs.

Highly differentiated entrepreneurs are well aware of their thoughts and feel self-confident. People who differentiate between their intellect and their emotions when problems arise can defend their rights and not get involved in their emotions. On the other hand, the fusion of thoughts and feelings causes a person to show their false self instead of presenting their true beliefs, i.e., the person pays more attention to the requests of others by losing her identity. Taking I-position is another component of differentiation. Differentiation occurs when a person can take IP. IP refers to an individual's behavior when under pressure from others. Entrepreneurs with low emotional differentiation are less likely to think, act, feel independent, and depend on others. Highly differentiated entrepreneurs take their IP in dealing with others and can pay attention to their thoughts and feelings in addition to meeting others' expectations (Skowron & Dendy, 2004).

In the late 1960s, after Skinner described the manufacturing strategy as a missing link, many definitions of manufacturing strategy were made. Skinner (1969) considers manufacturing strategies to be the effective use of manufacturing strengths resulting from an enterprise's strategic decision-making in the long run to achieve its business goals (Skinner, 1969). Waters (2006) defines a manufacturing strategy as follows: The manufacturing strategy includes all decisions and activities related to an organization's production, resources, long-term goals, policies, plans, and culture (Waters, 2006). Nang Leung (2002) considers manufacturing strategy as structural and infrastructural decisions of manufacturing industries to control long-term competitiveness (Leung, 2002). These definitions show several goals called competitive advantage and some measures to achieve these goals (Pouya, 2010). In general, manufacturing strategy research can be divided into two categories: content-related research and process-related research. Content-related research addresses competitive priorities, including cost, quality, capability and delivery dependency, flexibility, and innovation. Process-related research deals with the process of developing and implementing a manufacturing strategy. In their studies, Liang and Rogers (1997) emphasized the distinction between content and process.

Fahey and Christensen (1986) also distinguished between process and content. "Content focuses on the specifics of what is being decided. On the other hand, the process addresses how to make such decisions in an organizational context. Despite the obvious interaction between the two dimensions in organizational life, such a distinction is useful."

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between entrepreneurial differentiation and promoting manufacturing strategies of Sporting Goods Manufacturers.

Entrepreneurial fear of failure has been studied in two dimensions of internal and external factors, known as significant barriers to business development. Financial security, finance, and the venture's ability to execute are three components of external entrepreneurial fear of failure. A major anti-motivation factor for entrepreneurs is the financial fear of failure, and the feeling of such fear in entrepreneurs indicates a high-risk business environment for entrepreneurial activities (Audet, 2004). Financing is the most challenging part for entrepreneurs who are starting a business. It should be noted that traditional ventures fund a small percentage of the industries launched each year around the world, and about 9% are funded from private sources. Financing is usually difficult, complicated, and time-consuming (Bagheri, 2013). One of the most significant and often scary tasks an entrepreneur faces is estimating the demand for products and services. Indeed, entrepreneurs can experience success when they can adequately assess their market once entering the industry.

One of the concerns and fears of entrepreneurs in starting a business is identifying customers' specific needs and wants in the target market and how to meet their needs and wants (Dehghan & Peymanfar, 2021; Westerlund & Leminen, 2012). The internal barriers to entrepreneurial fear of failure are the four components of self-esteem, the potential for ideation, opportunity cost analysis capability, and personal abilities. In general, and social esteem in particular, self-esteem is affected by the quality of close relationships with others (Norouzi Seyed Hossini et al., 2022; Van Hiel & Brebels, 2011). Based on the studies, it can be said that the potential for ideation is defined in four issues: (1) believing in the potential of the entrepreneurial idea presented, (2) the belief that the idea presented is based on an opportunity with value creation, (3) believing that the idea taken from this opportunity has a good market, and (4) choosing an idea that is not a significant problem to implement. The combination of these four areas in the potential for ideation can cause entrepreneurship fear of failure. The opportunity cost analysis capability among entrepreneurs refers to the fact that an entrepreneur when implementing their idea, worries that "I will be away from my family when I start. To implement that idea, I have to devote time to it while spending it with my family. Whether the idea I consider is worth the cost of implementing it." Accordingly, an entrepreneur must have the ability to analyze cost and opportunity properly. Otherwise, this makes people afraid of initiating an entrepreneurial activity (Cacciotti et al., 2016). In describing personal ability, based on social psychology and cognitive theories, several perceptions have been presented about some ideas and attitudes in establishing a new business, which confirms the effect of perspective on the intention to start an entrepreneurial business. The more people have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurial initiatives, the more they undoubtedly recognize entrepreneurship as a possible activity. Therefore, it is more likely to have more sustainable entrepreneurial intentions (Drnovsek & Erikson, 2005; Nazari et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between entrepreneurial fear of failure and promoting manufacturing strategies of Sporting Goods Manufacturers. A summary of the relevant research literature is described in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Research literature.

| Authors | Subject | Key variables | Findings |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|
| Soomro and Shah (2022) | Is procrastination a friend or foe? Building the relationship between fear of failure and entrepreneurs' well-being | Entrepreneurship, economic development, well-being, procrastination, fear of failure | It is revealed that the fear of failure has a significant positive influence on procrastination. Furthermore, procrastination negatively affects subjective well-being. Finally, procrastination has a negative mediating role in the relationship between fear of failure and subjective well-being. |
| Hashemi et al. (2022) | Causal modeling of failure fears for international entrepreneurs in the tourism industry: a hybrid Delphi-DEMATEL based approach | International entrepreneurship, fear of failure | As pointed out by the results, "fear of the future" is the most influential group of factors that may lead to other fears. This fear seems essential in international entrepreneurial tourism because of future ambiguity. |
| Stroe et al. (2020) | The dualistic regulatory effect of passion on the relationship between fear of failure and negative affect: Insights from facial expression analysis | Harmonious and obsessive passion, Fear of failure Facial expression analysis, entrepreneurship | The results confirm that dispositional fear of failure may lead to higher adverse effects in failure-relevant situations depending on the dualistic regulatory effect of passion—harmonious passion dampens the influence of fear of failure on negative affect (Studies 1 and 2). In contrast, obsessive passion magnifies this effect in Study 1 but dampens it in Study 2, thus showing mixed evidence. |
| Anwarul Haq et al. (2014) | Entrepreneurial activity in China and Pakistan: GEM data evidence | Entrepreneurial activity, Fear of failure, Other entrepreneurs' knowledge, Perception of capabilities, Perception of opportunities | Chinese are not significantly impacted by their fear of failure to participate in entrepreneurship. Gender is also not a significant predictor of entrepreneurial activity in China. In Pakistan, opportunity perception does not significantly predict whether to be involved in entrepreneurial activity, while other factors do. Gender is a significant predictor variable of entrepreneurial activity in Pakistan. |
| Martins et al. (2018) | Self-confidence and fear of failure among university students and their relationship with entrepreneurial orientation: Evidence from Colombia | Entrepreneurship education, Entrepreneurial orientation, Self-confidence, Fear of failure | As pointed out by the results, self-confidence and fear of failure are determinants of the EO of university students. Self-confidence positively affects the three dimensions of EO, whereas fear of failure negatively affects EO. |
| Dutta and Sobel (2021) | Entrepreneurship, Fear of Failure, and Economic Policy | Entrepreneurship, fear of failure, economic policy, economic Freedom, business climate | The previous literature found that self-reported 'fear of failure' had a significant negative influence on individuals' choice to become entrepreneurs. We hypothesize this effect is decreased in economies with more additional, alternative entrepreneurial opportunities to pursue if a failure occurs. We also test and confirm that fear of failure lessens the entrepreneurial process when higher economic freedom levels. There are more additional chances for failed entrepreneurs to pursue. |

| Authors | Subject | Key variables | Findings |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|
| Cacciotti et al. (2016) | A reconceptualization of fear of failure in entrepreneurship | Fear of failure, Entrepreneurship, Socially-situated cognition | This paper aims to delineate the nature of fear of failure within the entrepreneurial setting. We frame this construct regarding socially situated cognition by adopting an approach to capture a combination of understanding, affect, and action related to the challenging, uncertain, and risk-laden entrepreneurship experience. |
| Biswas (2016) | Total factor productivity, development, and entrepreneurship in emerging economies | Entrepreneurship, economic growth, emerging economies, entrepreneurship social acceptance, fear of failure factor | This study finds that perceived opportunities, peers' knowledge involved in startups, and media attention to startups, all indicators of entrepreneurship social acceptance, are statistically significant determinants of growth measured by per capita GDP and unemployment reduction. This effect is persistent even after controlling for time effects, despite the liquidity crunch and credit squeeze occurring during the financial crisis starting in 2008. The fear of failure factor did not significantly influence growth, confirming that entrepreneurs in emerging economy environments are mainly prepared to pursue their goals doggedly, even in the face of fewer than 50:50 odds of succeeding. |
| Games et al. (2020) | Earthquakes, fear of failure, and well-being: An insight from Minangkabau entrepreneurship | Earthquakes, Fear of failure, Entrepreneurs' well-being, entrepreneurship, Organizational resilience | The results showed that the post-earthquake impact was positively and significantly related to fear of failure. In contrast, the relationships between fear of failure, financial performance, and the well-being of SMEs were also established. Moreover, the context of Minangkabau as an entirely Muslim society generated arguments regarding religiosity and organizational resilience. These factors were discovered to have influenced entrepreneurship towards making a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in disaster entrepreneurship studies. |
| Morgan and Sisak (2016) | Aspiring to succeed: A model of entrepreneurship and fear of failure | Entrepreneurship, Fear of failure, Loss aversion, Aspiration levels | We reveal that when an individual's threshold for success is satisfactorily high, the fear of failure stimulates extra ventures. When the success threshold is equal to the foregone outside option, alternatively, the fear of failure is always demotivating. Finally, irrespective of the success threshold, fear of failure is negatively associated with entry into entrepreneurship. |
| Kollmann et al. (2017) | Fear of failure as a mediator of the relationship between obstacles and nascent entrepreneurial activity—An experimental approach | Fear of failure, Nascent entrepreneurship, Achievement motivation, Obstacles | We show that the perception of obstacles activates fear of failure, which, in turn, negatively influences opportunity evaluation and exploitation. The mediating effect of fear of failure generalizes across different samples and obstacles (resource-oriented, market-oriented, and social-capital-oriented obstacles). It contributes to entrepreneurship research and practice by explaining individuals' decisions to withdraw from an entrepreneurial endeavor. |

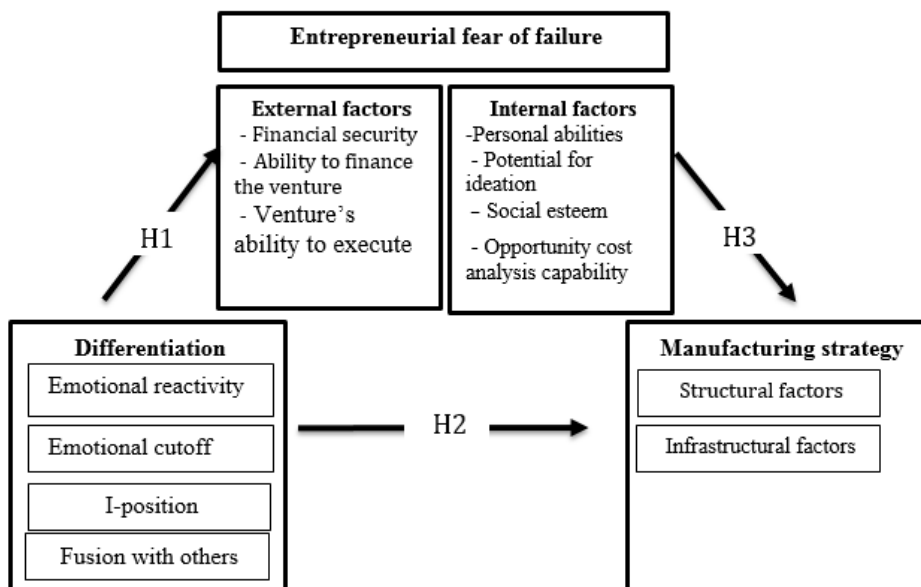


Figure 1. A researcher-made theoretical framework.

In this study, the independent variable is entrepreneurial differentiation, and in structural equation modeling (SEM), it is known as the primary exogenous variable. In SEM, the mediating variable is known as the intermediate endogenous variable, and in this study, it is the internal and external factors of entrepreneurial fear of failure. In SEM, the dependent variable is known as the final endogenous variable, and in the present study, it is the structural and infrastructural decisions of the manufacturing strategy.

3. Methodology

Regarding purpose, this study is applied research and correlational type. According to the statistics, 995 companies manufacture sports goods. Based on Morgan's Table, the sample size was determined to be 277 firms. The study questionnaires included the differentiation questionnaire developed by (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). It consists of four components and forty-three items; the fear of failure questionnaire adapted from Cacciotti et al. (2016) composed of thirty-two items; and a researcher-made manufacturing strategy questionnaire with thirty-four items. This questionnaire has two dimensions of structural and infrastructural decisions, the validity of which has been confirmed by relevant industry experts and professors. The Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were used to determine whether the distribution of collected data was normalized or non-normalized. According to the conceptual model, the SEM was used to analyze inferential statistics.

3.1. Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics showed that 51% of respondents were aged 31-40, 39% were aged 41-50, and 10% were under 30. Regarding gender, 81 (29%) of the sample were women, and 196 (71%) were men. The frequency of entrepreneurs' education level is as follows: 82 (30%) of entrepreneurs have a diploma and under high school diploma degrees, 57 (21%) have an associate degree, 106 (38%) have a bachelor's degree, and 32 (12%) have a master degree and higher. The distribution of sample members based on entrepreneurs' experience is as follows: 82 (29%) of entrepreneurs have ten or fewer years of experience, 102 (38%) have 11 to 20 years of experience, and 93 (33%) have more than 20 years of experience. Table 2 shows the results of the descriptive analysis, including central tendency and dispersion indices.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of the “differentiation” as an independent variable.

| Variable | Components | Mean | Median | Exponent | SD | Minimum | Maximum |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|--------|----------|--------|---------|---------|
| Differentiation | Emotional reactivity | 3.584 | 4 | 4 | 1.3747 | 1 | 5 |
| | Emotional cutoff | 2.327 | 2 | 2 | 1.1187 | 1 | 4 |
| | I-position | 2.347 | 2 | 2 | 1.2618 | 1 | 5 |
| | Fusion with others | 3.682 | 4 | 4 | 1.0229 | 2 | 5 |
| | Differentiation Total | 2.985 | 3 | 3 | 1.1945 | 1.25 | 4.75 |
| Fear of failure | Personal abilities | 3.412 | 4 | 4 | 1.2850 | 1 | 5 |
| | Potential for creativity | 2.456 | 2 | 2 | 1.1575 | 1 | 5 |
| | Social esteem | 3.626 | 4 | 4 | 1.2416 | 2 | 5 |
| | Opportunity cost analysis capability | 3.643 | 4 | 2 | 1.1657 | 2 | 5 |
| | Internal fear of failure factors | 3.284 | 3.5 | 3 | 1.5843 | 1.5 | 5 |
| | Financial security | 3.644 | 4 | 4 | 1.2843 | 2 | 5 |
| | Ability to finance the venture | 3.693 | 4 | 4 | 1.3080 | 1 | 5 |
| | Venture's ability to execute | 3.315 | 4 | 4 | 1.4440 | 1 | 5 |
| Manufacturing strategy | External fear of failure factors | 3.551 | 4 | 4 | 1.0454 | 1.33 | 5 |
| | Structural factors | 3.427 | 4 | 3 | 0.717 | 1 | 5 |
| | Infrastructural factors | 3.608 | 4 | 4 | 1.398 | 2 | 5 |

The relationship between research variables (differentiation, fear of failure, and manufacturing strategy) is interpreted by calculating their correlation coefficients. This coefficient is between -1 and +1. The closer this correlation coefficient is to 1, the more seriously the trend of co-directional or opposite variables is examined. After determining

the significance level and the direction of the relationship through testing, it was revealed that there was a significant relationship between differentiation, fear of failure, and manufacturing strategy ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, there is an important negative relationship between IP and the potential for creativity and fear of failure experience. As they increase, entrepreneurs' fear of failure decreases. Alternatively, there is a significant positive relationship between ER, EC, and FO, concern over personal ability, social self-esteem, inability to analyze opportunity cost, concern over financial security, concern over the ability to finance, and concern over the venture's capacity fear of failure. As these components increase, entrepreneurs' fear of failure intensifies. Figure 2 shows the relationships between differentiation, fear of failure, and manufacturing strategy in the main directions of the model.

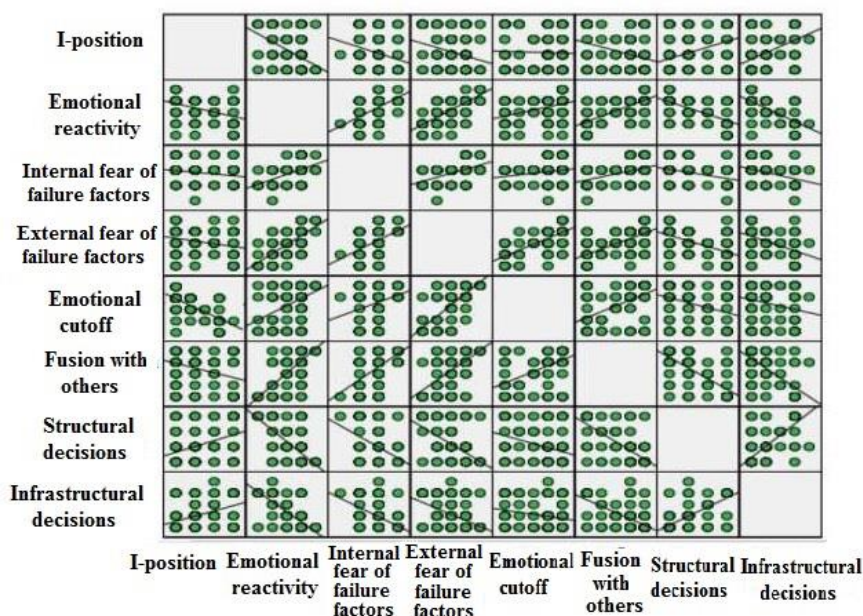


Figure 2. Scatter diagram between variables.

The scatter diagram shows a linear and ascending relationship between differentiation, fear of failure, and manufacturing strategy. Entrepreneurial fear of failure decreases by increasing IP and the potential for ideation. Entrepreneurs' fear of failure is also exacerbated by increasing ER, EC, and FO, concern over personal ability, social esteem, inability to opportunity cost analysis, concern over financial security, concern over the ability to finance, and concern over the venture's capacity. Notably, there is a negative relationship between entrepreneurs' internal and external fear of failure factors and two components of manufacturing strategy: structural and infrastructural decisions. Increasing these components makes entrepreneurs more afraid of failure and missing opportunities. As these components reduce, entrepreneurs make better and more optimal structural and infrastructural decisions.

In this study, the relationships between differentiation, fear of failure, and manufacturing strategy were significantly confirmed through correlation tests. Then, using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and path analysis, we examine the effect sizes of variables and model fit and determine the influence of independent and mediation variables on the dependent variable, i.e., manufacturing strategy. The factor loading coefficients and significance level of independent, dependent, and mediation variables in the measurement model are shown in the following Figures:

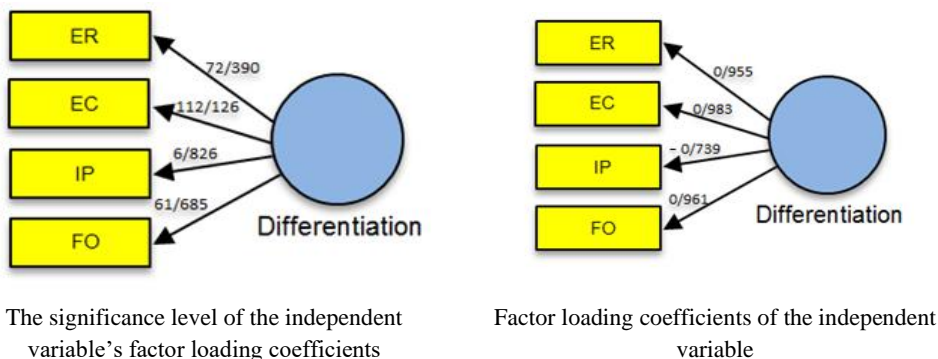


Figure 3. The measurement model of independent variables.

According to the measurement model, the factor loading coefficients related to the independent variable construct, differentiation, in each of its observed items, have a factor loading greater than 0.4, indicating the acceptability of the variable's construct. In the construct measurement model, the significant coefficients are higher than 1.96, which suggests the significance of the differentiation factor loadings.

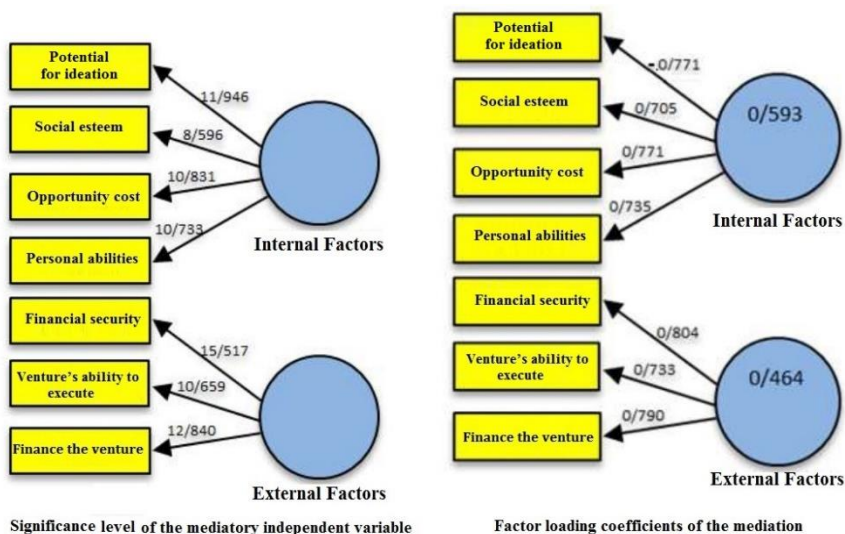


Figure 4. The mediation measurement model.

As shown in Figure 4, in CFA, the factor loadings of the mediation construct, i.e., fear of failure, are higher than the standard value (0.4). Their significance level is higher than the standard value (1.96), indicating the acceptable significance of factor loadings and that the research model has a good fit.

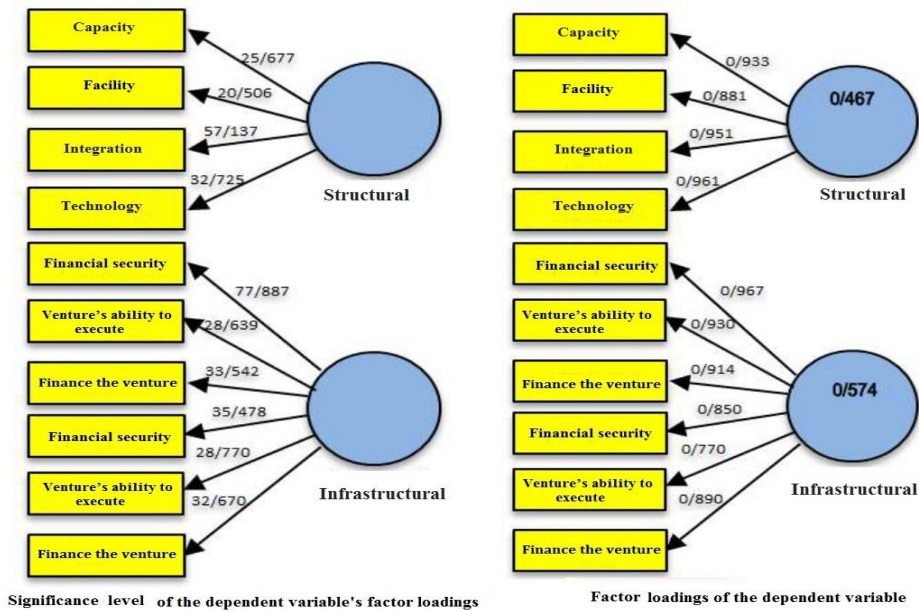


Figure 5. The dependent variable measurement model.

According to Figure 5, all factor loading values in the dependent variable, manufacturing strategy, are higher than the standard value, i.e., 0.4. It implies that the measurement model of the dependent variable, manufacturing strategy, has a good fit. The significance coefficients of this model are confirmed because they are higher than the standard value, i.e., 1.96. The dependent variable model, manufacturing strategy, also has a good fit. Then, we will examine the structural model and path analysis to examine the coefficients of determination and path coefficients. Based on Fig.6, the regression effect coefficients of the relationship between the research variables are investigated in the path analysis model.

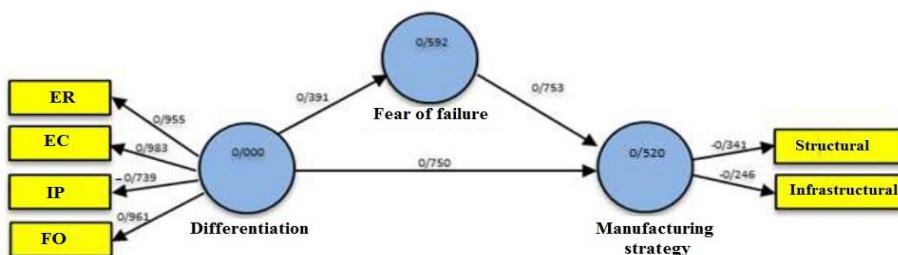


Figure 6. Path analysis of the conceptual model.

The regression coefficients of the main paths of the conceptual model are higher than the standard value, i.e., 0.4, which indicates that the variables are affected by each other. In this path analysis, the infrastructural decisions of the manufacturing strategy show a coefficient lower than 0.3, which is not statistically acceptable. The significant figures model is used to determine the significance of regression coefficients. If the significant figures are lower than the standard value (1.96), the model path will not be confirmed, and the hypothesis of this path will be rejected. Figure 7 shows the results of the significant figures model of research variables.

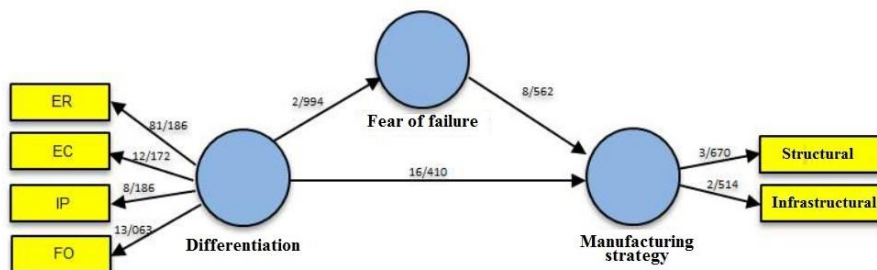


Figure 7. Research model with significance coefficients (t-value).

As shown in Figure 7, the significance of the path regression coefficient of the manufacturing strategy variables is confirmed because it is greater than the criterion value (1.96), indicating that the model variables are affected by each other. Then, through the variance accounted for (VAF) test, the variables' direct and indirect effects are examined. According to Fig.7, the internal and external factors affect entrepreneurs' fear of failure and explain the promotion of manufacturing strategy by 59.2% ($R^2 = 0.592$). On the other hand, differentiation can also explain the manufacturing strategy by 52% ($R^2 = 0.520$). For determining the indirect effect size through the mediation, fear of failure, the VAF statistic is used, which takes a value between 0 and 1. The proximity of this effect size to the number 1 indicates the strength of the influence of the mediation variable. In the same way, the indirect effect size on the total effect is also calculated. The VAF value is calculated by Equation (1):

$$(1) \quad VAF = \frac{a \times b}{(a \times b) + c}$$

The assumptions of this formula are:

- **a**: Path coefficient between the independent variable (differentiation) and mediation (fear of failure)
- **b**: Path coefficient between mediation (fear of failure) and dependent variable (manufacturing strategy)
- **c**: Path coefficient between the independent variable (differentiation) and dependent variable (manufacturing strategy)

The indirect effect of differentiation (mediation variable is fear of failure)

$$VAF = \frac{0.391 \times 0.753}{(0.391 \times 0.753) + 0.750} = 0.604$$

Findings confirm that the fear of failure factors play a favorable mediating role ($VAF > 0.5$) in the relationship between differentiation and manufacturing strategy. In other words, the indirect effect size of the differentiation and manufacturing strategy is higher than its direct path.

6. Discussion and conclusion

It is necessary for entrepreneurs' successful control over different situations, to reinforce their differentiation to make better decisions in promoting manufacturing strategies. Also, the more remarkable ability of entrepreneurs to gain "I" positions concerning others, along with emotional reactivity, indicates a high level of successful control and ensures the promotion of manufacturing strategies. Differentiation helps entrepreneurs find their way without waiting for guidance and direction from others. Thus, highly differentiated entrepreneurs have social skills, strengthen their competencies through practice, and successfully promote manufacturing strategies. They also have positive interactions with their peers and show acceptable behavioral responses. Entrepreneurs who know the social rules and have a sound and robust relationship with their colleagues and competitors are likelier to promote manufacturing strategies. This study also confirmed a significant relationship between entrepreneurial fear of failure and promoting manufacturing strategies. Cacciotti et al. (2016) also confirmed it and stated that the internal and external factors affecting the fear of failure could be examined. Therefore, entrepreneurs select and implement different strategies. According to Mohammadi Eliassy and Notash (2011), the reasons for most entrepreneurs' failure are the same and predictable factors that need to be identified to prevent loss. Identifying the SMEs' success factors will help entrepreneurs promote their manufacturing strategies (Mohammadi Eliassy & Notash, 2011). It is crucial to consider the structural and infrastructural factors of the manufacturing strategy. In the face of fear of failure, entrepreneurs adopt different strategies that can be examined in two areas of structural and infrastructural decisions. There is also a negative relationship between entrepreneurial fear of failure and the promotion of manufacturing strategies.

The first hypothesis was a significant relationship between entrepreneurs' differentiation and fear of failure. According to the findings of this study, it was found that differentiation affected entrepreneurial fear of failure. Accordingly, differentiation negatively affected entrepreneurs' fear of failure. The differentiation had a mitigating effect on entrepreneurs' fear of failure. It is worth noting that the entrepreneurial fear of failure is a function of personal inabilities, lack of potential for ideation, lack of social esteem, and inability to analyze opportunity cost. Differentiation involves highly differentiated entrepreneurs who are risk-takers and highly inclined to take exciting action. These entrepreneurs are more inclined to succeed because it is enjoyable for them to succeed because of its difficulty. It reduces their fear of failure level and increases their desire for success.

The second hypothesis examined the relationship between entrepreneurial differentiation and promoting manufacturing strategies. Findings showed a significant relationship between entrepreneurs' differentiation and promoting manufacturing strategies of Sporting Goods Manufacturers. In other words, the greater the entrepreneurial differentiation, the more it can play a significant role in promoting manufacturing strategies. To illustrate this finding, we argue that highly differentiated entrepreneurs have well-defined behaviors, take a specific path, maintain control in sensitive situations, and make rational decisions. On the other hand, undifferentiated entrepreneurs do not have well-defined behaviors. They often face problems emotionally and are anxious when communicating with others. Highly differentiated entrepreneurs have strong egos that can handle situations well, act on existing realities, and control emotion efficiently. These entrepreneurs have well-defined goals, deal with their thoughts and beliefs independently, and efficiently respond to emotions through reasoning and logic. Highly differentiated entrepreneurs generally have high overall performance, mental health, and a sense of responsibility and autonomy, affecting individual and interpersonal relationships. A sense of responsibility in individual relationships leads to the importance of values, progress, and making the right decisions.

On the other hand, a sense of responsibility in interpersonal relationships creates security and trust and ultimately facilitates interpersonal relationships. These entrepreneurs are not automatically subject to emotions. It means that even in interpersonal and social situations with high excitement levels, they ponder the problem, act on argument-based estimation, and make sound decisions, not just react to events. Differentiation in their thinking and behavior clarifies how much they can or may not enter when interacting. This feature prevents many problems and even facilitates the promotion of manufacturing strategies.

The third hypothesis implied that internal factors causing an entrepreneur's fear of failure affect the manufacturing strategies of Sporting Goods Manufacturers. Therefore, according to the results, this hypothesis was confirmed. This finding is also consistent with [Cacciotti et al. \(2016\)](#). Entrepreneurs with higher personal disabilities, lack of potential for ideation, social esteem, and inability to analyze opportunity costs express a higher fear of failure. According to [Cacciotti et al. \(2016\)](#), the fear of failure internally factors is caused by an entrepreneur's internal cognitive evaluations. The ability to control external factors affects entrepreneurial fear of failure. Fear of financial failure is the main anti-motivational factor in business and entrepreneurial activities. [Kianpour \(2013\)](#) considers entrepreneurs' worries about losing capital and their need to maintain personal assets and family support as one of their anti-motivational and critical factors. The most important reasons for such crises are seen in traditional management structures. Entrepreneurs' creativity has been eroded by establishing favorable business and economic conditions and complying with laws ([Kianpour, 2013](#)). [Cacciotti et al. \(2016\)](#) also believe that an entrepreneur's ability to control external factors can affect the fear of failure ([Cacciotti et al., 2016](#)). According to the findings, the research suggestions are:

- The study revealed that high differentiation was helpful for entrepreneurs, and on the other hand, low differentiation is undesirable for entrepreneurial fear of failure. Accordingly, improving differentiation among entrepreneurs, especially

in SMEs, makes more rational decisions. Capable SME entrepreneurs have the opportunity to make accurate and correct decisions in the face of risks at work by improving their self-confidence. In other words, by improving differentiation, they do not assume that the existing risks are too significant and impossible. With a realistic view, they examine the situation and make decisions accordingly. Thus, strengthening the level of differentiation for entrepreneurs leads to risk-taking with an objective analysis of the current situation.

- We found that the internal factors of entrepreneurs' fear of failure are considerable in the amount of fear they express. SME entrepreneurs should pay more attention to their capabilities and knowledge. They need to be aware that disbelief in their inner strengths increases their fear of failure. As a result, they do not show excellent behavioral responses and miss opportunities.
- Entrepreneurs need to be aware of their inability to understand the potential for ideation, the concern over personal ability, inadequate social esteem, and the inability to analyze opportunity costs. Specifically, studies show that the inability to analyze opportunity cost leads to inappropriate behavioral responses, meaning that SME entrepreneurs cannot make the right decisions about opportunities ahead. Therefore, it is recommended that entrepreneurs implement their findings in such situations in consultation with SME experts or managers.

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رابطه بین تمایز کار آفرینی و ترویج استراتژی‌های تولید تولیدکنندگان کالاهای ورزشی - نقش واسطه‌ای ترس از شکست

محمدرضا فتحی^{۱*}، محسن ترابی^۲، مرتضی کریمی^۳

^۱ دانشیار، گروه مدیریت و حسابداری، پردیس فارابی، دانشگاه تهران، ایران.

^۲ استادیار، گروه مدیریت و حسابداری، دانشگاه هرمزگان، هرمزگان، ایران.

^۳ مؤسسه آموزش عالی سهروردی، قزوین، ایران.

کلیدواژه

استراتژی‌های ساخت
بنگاه‌های خرد و متوسط
تصمیم‌گیری
توسعه اقتصادی
خطرپذیری

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: امروزه با توسعه شرکت‌های کوچک و متوسط، نقش تصمیم‌گیری کارآفرینان جایگاه ویژه‌ای در ارتقای استراتژی تولید دارد. این مطالعه به بررسی رابطه بین تمایز کارآفرینی و ترس از شکست در ارتقای استراتژی‌های تولید شرکت‌های کوچک و متوسط در تولیدکنندگان کالاهای ورزشی پرداخت.

روش: این پژوهش از نظر هدف کاربردی و از نظر روش‌شناسی از نوع همبستگی است. جامعه پژوهش را تولیدکنندگان لوازم ورزشی تشکیل می‌دهند. طبق آمار ۹۹۵ شرکت وجود دارد. حجم نمونه بر اساس جدول مورگان ۲۷۷ شرکت بود. در این مطالعه از پرسشنامه‌های تمایز ایجاد شده توسط اسکورون و فریدلندر (۱۹۹۸)، پرسشنامه ترس از شکست اقتباس شده از کاپیوتی و همکاران (۲۰۱۶) و نیز از یک پرسشنامه محقق ساخته برای استراتژی تولید، استفاده شد. روایی پرسشنامه محقق ساخته توسط کارشناسان و اساتید صنعت مربوطه تایید شد. برای تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها از مدل‌سازی معادلات ساختاری و نرم افزار SmartPLS استفاده شد.

یافته‌ها: نتایج نشان داد که عوامل درونی و بیرونی مؤثر بر ترس کارآفرینان از شکست می‌تواند استراتژی تولید را تا ۵۹.۲ درصد ارتقا دهد ($R^2 = 0.592$). از سوی دیگر، تمایز کارآفرینی نیز می‌تواند بر ارتقای صنعت تولید تا ۵۲ درصد تأثیر گذارد ($R^2 = 0.520$).

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: اگرچه تحقیقات زیادی در زمینه کارآفرینی و استراتژی تولید انجام شده است، اما تحقیقات کمی در مورد تمایز کارآفرینان و ترس از شکست انجام شده است. کارآفرینان می‌توانند از ذینفعان اولیه این تحقیق باشند. مدیران شرکت‌ها و سازمان‌های تحقیقاتی نیز می‌توانند از یافته‌های تحقیقاتی برای برنامه‌ریزی صنعت تولید و ابتکارات کارآفرینی و مدیریت استراتژی و کارآفرینی استفاده نمایند.

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The Future Study of Sports Tourism in Iran: Using Scenario Wizard and COPRAS

Samaneh Haghghat¹, Ali Saberi² , Ghodratalah Bagheri², Gholamreza Khaksari³

¹ PhD student in Sports Management, Hamedan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Hamedan, Iran.

² Assistant Professor of Sports Management, Farabi Campus, University of Tehran, Iran.

³ Assistant Professor of Sports Management, Hamedan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Hamedan, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The present study was conducted to do futuristic research on sports tourism in Iran using Scenario Wizard and COPRAS.

Methodology: After examining the topic and reviewing the research literature, interviews were done with twelve sports professors and sports tourism experts. Finally, the saturation views method was used as a criterion for finalizing the sampling process. Among the findings, 15 critical factors were identified as the most important ones affecting sports tourism in Iran. Using MICMAC software, the identified factors were structurally analyzed. The factors found to be more influential were sorted out and ranked directly and indirectly.

Findings: The research findings showed that according to the country's sports experts, the most critical factors affecting the development of Iran's tourism are as follows. Natural factors and characteristics of the destination, planning, and formulation of strategy, infrastructural factors, advertising and information, welfare services, marketing, transportation, the level of people's participation, technology and advanced knowledge, security and trust, international relations, budget, factors Social, economic factors, local issues. Then, the most important among them was presented as the main drivers of sports tourism. Based on the results, the two factors of local issues and international relations were found to have the most significant impact on sports tourism in Iran. Concerning these two key factors, four scenarios of resilient development, the darkness of sports tourism, fragile development, and ideal development were proposed for the future of sports tourism in Iran. Finally, by performing the COPRAS technique, the delicate development scenario was selected as the most likely scenario for sports tourism in Iran.

Originality: Since there is no sufficient future study of sports tourism in Iran, this article tries to develop the various aspects of sports tourism in this country.

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1. Introduction

One of the factors playing a crucial role in the economic development of cities and villages and one that, through foresight and scenario design, can lead to the economic growth and improvement of people's quality of life is the development of the tourism industry. Nowadays, tourism is just becoming one of the fundamental pillars of world commerce and economy, and many experts and executives consider it the central pillar of development. It is one of the critical aspects of countries' economies and has received a special place in the economic development of some countries in the past decades. It is so essential that some economists refer to it as invisible export. In fact, in the current world of economic competition, tourism is an industry that, like all other industries, needs special equipment and facilities and demands studies and research for its proper growth and development. In many countries of the world, tourism has become one of the most complex businesses. As a multi-faceted socioeconomic activity, it has various functions and fruitful outcomes, including the creation of jobs, income generation, earning foreign currencies, and strengthening the infrastructures of social and commercial activities (Taghvaei & Hosseinekhah, 2018).

According to a report by the World Tourism Organization, tourism is one of the world's most important and flourishing sectors, with an international income that has increased by more than 87% during the twenty-first century's first decade. The same report attests that tourism earnings have risen from 570 billion dollars in 2000 to more than 1000 billion dollars in 2010. Similarly, in 2014, the World Tourism Organization announced the growth of this industry to be 4.6 percent, while according to a more recent report, the total export income from foreign tourism in 2013 was 1.4 trillion dollars worldwide. The total revenue earned from foreign tourism in various tourist destinations worldwide through providing such services as accommodation, food and beverages, entertainment, shopping, other ones, and buying goods has increased to an estimated 1159 billion dollars since 2013 (Rahbar & Gudarzi, 2017).

Today, one type of tourism that has become very popular and welcomed by people from countries worldwide is sports tourism. Holding various kinds of international, national, and regional sports competitions and games strongly incentivizes people to attend or watch sports events. Among major sports events is the World Cup of Football, held every four years, Olympic and Paralympic events, and many other international games and races. Sports tourism is a trip that one takes for non-commercial reasons. It may happen formally or informally and is mainly done for having fun, watching sports, applauding the athletes, and participating in sports events. It takes place based on a short-term or defined plan inside or outside one's country. According to their capacities and potential, some countries have started creating sports centers focusing on one or more specific sports fields. Considering its geographical location and special weather conditions, any country can be the right site for producing and providing one or more sports services, followed by travel and tourism services (Moharramzadeh, 2019).

Tourism is a new industry in Iran, and many people are unaware of its importance in tourism. According to the available data, technologically-advanced countries earn more than 20 billion dollars annually from sports tourism. Despite its unique tourism, natural

attractions, and historical monuments of several thousand years, Iran has not benefited much from this area (Moharramzadeh, 2019). Through holding significant sports competitions, Iran has managed to decrease its unemployment rate by 19% annually. In agreement with the above discussion, statistics also indicate that most countries in the world have proper grounds for implementing sports tourism and have, thus, begun to invest many financial resources in the economy of sports tourism. Iran is among the first ten countries with the highest tourism diversity in the world (Safdel et al., 2014).

In scientific research on sports and tourism in Iran, not much has been done about tourism policies, especially the policy-making processes regarding sports tourism, which shows that the importance of this case has not been fully recognized and understood. Indeed, Iran needs detailed and long-term studies, research, and careful planning to succeed in attracting sports tourists and help boost its economy. Due to the diversity of its climatic conditions, Iran can host sports camps from European and Asian sports teams, but this will be only realized when the necessary infrastructures are provided for the development and advancement of this field. The importance of paying attention to tourism development in making macro-policies has been recognized to some extent, and measures have been taken. Indication of this concern is Iran's Twenty-year Vision Plan, in which the field of tourism, it is intended that the country reach an average of 20 million tourists by 2025 (ICCIMA, 2017). This is also the first document of strategic and futuristic thinking in Iran, paying particular attention to such significant areas of policy-making, based on which the country's development directions are designed and stratified in different sectors. This Vision Plan has aimed at dividing the regional work so that each province has assumed responsibilities according to its capabilities and all work toward realizing the country's desired future. In the meantime, Iran is faced with serious crises that make these plans and predictions undergo fundamental changes. According to results from future studies done in Iran, some of the most critical challenges in this country directly impact tourism. They are the water crisis, inefficient economic structures, unemployment, the social capital crisis, the rise of dust storms, social depression, bureaucratic corruption, and inflationary stagnation (ICCIMA, 2017).

In recent years, strategic planning has widely been applied in the sports organizations of our country Iran. Still, to improve future studies' performance, the necessity of strategic planning should also be considered in other areas. The futuristic study of sports tourism aims at studying the future of this industry and helps us make efficient decisions and long-term plans and realize how sports tourism can affect sports development. This study aims to find the strengths and weaknesses of the social, economic, technological, and political fields and to use the ideas from future research in the scenario-writing method to help expand and develop sports tourism. Therefore, in the present research, we intend to study the future of sports tourism in Iran using Scenario Wizard and COPRAS programs.

2. Theoretical background

In their research "identification and prioritization of factors affecting the attraction of international tourists: the case study of Isfahan city", (Soleimani & Leila and Zamani, 2017), have studied the case of tourism in the city of Isfahan as a significant site of tourism

attractions. Their study found that historical, cultural, and natural attractions have ranked the highest among the attractions, followed by security, rural tourism, and advertisement, which rank fourth to sixth among the factors affecting tourism in this city. Also, exchange rate, religion, and infrastructures hold the seventh to ninth places among the factors. At the same time, the facilities for issuing visas to Iran and medical tourism occupy the tenth and eleventh places, respectively. Their research project (Naeim Abadi et al., 2017) measured the satisfaction of sports tourists with the security of coastal areas as a case study of Chabahar port.

According to the results obtained and the field studies conducted, and because the Chabahar region is one of the border areas of the country, it is concluded that authorities shall consider the potential of this port in creating direct and indirect employment and increasing income for residents, strengthening solidarity between ethnic and religious groups, and enhancing the national unity. These are stimuli for producing local goods and services, reducing poverty, and improving the social and cultural life of the local community. Despite all such potential, it was found that the level of security for tourists at this site has often been underestimated. Amini et al. (2017) studied “barriers to Iran's sports tourism” and concluded that administrative barriers with 0.549 weight, infrastructure with 0.519 weight, and information and communication with 0.496 weight are the three high-ranking barriers. According to their study, the existence of the mentioned barriers is one of the primary challenges retarding the success of the tourism industry. Still, it can be effectively overcome through development measures to solve Iran's tourism problems (Amini et al., 2017). Khajehpour and Doosti (2017) have reported efficient management as one of the key factors helping the development of sports tourism in Ramsar Green Roof Complex (Khajehpour & Doosti, 2017). Another study (Rahbar & Gudarzi, 2017) investigated sports tourism attractions in Isfahan province. It concluded that natural-sports attractions have first place, non-sport attractions (historical and cultural heritage) have the second place, and sports attractions hold the third most important place for developing sports tourism in this province and attracting tourists. Therefore, they suggested managers should propose more efficient plans for tourism development in Isfahan province, especially regarding nature and sports attractions. In their research, (Rahimi et al., 2016) also worked on “presenting a model for sports tourism development in Iran's international sports events”. Based on their results, building, and equipping special centers and sites for sports tourism focused on volleyball in different climatic regions of the country. Also, devising laws and regulations for encouraging and supporting domestic and foreign investments in Volleyball tourism seem necessary measures to be undertaken.

In “Identification and Analysis the Process of Co-creation Experience in Sports Tourism of Iran”, thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data, and the results revealed six organizing themes such as market research, creation of dynamic organization, working team development, conversation, and interaction, as well as creation of shared commitment and participation. The quantitative analysis revealed that the most effective and impressionable components are the creation of shared responsibility and a dynamic organization, respectively. Market research is the minimum significant component, while the creation of active organization is the maximum (Rastgoo

et al., 2022). Fallah Kazemi and Atghia (2021) in “What Are the Sports Tourism Factors and Potentials in Guilan Province” have argued that aquatic sport in coastal cities could lead to the prosperity of sports tourism in Guilan Province and turn this province into a hub of water sports tourism. To achieve this goal, sports, welfare, transportation infrastructure, and proper advertisements are necessary (Fallah Kazemi & Atghia, 2021). In “The Role of Social Marketing in Sports Tourism Development in Tehran Province”, Data were analyzed by SPSS21 and LISREL 8 software. The results showed seven components of social marketing. They include technology, government laws and policies, environment, economic status, safety and security in sports venues, use of ads and communication channels, all but the last item have a positive and significant effect on the development of sports tourism (Moradi Doliskani & Atghia, 2021).

In a research project entitled “Business models for active tourism experiences of outdoor sports events”, (Perić et al., 2019) concluded that the basis of having a sound, systematic analysis is that one thing, such as the futuristic studies of sports tourism, should be analyzed in association with other factors, especially environmental ones. Such factors are either intentional or unintentional on the one hand and either internal or external on the other. Yeh et al. (2018) conducted research entitled “The full economic value of sports tourism in belt and road development: an environmental perspective”. Their research applies the methods of environmental studies to the case of sports events. They conclude that according to significant policy and management principles, it is evident that we should pay more attention to the natural environmental surroundings and reduce the risk of ecological and sports event problems (Yeh et al., 2018). Likewise, Ratten and Ferreira (2017) conducted a study entitled “Entrepreneurship, innovation and sport policy: Implications for future research”. They believe that the success of sports tourism, inspired by business models, comes from its principal capital being a combination of public and private sector property (Ratten & Ferreira, 2017). Their research entitled “Sports tourism: a comparative study of the people from Brazil and Hong Kong” (Uvinha et al., 2018) found that sports tourism capacities differ in different countries. For example, the capacities of sports tourism in Brazil are much higher than those of Hong Kong.

One reason for this difference is the high popularity of sports in Brazil compared to Hong Kong. In "Future directions of research towards sports demand", (Macdonald, 2017) maintains that the amount of research in the field of sports behavior, the contribution of knowledge, economic methodologies, and general specialties have all undergone important progress in the current century. At the same time, through the interference of the sports economy, market, advocacy, and strategies related to this economy, the future can bring challenges for human life. That is why we need interdisciplinary research to increase our understanding of designers of games and competitions and the factors affecting their presence and outlooks. Papanikos (2015) examined the “Economic Impacts of Marathon as a Sports Tourism Event”. The main finding of this research was that, seen as sports tourism, the Marathon depends, to a large extent, on the interests of investors. Therefore, first, we should see the economic benefits and costs of the Athens’ Marathon, and second, realize that cooperation regarding the Athens Marathon can raise investment in this city. In the few studies conducted about sports tourism in Iran, few aspects have been investigated, and no study that may consider the whole of it, including all the factors affecting sports

tourism in our country, has not yet been carried out. Few studies have been done to specifically investigate the futuristic study of sports tourism in Iran and abroad, either. One of the novelties of the present study is that it identifies the factors affecting sports tourism in Iran and presents scenarios for its future course of progress (Papanikos, 2015).

3. Methodology

The primary research methodology applied here is a mixed one (qualitative-quantitative). In terms of purpose, this research is a practical one, and in terms of research type, it is a case study. The research's statistical community (subjects) included sports management professors and faculty members, sports tourism specialists, and sports management Ph.D. graduates that were selected through snowball- the inferential method. The data and necessary information were collected by studying previous research and conducting an open interview which consisted of 8 general questions. Interviews were conducted with twelve sports tourism professors and experts, and the views saturation method was used to finalize the samples. In the quantitative phase of the study, the matrix questionnaire and questionnaire for soliciting the ideas of the experts used in the interviews were employed. Using MicMac software (mutual effects analysis approach) to identify the key factors affecting sports tourism, data analysis and determining the critical factors of sports tourism were done. After that, and based on results from analyses, a scenario was developed using the Scenario Wizard software in four consecutive steps, which will be discussed in more detail later. In the end, the COPRAS technique was also used to select the best and most probable scenario.

4. Results

4.1. Extraction of the final propellants

In the first phase of the study, key factors affecting the development of sports tourism were identified and extracted by reviewing the research literature and conducting interviews. After identifying and sorting out 31 key factors, in the second phase, these factors were presented in the form of a questionnaire to the experts, who were asked to decide the importance of each factor by scoring them from 1 to 5. The results from 25 questionnaires filled out by experts were analyzed using SPSS software and through a two-sentence test, and finally, 15 critical factors were selected based on the experts' opinions. The list of final factors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Screened final factors.

| Factors affecting sports tourism in Iran |
|---|
| Natural elements and characteristics of the sites |
| welfare services |
| technology and efficient knowledge |
| social factors |
| Planning and strategy |
| Marketing |
| Security and Trust |

| Factors affecting sports tourism in Iran |
|--|
| Economic factors |
| Infrastructure |
| Transportation |
| International Relations |
| Local issues |
| Advertising and information |
| The level of people's participation |
| the budget |

After determining the list of influential factors, to identify and rank them, in the third step of the work, the variables were entered into the mutual effects analysis matrix. After developing a standard questionnaire, the analysis of mutual effects was left to the experts. Then, the average sum of the collected responses was entered into the Micmac software. In the fourth stage (analyzing the outputs of the Micmac software), after the questionnaire data was given to the software, the impacts of the factors affecting the future of sports tourism in Iran were directly and indirectly calculated. This software also calculates the degree of compatibility of the matrix in two modes of influencing and being influenced. The higher the percentages, the higher the compatibility of the factors and the rationality of the relationship among the factors. The software classifies and ranks the factors directly and indirectly under the two headings of influencing and being influenced, shown in two Figures 1 and 2. As can be seen from Figures 1, according to ranking based on the direct and indirect influence of the variables, for example, the critical factor of “international relations” has a similar place in the order based on direct and indirect impacts. But "marketing" ranks first indirect effects ranking and second in indirect effects ranking. This comparison is also valid for other variables.

| Direct Influence | | Indirect Influence | |
|------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| MDL matrix | | MLL matrix | |
| Rank | Variable | Rank | Variable |
| 1 | 9. Marketing | 3 | Technology and efficient knowledge |
| 2 | 6. Local Issues | 9 | Marketing |
| 3 | 7. International Relations | 7 | International Relations |
| 4 | 3. Technology and efficient knowledge | 6 | Local Issues |
| 5 | 4. Security and Trust | 4 | Security and Trust |
| 6 | 12. Natural elements and characteristics of the sites | 12 | Natural elements and characteristics of the sites |
| 7 | 5. Budget | 5 | Budget |
| 8 | 10. Transportation | 10 | Transportation |
| 9 | 13. Planning & Strategy | 13 | Planning & Strategy |
| 10 | 14. Infrastructure Factors | 15 | Advertising and information |
| 11 | 15. Advertising and information | 11 | The level of people's participation |
| 12 | 11. The level of people's participation | 14 | Infrastructure Factors |
| 13 | 2. Economic factors | 2 | Economic factors |
| 14 | 1. Social Factors | 1 | Social Factors |
| 15 | 8. Welfare Services | 8 | Welfare Services |

Figure 1. Classification of variables based on their direct and indirect influence.

| Direct Influence | | Indirect Influence | |
|------------------|---|---|--|
| MDL matrix | | MLL matrix | |
| Rank | Variable | Variable | |
| 1 | 15. Advertising and information | 15. Advertising and information | |
| 2 | 4. Security and Trust | 4. Security and Trust | |
| 3 | 10. Transportation | 12. Natural elements and characteristics of the sites | |
| 4 | 12. Natural elements and characteristics of the sites | 13. Planning & Strategy | |
| 5 | 13. Planning & Strategy | 10. Transportation | |
| 6 | 1. Social Factors | 7. International Relations | |
| 7 | 2. Economic factors | 2. Economic factors | |
| 8 | 5. Budget | 5. Budget | |
| 9 | 7. International Relations | 1. Social Factors | |
| 10 | 6. Local Issues | 14. Infrastructure Factors | |
| 11 | 9. Marketing | 11. The level of people's participation | |
| 12 | 14. Infrastructure Factors | 8. Welfare Services | |
| 13 | 8. Welfare Services | 9. Marketing | |
| 14 | 11. The level of people's participation | 6. Local Issues | |
| 15 | 3. Technology and efficient knowledge | 3. Technology and efficient knowledge | |

Figure 2. Classification of variables based on their direct and indirect influence.

The software calculates the relationships of the factors from the questionnaire completed in a matrix and finally considers a total numerical score for each factor. Then, based on this score, it ranks them based on their direct and indirect influences. The factors that get the most outstanding scores will have to change effectiveness accordingly. Upon analyzing the variables based on their efficacy by the Micmac software, as output, they are placed in the form of a Figure 3.

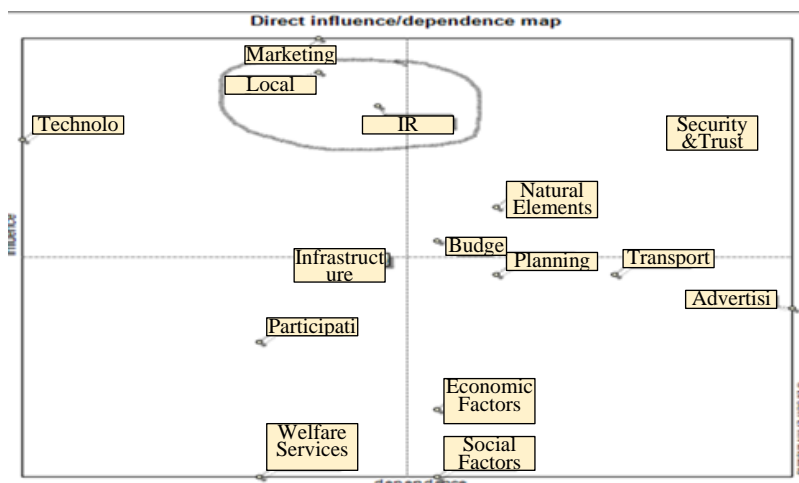


Figure 3. The status of crucial factors in the output of Micmac software.

Interpreting the variables as presented in the Micmac chart, it was determined that the two variables of local issues and international relations are among the most influential variables affecting the future of sports tourism in Iran. Considering these two key factors, four scenarios of resilient development, the darkness of sports tourism, fragile development, and ideal development were proposed for the future of sports tourism in Iran, as presented in Figure 4.

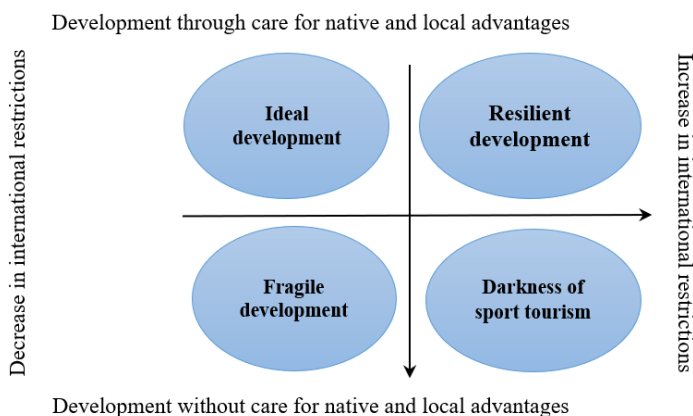


Figure 4. Plausible scenarios of sports tourism in Iran.

4.2. Formulating plausible scenarios of sports tourism in Iran

According to the impact index, the two drivers of local issues and international relations have been used to form the research scenarios. The root definitions tool was used to develop research scenarios. The root definition tool consists of the following components: customers or the addressee, agents or actors, transformation process or service delivery, owners of the problem, worldviews or interests of stakeholders, and the system or problem environment. Four scenarios for the future of sports tourism are formed from the combination of the two modes of each driver. The driver of indigenous issues provides the two opposite modes of development, emphasizing native advantages versus development without regard to indigenous benefits. International relations drivers consist of the two states increasing international restrictions against decreasing global limits. Each scenario explains different situations and conditions. The status of other driving variables should also be described to describe each scenario. The Figure 4 shows the four scenarios and their titles. The names of the scenarios are described according to the contents and events that occur in each scenario. Based on the two main drivers described above, four scenarios of *resilient development*, *the darkness of sports tourism*, *fragile development*, and *ideal development* were proposed for the future of sports tourism in Iran.

4.2.1. Resilient development scenario

This scenario is gained by combining the two factors of paying attention to local advantages and increased international restrictions and sanctions. Customers of the tourism system and people using sports tourism services are mainly domestic and regional tourists because of international restrictions. The agents of this system are national authorities like those related to the Ministry of Sports and Cultural Heritage Organization and provincial managers and officials. The process of providing services takes place on a domestic or regional scale. There is a consensus over the stance of this scenario based on which the development of tourism and sports tourism, in addition to economic advantages and job creation, has cultural and medical advantages such as increasing soft power and creating vitality among a vast portion of the society including especially young people and women. The owners of this tourism system, the Ministry of Sports and Youth and the Cultural Heritage Organization, are the two significant possessors of the scenario. The system's environment is in Iran, especially the tourism business environment.

4.2.2. The darkness of the sports tourism scenario

Due to external pressures and restrictions and insufficient internal determination for tourism development. This scenario depicts the worst situation for sports tourism. Customers of the tourism system are domestic people who use tourism services. Due to the inefficient performance of agents and government sectors involved in the system and because of extensive external pressures, the nature of actors and agents is different in different regions. In this scenario, the government actors have been passive. Because of pressures from institutional groups, the possibility of the presence and attendance of non-state actors is also very poor. The process of providing sports and tourism services is very ineffective and does not follow international standards as it is sparsely done throughout the country. In this scenario, the tendency for the development of tourism and sports tourism, holding sports events and conferences, and the presence of tourists and foreign teams pose many threats to the country in the field of culture. Government actors own the system, but these actors have acted passively, and powerful traditional groups significantly influence them. Communication with other countries is reduced considerably and limited in the system's environment, tourism, and sports environment inside the country.

4.2.3. Fragile development scenario

Although many international restrictions are removed, and it is now possible to transfer technology and knowledge and provide for receiving capital and investment in this scenario, the negligence of authorities and their lack of concern for resources other than oil, which is an easy source of income, the development of the tourism and sports will be fragile and unstable. The customers and consumers of the tourism system are tourists, domestic and, to some extent, foreign agents who need and use tourism and sports tourism services. Activists of the system are government officials and decision-makers in sports and tourism, but they act passively and inattentively. Providing services has improved because of the relative betterment of the situation upon removing international

restrictions. Still, sports services and the quality of holding sports events and festivals are far from adhering to global standards. Overcoming international limits is necessary for developing sports tourism, but it is not sufficient. The worldview of this scenario is such that from the point of view of policy-makers and decision-makers, especially government ones, the tourism sector and its various subdivisions, such as sports tourism, are not worth the effort, and this is due to the lack of consensus, among the multiple decision-making sectors and comprehensive cultural sensitivities in the country. For them, oil resources and related accessories are an easy and hassle-free source of income. The system's owner is the Ministry of Sports and other organizations in charge of the tourism sector, which act hesitantly and are influenced by the decisions of different ministries and departments, including the government's economic team and cultural institutions. The environment affected by this system includes sports, domestic, and somewhat regional tourism.

4.2.4. Ideal development scenario

This scenario depicts the best and most ideal situation for tourism development. In this scenario, removing international restrictions and planning based on local capacities are combined to create a suitable ground for developing sports tourism in Iran. System customers are tourists, athletes, sports professionals, and sports managers at the domestic, regional, and global levels. System activists are government agents and authorities in sports, tourism, economy, and culture, and they work in complete coordination with each other toward developing sports tourism. Providing sports and tourism services follows global standards for domestic and foreign tourists and athletes. The worldview of this scenario is that complete development is not possible by just focusing on the oil resources. Instead of focusing on one advantage for creating resilience and stability over time, multiple points and benefits should be emphasized. The system's owners are the managers of sports organizations, and those of the culture, art and tourism sectors also control the system. Other departments, including economic executives, support their decisions. The environment of the system is that of international sports and tourism businesses.

4.3. Choosing the most probable scenario

The COPRAS technique is used in this stage to choose the best and most probable scenario. COPRAS is used during decision-making and is employed when we want to prioritize or rank various options or alternatives. To do that, it uses the weight of the factors involved. At first, this technique was developed to determine the priority and effectiveness of options. This method is often used for evaluating the value of both the minimum and maximum criteria, in which case the effects of the minimum and total measures on assessing the results are considered separately.

Furthermore, this method is efficient and easy to use and does not require complicated mathematical operations or calculations. To that end, a questionnaire about the scenarios was provided to the experts, who were asked to express their opinions about each of the scenarios based on the three criteria of being compatible with current trends, being consistent with recent statistics and data, and being plausible and factual. Then the experts' opinions were gathered using the geometric mean method, and the results thus gained

were finally used for ranking the scenarios (Fathi et al., 2022). The steps to perform the COPRAS approach are given below;

- We are determining the weight of the criteria using one of the usual methods such as entropy, hierarchical process, Fuller, etc.

Table 2. The weight of each criterion using the Shannon entropy model.

| Scenarios | Weight of criteria |
|---|--------------------|
| Compatibility with current trends (A1) | 0.16 |
| Compatibility with current statistics and data (A2) | 0.24 |
| Probability based on facts (A3) | 0.11 |

- Formation of the decision-making matrix

Table 3. Decision-making matrix.

| Scenarios | A1 | A2 | A3 | Scenarios |
|--------------------------------|----|----|----|--------------------------------|
| Resilient development | 7 | 5 | 5 | Resilient development |
| Fragile development | 7 | 7 | 3 | Fragile development |
| Ideal development | 3 | 3 | 9 | Ideal development |
| The darkness of sports tourism | 4 | 1 | 7 | The darkness of sports tourism |

- Forming the weighted matrix, the values of each option are multiplied by their weight and divided by the sum of the values:

$$\frac{q_i}{\sum_{j=1}^n x_{ij}} * x_{ij} = d_{ij}$$

Table 4. Normalized values of the criteria.

| Scenarios | A1 | A2 | A3 | Scenarios |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|
| Resilient development | 0.013 | 0.025 | 0.016 | Resilient development |
| Fragile development | 0.012 | 0.031 | 0.009 | Fragile development |
| Ideal development | 0.009 | 0.024 | 0.048 | Ideal development |
| The darkness of sports tourism | 0.010 | 0.007 | 0.032 | The darkness of sports tourism |

- Then the positive and negative criteria are specified and separated. By a positive or consistent criterion, we mean a criterion whose desirability increases when its value increases.
- After determining the positive and negative criteria, their final values should also be determined. The algebraic sum of positive and negative values is calculated separately through the following relationships:

$$\sum_{zi=-} dij = s_j^-$$

$$\sum_{zi=+} dij = s_j^+$$

Table 5. Values related to the positive and negative differences of the criteria.

| Scenarios | A1 | A2 | A3 | +Sj | -Sj |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Resilient development | 0.013 | 0.025 | 0.016 | 0.099 | 0.016 |
| Fragile development | 0.012 | 0.031 | 0.009 | 0.113 | 0.009 |
| Ideal development | 0.009 | 0.024 | 0.048 | 0.069 | 0.048 |
| The darkness of sports tourism | 0.010 | 0.007 | 0.032 | 0.077 | 0.032 |

- In the final stage, the following relationship is used to calculate the absolute value of each Q option.

$$Sj^+ + \frac{s_{min}^- \sum_j^n = 1 S_j^- x}{s_j^- \sum_j^n = 1 \frac{s_{min}^-}{s_j^-}} = Q_i$$

Table 6. Ranking of scenarios facing sports tourism in Iran.

| Scenarios | Nj | Qj | -Sj | +Sj | Rank |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Resilient development | 77.57 | 0.128 | 0.016 | 0.099 | 2 |
| Fragile development | 100 | 0.165 | 0.009 | 0.113 | 1 |
| Ideal development | 47.87 | 0.079 | 0.048 | 0.069 | 4 |
| The darkness of sports tourism | 55.75 | 0.092 | 0.032 | 0.077 | 3 |

According to the results thus obtained, the scenarios of fragile development, resilient development, and darkness of sports tourism hold the first to third positions, respectively. Based on the analyzed criteria, the most likely scenario is fragile development. According to experts, the delicate development scenario is the worst, and the ideal development scenario is the best for realization in Iran. Still, the fragile development scenario is more likely to be realized.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The current research project sought to identify the most plausible and probable scenarios for the future development of sports tourism in Iran. To that end, the key factors of the case were extracted by reviewing the related research literature and conducting interviews with experts. The findings of the study indicated that according to sports experts, the most important factors affecting the development of tourism in Iran could be summed up as follows: Natural factors and characteristics of the sites, planning and devising strategies, infrastructural factors, advertising and information, welfare services, marketing, transportation, people's participation, advanced technology and efficient knowledge, security and trust, international relations, budget, social factors, economic factors, and local issues. Results from our study are in accord with those of (Soleimani & Leila and Zamani, 2017), (Naeim Abadi et al., 2017), (Khajehpour & Doosti, 2017), (Rahbar & Gudarzi, 2017), (Esfahani et al., 2009), (Karizki et al., 2016), (Rostamkalai, 2015), (Hataminejad et al., 2017), (Yeh et al., 2018), (Ratten & Ferreira, 2017), (Uvinha et al., 2018), (Papanikos, 2015), (Perić et al., 2019).

After identifying the factors affecting the future of sports tourism in Iran, the identified factors were structurally analyzed using Micmac software. The effective factors were

identified and ranked directly and indirectly, and then the most important ones were presented as the main drivers of tourism in Iran. Based on the results, the two factors of “local issues” and “international relations” were found to pose the greatest impact on sports tourism in Iran. Based on these two key factors, the four scenarios of “resilient development”, “darkness of sports tourism”, “fragile development,” and “ideal development” were proposed for the future of sports tourism in Iran. The “resilient development” scenario is presented following a combination of local issues, advantages, and increased international restrictions. “Darkness of sports tourism”, as the second scenario, is a metaphor for referring to the dire situation that may come about due to the pressure of external restrictions and the lack of efficient management principles within the country. Under the third scenario, “fragile development”, although the use and import of technology and attraction of capital can occur to some extent, such challenges as poor management can endanger the development of tourism and sports. The fourth scenario, which we termed “ideal development”, introduces the best situation, and comes about out of removing international restrictions and using domestic and local capacities.

In the meantime, by assuming the limits of human knowledge, future studies intend to draw the future situation and help the managers, among others, in tourism and sports tourism. Based on the results from this research, suggestions have been proposed which include the following: Planning for raising general awareness about sports tourism in the society; changing people's attitudes and outlooks about tourism and sports tourists; establishing an organization for exclusively carrying out activities related to sports tourism; expanding and promoting and advertising the native capacities and attractions of Iran to other countries in order to attract sports tourists; doing wide advertisement through media, social networks, and other new platforms in order to promote local capacities of Iran and introduce them to foreign sports; producing and broadcasting programs and shows for raising global awareness about more indigenous and local sports and related festivals; holding international sports events in Iran for attracting sports tourists; preparing and launching publications, newspapers, magazines, catalogs and specialized brochures for sports tourism and introducing attractions and events related to sports tourism; establishing constructive international relations with other countries for enhancing cultural exchanges and introducing Iran's capabilities in attracting sports tourists and acquainting the tourists with Iran's native and local issues and attractions and finally getting plans and permissions for hosting sports competitions and games; establishing diplomatic relations abroad so as to change the negative attitudes towards Iran; training and employing native people in the sports tourism sector meaning to reduce conflicts between native people and sports tourists; specifying standards and frameworks for future studies meant to have a comprehensive view of this domain of socioeconomic activities (especially in the future studies about sports tourism); conducting more future studies in the field of sports and sports tourism in order to increase future studies records and using them for improving sports; and finally, cultivating team-working zest among sports experts in order for them to further cooperate in doing future studies.

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آینده پژوهی گردشگری ورزشی در ایران با استفاده از سناریو ویزارد و کوپراس

سمانه حقیقت^۱، علی صابری^{۲*} , قدرت‌الله باقری^۳، غلامرضا خاکساری^۳

^۱ دانشجوی دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، واحد همدان، همدان، ایران.

^۲ استادیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، پردیس فارابی، دانشگاه تهران، تهران، ایران.

^۳ استادیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، واحد همدان، همدان، ایران.

چکیده

هدف: پژوهش حاضر با هدف آینده‌پژوهی گردشگری ورزشی در ایران با استفاده از سناریوویزارد و COPRAS انجام شد.

روش: پس از بررسی موضوع و مرور پیشینه پژوهش‌ها، مصاحبه با دوازده نفر از اساتید و خبرگان گردشگری ورزشی انجام شد. از روش اشباع نظری به عنوان استاندارد برای پایان نمونه‌گیری استفاده شد. در میان یافته‌های بدست آمده ۱۵ عامل کلیدی به عنوان مهمترین عوامل مؤثر بر گردشگری ورزشی در ایران شناسایی شدند. با به‌کارگیری نرم‌افزار MICMAC عوامل یادشده تحلیل ساختاری شدند. عوامل اثرگذار و تأثیرپذیر به صورت مستقیم و غیرمستقیم شناسایی و رتبه‌بندی شدند و مهمترین آنها به عنوان پیشران‌های اصلی ارائه شدند.

یافته‌ها: یافته‌های تحقیق نشان داد از نظر خبرگان ورزش کشور، مهمترین عوامل مؤثر بر توسعه گردشگری ایران شامل موارد زیر هستند: عوامل طبیعی و ویژگی‌های مقصد، برنامه‌ریزی و تدوین استراتژی، عوامل زیرساختی، تبلیغات و اطلاع‌رسانی، خدمات رفاهی، بازاریابی، حمل و نقل، میزان مشارکت مردم، تکنولوژی و دانش سرآمد، امنیت و اعتماد، روابط بین‌الملل، بودجه، عوامل اجتماعی، عوامل اقتصادی، گویه‌های بومی. بر اساس نتایج دو عامل گویه‌های بومی و روابط بین‌الملل بیشترین تأثیر را بر گردشگری ورزشی در ایران دارند. براساس این دو عامل کلیدی چهار سناریو توسعه تاب‌آور، ظلمت گردشگری ورزشی، توسعه شکننده و توسعه ایده‌آل برای آینده گردشگری ورزشی در ایران ارائه شد. در نهایت با انجام تکنیک COPRAS سناریوی توسعه شکننده به عنوان محتمل‌ترین سناریوی گردشگری ورزشی در ایران انتخاب شد.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: از آنجایی که تحقیقات آینده‌پژوهی گردشگری ورزشی کافی در ایران وجود ندارد، این مقاله سعی دارد جنبه‌های مختلف گردشگری ورزشی در ایران را توسعه دهد.

کلیدواژه

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

Roghayeh Sarlab^{1*} , Mohammad Rasoul Khodadadi², Rasoul Asli³

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of sport management, Faculty of Sport Science, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran.

² Associate Professor, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran.

³ M.A in Sport Management, the Higher Educational Institute of Charkhe Niloufari Azarbaijan, Tabriz, Iran.

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.

Keywords

Branding
Intangible
Purchase Amount
Sporting Goods
Tangible

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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% (Kotler & 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):

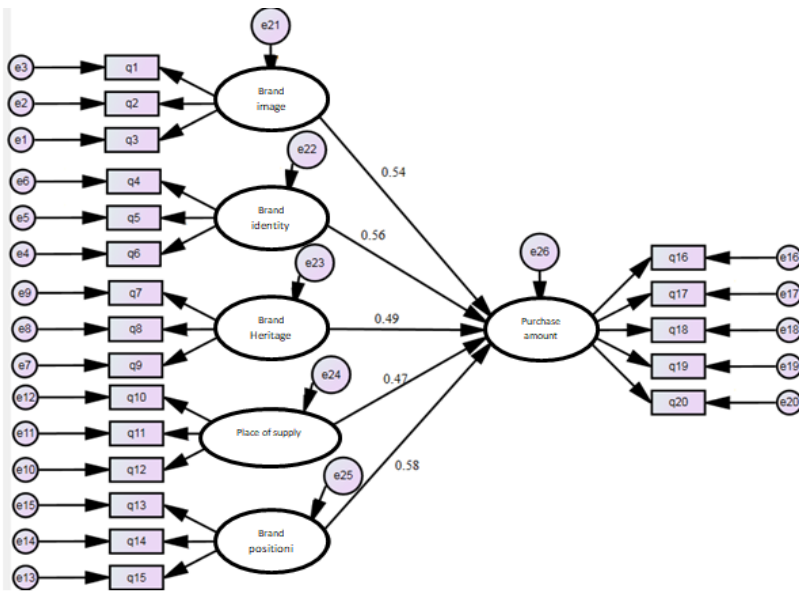


Figure 1. Test model (tangible brand dimension).

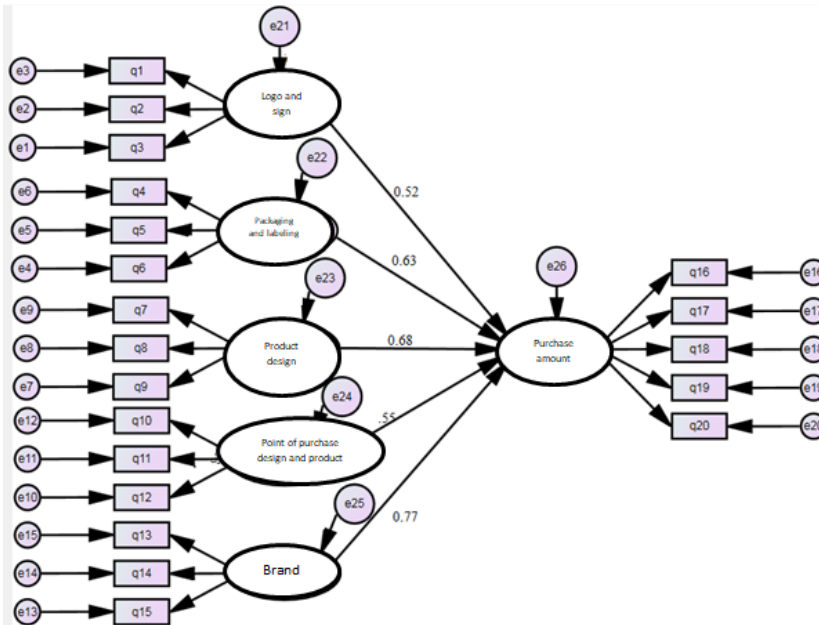


Figure 2. Test model (intangible brand dimension).

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 (χ^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 (χ^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

رقیه سرباب^{۱*}، محمدرسول خدادادی^۲، رسول اصلی^۳

^۱ استادیار، گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه ارومیه، ارومیه، ایران.

^۲ دانشیار، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه تبریز، تبریز، ایران.

^۳ کارشناسی ارشد مدیریت ورزشی، موسسه آموزش عالی چرخ نیلوفری آذربایجان، تبریز، ایران.

چکیده

هدف: عناصر مؤثر در برندسازی محصول برای ایجاد موقعیت رقابتی و پایدار در بازار مؤثر است. لذا، هدف اختصاصی تحقیق حاضر بررسی عوامل مؤثر 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 تأیید 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.

کلیدواژه

برندسازی
ملموس
ناملموس
کالاهای ورزشی
میزان خرید

نوع مقاله

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Sustainable Development Mountain Tourism in Iran

Mohsen Mokhtarian¹ , Abbas Khodayari^{2*} , Mehdi Kohandel²

¹ Ph.D Candidate of Sport Management, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran.

² Associate Professor of Sport Management, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Tourism is significant among countries and all over the world considered mountain tourism because of its advantages. Despite its rare nature and unique mountainous attractions, Iran has not been able to gain its share of this industry. This study aimed to explain the sustainable mountain tourism development model in Iran.

Methodology: This is an applicable and descriptive-analytical study. It used semi-organized interviews with 22 mountain tourism experts, and the study of library documents collected preliminary data. Then, a researcher-made questionnaire was designed and validated using experts' opinions, consultation with advisors, and the views of eight experts. The reliability of this questionnaire, which had 123 items, was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha=0.973$) and distributed among the samples, including 576 mountain tourists, guides and experts of mountain tourism, and village council officials of mountainous areas by simple random sampling. Various tests, such as King and Horrocks thematic analysis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis used to analyze the data.

Findings: The findings of the qualitative section include 100 descriptive codes, 29 interpretive codes, and three broad themes. The results of the quantitative team showed that the factors of sustainable development of mountain tourism are infrastructure in four sub-sectors, attractiveness in two sub-sectors including natural and artificial attractions, and sustainability factor in six sub-sectors. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual and the Normed Fit Index showed that the research model has a desirable and acceptable fit.

Originality: This article has determined the primary and practical factors, the relationship between these factors, and the explanation of the sustainable development model of mountain tourism in Iran. The purpose of doing it is to expand the existing knowledge for the usage of the stakeholders in mountain tourism.

Keywords

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1. Introduction

In many cases, the desire for travel and migration for early humans has led to access to more water and food resources, choosing better areas to live, more knowledge of nature, and finally, a change in his attitude and view of the world and life. Over the centuries, the exploration of tourism and travel has deepened and become more enjoyable as the planning, and use of past experiences accompanies this exploration. The positive and beneficial effects that travel and tourism have had on people's lives over time have led countries to attract more people to their tourism areas and destinations to benefit their citizens from its rich advantages. These efforts ranked the tourism industry third in the international export classification, after fuel and chemicals, and above the automobile and food industries. In many developing countries, however, the tourism industry ranks first in the export sector (UNWTO, 2020).¹

Sports tourism, one of the most popular industries, has also benefited from this significant growth. Sports tourism has been a new form of tourism in the last decade, as tourism and sports have become interdependent and complementary (Meşter et al., 2008). The interaction of sports tourism and economic development has been a topic of interest in many countries, and numerous studies have confirmed their close relationship (Lin & Lu, 2016). One of the most attractive destinations for most tourists is the mountains and related activities. Mountains are a natural and valuable wealth that the tourism industry often uses extensively (Paunović & Jovanović, 2017; Wearing & Neil, 2009). Mountains cover about 24% of the world's land surface, ranging over every continent, in 139 countries and all major types of ecosystems, from deserts and tropical forests to polar icecaps (Charters & Saxon, 2007; Denniston, 1995; Keller, 2014). Mountains are among the most important natural tourist attractions of contemporary tourism due to the characteristics of geographical space, climate diversity, and various landforms (Drumm & Moore, 2005; Vanhove, 2010). Ten percent of tourist destinations worldwide are developing their mountain tourist attractions, and there are more than 50 medium or large sites for mountain tourism in the Alps alone (Page & Ateljevic, 2009). Nazari (2021) argued that increasing the share of sport tourism in the leisure time of the people according to their interest in sport tourism is very important (Nazari, 2021). Development without considering the concept of "sustainability" cannot achieve the desired goals of countries in the long term and, perhaps in the medium term, will have adverse effects. Dastgerdi et al. (2022) argued that the development of sports tourism in section tourist welcoming is related to the development of the entire tourism industry and requires investment, planning, and organization. Marketing, providing necessary services, and creating distinct and exciting experiences for tourists and satisfying them are the key variables to success in the development of the industry. All these works require the cooperation and coordination of people and organizations in the sovereign, government, public and private sectors (Dastgerdi et al., 2022). Sustainability has become a significant issue in the future of tourism planning and development (Byrd, 2007; Paunović & Jovanović, 2017; Prideaux, 2009) and originated from the basic concepts of the three lines (economy,

¹ United Nation World Tourism Organization

society, and environment) that were influential on sustainable tourism in the 1980s (Aall, 2014; Krippendorf, 1988). Due to their importance in the global water cycle, mountains play a vital role in comprehensive and extensive stability (Prideaux, 2009). Regardless of geographical dimension, stability in mountainous areas is often associated with strong political dimensions, meaning strict political boundaries often ignore geographical, cultural, and biological boundaries (Godde et al., 2000). Also, because the primary resources in which the mountain tourism industry develops are state-owned and managed (Veal, 2002), achieving sustainable development requires a complex process to define the tasks and roles of each factor. With various related activities, mountain tourism has a particular position among sports tourists. Activities such as hillside climbing, hiking, mountaineering, rock climbing, big-wall climbing, canyoning, caving, Alpine or touring skiing, cycling, motorcycling and horse riding in the mountains, sport climbing, ice climbing, sky running competitions, and other sports that are done in this natural and enjoyable environment, is popular with tourists.

Mountainous areas are recognized as the second most popular tourist destination after beaches and islands, including 15 to 20% of annual international tourism. The development of mountain tourism is unique on a global scale and in time and space. For many areas, the development process is characterized by a period of identification or discovery, followed by the development of the target community/region, which ultimately leads to the creation of travel and tourism destinations (Richins et al., 2016). The World Economic Forum report 2019 shows that Iran is in the eighty-ninth place in attracting foreign tourists among the 140 countries surveyed, with an index score of 3.5 and four higher than in 2017, while Spain, France, and Germany are ranked first to third, respectively. For the fifth year in a row, this report declared Iran the best tourist destination in terms of travel expenses and considered it the cheapest (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019).

Due to its climatic diversity, Iran allows tourists to enjoy its rare nature in peaks higher than 4000 meters from sea level, entire valleys, and hiking and biking trails on mountain slopes in all seasons. Utilization of these natural resources, which is abundantly seen in Iran, requires proper planning and action to achieve sustainable quantitative and qualitative development. We will soon face the uncontrolled growth of tourism if we ignore the pillars of sustainable development, even with the prerequisites for development, such as the appropriate political, legal, security, and economic conditions. After a while, we will not only face a decrease in several tourism, but we will also cause irreparable damage to our valuable natural and national resources due to non-compliance with the principles of sustainable development. Despite the abundant natural and mountainous resources in Iran, it seems that the managers of the relevant organizations have not been able to achieve an excellent position for tourism in Iran, among other countries, with plans leading to sustainable development. Therefore, the current research aims to explain the model of sustainable development of mountain tourism in Iran.

2. Theoretical background

In reviewing the background of research, Colabi (2022) considers the categories of human capital education, culture, personal characteristics, networking and markets, investment

and financing, legislation and policies, and infrastructure are the most critical sustainable tourism ecosystem factors, respectively (Colabi, 2022). Mobasheri et al. (2022) introduced the most critical ecotourism development dimensions: management, infrastructure development, marketing and training, and human resource development and conducting marketing activities to increase market share (market penetration). Furthermore, they are diversification of the ecotourism product (diversification heterogeneous), improving the condition of access roads to tourism target villages, and increasing the resilience of destinations in the face of natural disasters are considered the essential strategies for the development of Iran's ecotourism (Mobasheri et al., 2022). Haghgi and Heidarzade (2021) evaluated the factors of achieving sustainable tourism in the cities of mountainous regions as the priority of urban services, basic needs, recreational attractions, the host community's culture, economy, natural ecosystem, cultural attractions, and sustainability (Haghgi & Heidarzade, 2021). Ghorbani et al. (2020) identified the obstacles and strategies of sustainable development through sports as weaknesses in the educational system, weakness in specialization, economic problems, low cohesion of organizations, governmentality, excessive involvement of politicians, and financial and moral corruption as obstacles and strengthening sports diplomacy. , the development of sports media, improvement of infrastructure, hosting of sports events, and sports development were listed as effective and critical strategies (Ghorbani et al., 2020).

Karimi et al. (2020) showed that adventure sports tourism has necessities and challenges, including socio-cultural, entrepreneurship-based employment, emotion management, communication management, and infrastructure as causal conditions factors. Barriers include administrative-managerial, facilities and equipment, personal, financial, and economic security, superstructures, and information as interveners factors. Platforms have rules and regulations, cultural and communication, academic research, and specialized human resources as background conditions. Strategies include risk management, education and culture building, place and event management, and quality and innovation management. In addition, the results considered effects including economic, social, and cultural (Karimi et al., 2020). Asadi et al. (2020) compared the tourism development model of Iran with Turkey and Malaysia. They concluded that the most effective and impressive factors of the total system are the compilation of the document on the national tourism development of Iran. Also, increasing capital security and investment in tourism, improving international relations, reviving, and promoting tourism infrastructure, domestic tourism development, restructuring the tourism organization, and turning it into a ministry (Asadi et al., 2020).

Incoming tourism development strategies also include: identifying the target market of international tourism; developing marketing and advertising programs in target countries; Increasing linkage with regional and international organizations; Facilitate the issuance of visas and residence permits to target countries; Providing banking services and currency exchange and issuing international bank cards; Investing in the field of international leisure tourism. Scott (2021) also believes that climate change is a significant challenge that increasingly affects investment, planning, operations, and tourism demand. His research findings show that the preservation and development of tourism depend on economic prosperity and socio-political stability. Predictably, climate change will reduce

future economic growth and political instability in many countries. The continuation of this delay will jeopardize the tourism destinations and livelihoods of millions of people dependent on tourism, as well as their cooperation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the ambitions of international development after 2030. He believes that in a sustainable tourism community, we should be aware that if climate change fails, there will be no sustainable tourism (Scott, 2021). Natural factors and characteristics of the destination, planning, and formulation of strategy, infrastructural factors, advertising and information, welfare services, marketing, transportation, the level of people's participation, technology and advanced knowledge, security and trust, international relations, budget, factors Social, economic factors, local issues (Haghighat et al., 2022).

Chakraborty (2020) believes that the Kamikochi Valley is one of Japan's essential mountainous regions and is under intense pressure from visitors from spring to autumn. The intensity of the visit leads to direct pressure on the landscape and wildlife, as well as indirect pressure on the continuous growth of the infrastructure and changes in the configuration of the earth's surface. He concludes that because mountain landscapes are highly dynamic and their characteristics of gradual evolution and flexibility are highly dependent on location, it remains a fundamental challenge to manage sustainable tourism with active understanding, attention, appreciation, and protection of biophysical mechanisms (Chakraborty, 2020). Latip et al. (2020) studied the effects of tourism activities on the environment of Mount Kinabalu. They identified noise and air pollution, tree damage, soil erosion, and waste accumulation as the most important factors of "environmental effects (Latip et al., 2020)."

Researchers have suggested that effective preventive measures should be taken, given that mountain, tourism is one of the tourist attractions and contributes to the region's economy. For this reason, planning, implementing, and strengthening new policies and regulations for tourism activities regarding this site's maintenance and protection will help minimize tourism's effects. Kuščer (2012) presented the model of mountain tourism development, technological conditions, socio-cultural conditions, natural conditions, and political and legal conditions as the main components of the destination conditions. The innovation factor in mountain tourism destinations also includes the components of stakeholder participation and socio-cultural sustainability, environmental sustainability (natural environment), and activity and dynamism. He also mentioned the development factor of mountain tourism destinations with the components of natural environment protection, tourist travel and expenses, visitor satisfaction, and socio-economic well-being (Kuščer, 2012).

In most cases, the statistical samples of the investigated researchers are students and faculty members of the universities and the researchers that have benefited from the opinions of the beneficiaries of mountain tourism, as samples were less observed. Available research in the field of sports tourism and mountain tourism has addressed various issues such as the mutual effects of innovation, environment, and development, the impact of climate change and mass tourism on mountain tourism, the importance of mountain areas in sustainable development, and other issues in this field. The search for researchers to find studies on the model of sustainable development of mountain tourism in Iran was not successful. Therefore, the current research aims to explain the model of

sustainable development of mountain tourism in Iran. The necessity of conducting this research is to provide the necessary information and knowledge to create favorable conditions and prepare software and hardware facilities for utilizing maximum and sustainable benefits from economic, cultural, social, and political advantages due to the presence of domestic and foreign tourists in the mountainous regions of Iran. The results of this study are expected to help remove the existing barriers to the presence of domestic and foreign tourists interested in mountain sports to achieve positive consequences for the target areas continuously and sustainably by hosting an intelligent presence of tourists.

3. Methodology

This is applied research in terms of purpose and nature. The survey research method is content analysis and descriptive-analytical. Collecting primary data in the field and using a semi-structured interview and library study was done, and then questionnaire distribution was used to collect data. The research method is mixed (qualitative and quantitative). The statistical population of this study was connoisseurs, managers, mountain guides, and experts in related organizations, including the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, Environmental Protection Organization, Mountaineering, and Sport Climbing Federation. Also, tourism experts of private organizations and companies serving mountain tourists and local officials such as village councils and governors in mountainous areas were considered alongside tourists exploiting Iran's mountainous regions. In the qualitative part of the research, 22 managers, experts, and guides related to mountain tourism participated in the interview through purposeful sampling and the snowball technique.

After the 17th interview, theoretical saturation was done, and subsequent interviews were continued to ensure that no new data was obtained from these interviews. After examining and carefully studying more than 36 documents and library sources and implementing the interviews in written text, their expressions were carefully reviewed. All the concepts that helped the researcher understand the participants' perspectives, experiences, and perceptions, "according to the research title," in the form of tables adjusted. After rechecking, it was given in the form of descriptive codes. Then, by clustering these codes, interpretation codes were obtained, and finally, by clustering interpretation codes, overarching themes or the main components and factors were obtained. Interviews were conducted using open questions that were the result of documentary studies. Materials acquired from library studies and interviews were used to prepare a preliminary questionnaire.

The final questionnaire, which had 123 items on a five-point Likert scale, was approved by eight experts, specialists, and professors of Alborz and Tehran universities regarding content validity. After preliminary distribution among 30 samples, its reliability was tested and confirmed by Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha=0.973$). In the standardization stage of the research tool, distributing the questionnaire by simple random sampling among 203 people from the samples, the necessary data for exploratory factor analysis was collected. After performing the relevant statistical tests, the final questionnaire was prepared for confirmatory factor analysis and the implementation of the final stage of the research. Then, through face-to-

face and virtual methods (federation channels, mountaineering clubs, and tourism institutions in social networks), 576 usable questionnaires were distributed and returned to the researcher. Data analysis in the qualitative part was performed using King and Horrocks's thematic analysis (2010). It includes three stages of descriptive coding, interpretive coding, and integration through overarching themes using Excel software, which was omitted from the report due to preventing the increase in the volume of the article. Quantitative data analysis was also done with the Keizer-Meir-Olkin sampling index, Bartlett's spheroid test, and exploratory factor analysis for infrastructure, attractiveness, and sustainability scales. F. Finally, the conceptual model was obtained by performing confirmatory factor analysis; SPSS and Amos Graphics software was also used.

4. Results

In the qualitative part of this study, 22 interviewees were present, among whom 50% had bachelor's degrees. Also, each Doctoral, Master's, and Diploma degree includes 13.64% and an Associate degree 9.09%. Their field of activity was the director of the organization or institute of mountaineering/mountain tourism with 31.82%, the mountain tourism guide with 59.09%, and the faculty member of the university with 9.09%, respectively.

In the quantitative section, the field of activity, 11.81% of the research samples were managers or experts in sports organizations, 17.88% of them managers or experts in tourism organizations, 28.30% of them athletes (mountaineering and related sports), 14.06% of Eco tourists, 19.27% mountain guides and 8.68% in other fields. The mean age of participants was 42.05 years with a standard deviation of 13.05 years, and their minimum and maximum ages were 18 and 77 years, respectively. The average mountaineering experience of the samples was 19.42 years, with a standard deviation of 12.53 years, a minimum of one, and a maximum of 61 years. About the annual activity rate, 48.61% of the research samples had more than seven mountaineering or ecotourism (more than one day) activities during a year, 18.06% of them 5 to 7 exercises, 22.57% in 2 to 4, and 10.77% Participated in one action during a year.

After carefully reviewing library documents and sources, conducting interviews, and implementing them into written text, its phrases read carefully. Then, all concepts that help the researcher understand the participant's views, experiences, and perceptions "following the research title" are organized in tables and, after review, given in the form of descriptive codes. Then, by clustering these codes, interpretive codes are obtained, and finally, by clustering interpretive codes, comprehensive themes (components and main factors) are received. After detailed studies and re-polling of experts, 100 descriptive codes, 29 interpretive codes, and three complete themes of sustainability, infrastructure and attractiveness were obtained [Table 1](#). These themes and the process of getting them used to prepare the preliminary questionnaire for the quantitative part of the research. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the significance level of the variables of sustainability, infrastructure, and attractiveness are 0.315, 0.105, and 0.517, respectively. Given that the significance level greater than or equal to 0.05 confirms the assumption of zero and standard, the data distribution was normal.

Table 1. Descriptive codes, Interpretive codes, and Comprehensive themes.

| Descriptive codes | Interpretive codes | Comprehensive themes |
|--|--|----------------------|
| Promote and advancement of small businesses | Reduction and eradicate of poverty | Sustainability |
| Entrepreneurship and empowerment of the local community | | |
| Reduction and ultimately eradicate poverty | Reduction and eradicate of hunger | |
| Selling local products to mountain tourists | | |
| Reduction and eradicate hunger | Ensuring health, wellness, and well-being | |
| Healthcare and reduction of child mortality | | |
| Improving health and reducing infectious and non-communicable diseases | | |
| Helping with health services and improving health, wellness, and well-being | Assurance of inclusive education quality | |
| Technical and vocational training related to tourism | | |
| Improving the quality of education for the local community | Gender equality | |
| Civic participation and leadership in relevant institutions for women and men | | |
| Gender equality between women and men | Safe water and wastewater management | |
| Public access to safe and cheap drinking water | | |
| Proper disposal of sewage in mountainous areas | | |
| Conservation of water-related mountain ecosystems | Access to cheap and sustainable energy | |
| Local community access to cheap and safe energy | | |
| Expand scientific research on clean energy | | |
| Development of technology and infrastructure for new and sustainable energy | Proper position and economic growth | |
| Creating appropriate jobs with a fair salary | | |
| Sustainable economic growth without degrading the mountain environment | Sustainable industrial centers, attention to innovation and creativity | |
| Creating quality processing industries | | |
| Increasing access to information and communication technology | | |
| Modernization of industries and their adaptation to the environment | Reducing inequality within and between countries | |
| Support for research and development, innovation, and creativity | | |
| Renovation and development of cities and villages in mountainous areas | Creating safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and villages | |
| Development of social justice and protection of the vulnerable | | |
| Encourage investors to participate in regional projects | | |
| Preservation and restoration of cultural and natural heritage | Patterns of responsible and sustainable production and consumption | |
| Reduction of damages and losses due to natural disasters and crises | | |
| Creating more intelligent and greener settlements | Climate change and its effects | |
| Promote a responsible production pattern in mountainous areas | | |
| Responsible consumption and reduction of food waste | Underwater living creatures | |
| Improving waste recycling methods in mountainous areas | | |
| Waste management and reduction of its release into the air, water, and soil | On land habitats | |
| Improve transportation and housing to reduce carbon footprint | | |
| Strengthen resilience and improve adaptation to natural disasters | Underwater living creatures | |
| Reduce pollution of rivers leading to water resources | | |
| Conservation of the mountain as the source of rivers leading to water resources | On land habitats | |
| Prevention of foothills pollution and protection of marine ecosystems | | |
| Preservation, restoration, and sustainable use of mountains, forests, and arid regions | On land habitats | |
| Reduce degradation of plant and animal species ecosystems | | |
| Combating the smuggling of protected plant and animal species | | |
| Reducing pollution due to garbage, waste, and human excrement | | |

| Descriptive codes | Interpretive codes | Comprehensive themes |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Interaction between cultures and religions in mountainous areas | pacifist society, access to justice, and accountable organizations | |
| Accountability and transparency of mountain-related organizations | | |
| Necessary partnerships to achieve the common goals of sustainable development | Participating in achieving these goals | |
| International supports for national plans to achieve common goals | | |
| Managers' awareness of the critical role of tourism in the economic prosperity | Economic infrastructure | |
| Stability of prices and inflation control | | |
| Public / private investment and support | | |
| Increasing the share of employment of local communities in mountain tourism | | |
| Training and monitoring of interactions between tourists and the local community | Socio-cultural infrastructure | |
| Respect for cultural differences in mountain tourism destinations | | |
| Development of life skills in tourism staff and managers | | |
| Development of communication skills in tourism staff and managers | | |
| Existence of educational and support institutions related to mountain tourism | Management and planning infrastructure | |
| Managers' view of mountain tourism, as a system, with coordinated components | | |
| Planning of managers to play a critical role in tourism in the future of the country | | |
| Science-based perspective and access to relevant knowledge, information, and statistics | | |
| Decision-making with stakeholder participation and attention to related organizations | Appropriate management and regulations infrastructure | Infrastructure |
| Facilitate the rules of tourism ancillary services | | |
| Update tourism investment laws | | |
| Update laws to support the judicial rights of tourists | | |
| Update the rules regarding tourist clothes | Structural and transportation factors infrastructure | |
| Creating and improving accommodation and hospitality infrastructure in the mountains | | |
| Development of safe water, clean energy, garbage, and waste infrastructure | | |
| Creating and improving infrastructures related to communications, relief and rescue, medicine, and technology | | |
| Development of infrastructures related to intercity transportation and relocation to the foothills | Political and security infrastructure | |
| Strengthening appropriate and friendly political relations with other countries | | |
| Rational policy-making on the importance of tourism | | |
| Increase security, stability, and tranquility | | |
| Reducing the number of decision-making and implementation areas in mountain tourism | Organizational coordination | |
| Coordination between organizations related to mountain tourism | | |
| Transparency of the job description of employees and organizations in this field | | |
| Awareness of relevant organizations on the subject of mountain tourism | | |
| Adaptation of relevant organizations to socio-political developments in the world | Marketing and advertising infrastructure | |
| Preparing guidebooks, brochures, websites, media, visual media, etc., for advertising | | |

| Descriptive codes | Interpretive codes | Comprehensive themes |
|--|--|----------------------|
| Modern, targeted, and specialized marketing to attract interested people | | |
| Multilingual information and the use of social networks in advertising | | |
| Research on the characteristics and expectations of tourists and the capacity of the target areas | | |
| Variety, quality, and manner of providing desirable services related to hospitality, accommodation, health | | |
| Variety, quality, and manner of providing desirable services related to transportation | Facilities and services infrastructure | |
| Diversity, quality, and manner of providing services related to medical, banking, security, and visa | | |
| Variety, quality, and manner of providing service in stores and malls | | |
| Training and empowerment of specialized and skilled personnel | | |
| Utilizing a database to provide human resources | | |
| Determining the necessary standards for human resources in different sectors | human resources supply infrastructure | |
| Training and providing skilled human resources for the future tourism market | | |
| Existence of high mountains | | |
| Climate diversity | | |
| Existence of visual attractions | Natural attractions | |
| Existence of diverse and unique flora and fauna in the mountains | | |
| Possibility to do various mountain sports | | |
| Existence of various hiking and hillside climbing tracks | | |
| Existence of various routes for mountaineering, rock climbing, and big wall climbing | | |
| Existence of regional cultural celebrations and occasions | Artificial attractions | |
| Organizing events, competitions, and sports camps | | |
| Identify appropriate mountain tourism areas | | |
| Existence of historical mountain attractions | | |
| Exhibitions, museums, and halls of fame | | |

In the next step, by performing confirmatory factor analysis, it was determined that the sustainability factor has six components: "Reducing poverty and hunger and promoting health", "Development of technical and vocational education, employment of women and management of water and wastewater resources", "Access to clean and cheap energy, economic growth and infrastructure of conversion industries", "Pacifist communities, accountable organizations and participation in achieving the goals of sustainable development", "Development of social justice, improvement of urban and rural texture, promotion of production and consumption patterns", and "Tackling climate change, conserving habitats related to water and land resources". The results showed that the obtained factor loads for the six component items were more outstanding than 0.4 and had sufficient validity to be maintained in the measurement model. In addition, the factor load of all items was significant at a 95% probability level. Infrastructure factor has four components: "Economic and socio-cultural infrastructures", "Management and planning infrastructures, appropriate laws and regulations, policy and security and organizational coordination", "Structural, transportation, marketing, and advertising infrastructures," and "Facilities, services, and human force supply infrastructures". Their items have a factor load more significant than 0.4 and have sufficient validity to be maintained in the model.

The attractiveness factor also has two components, "Natural attractions" and "Man-made attractions". Its items have a suitable factor load to be maintained in the model, and the factor load of all items is significant at a 95% probability level. Evaluation for fitting the sustainable development of the mountain tourism model can be seen after examining the fit indexes described in Table 2.

Table 2. The fit indexes of the sustainable development of the mountain tourism model.

| | Fit indices | Measure | Criterion | Interpretation |
|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------|----------------|
| Absolute | CMIN/DF | 4.055 | <5 | Confirmed |
| | p-value x2 | 0.004 | >0.05 | Unconfirmed |
| | GFI | 0.984 | >0.90 | Confirmed |
| Comparative | TLI | 0.969 | >0.90 | Confirmed |
| | CFI | 0.998 | >0.90 | Confirmed |
| | RMSEA | 0.068 | <0.08 | Confirmed |
| Parsimony | PNFI | 0.686 | >0.5 | Confirmed |
| | PGFI | 0.579 | >0.5 | Confirmed |

The fitting evaluation of the measurement model of sustainable development of mountain tourism showed that all appropriate indices are in the desired range; only the significance level of the Chi-square statistic is 0.004 and less than 0.05, while it should be more than this value. Therefore, this statistic is not acceptable. Since the significance level is sensitive to the number of samples and is almost always significant in large samples, other fit indicators are sufficient for the conclusion. It can be concluded that the proposed structural model has a desirable and acceptable fit. Figure one is considered the final model of the research. In this model, the sub-components of each factor are arranged in order of priority.

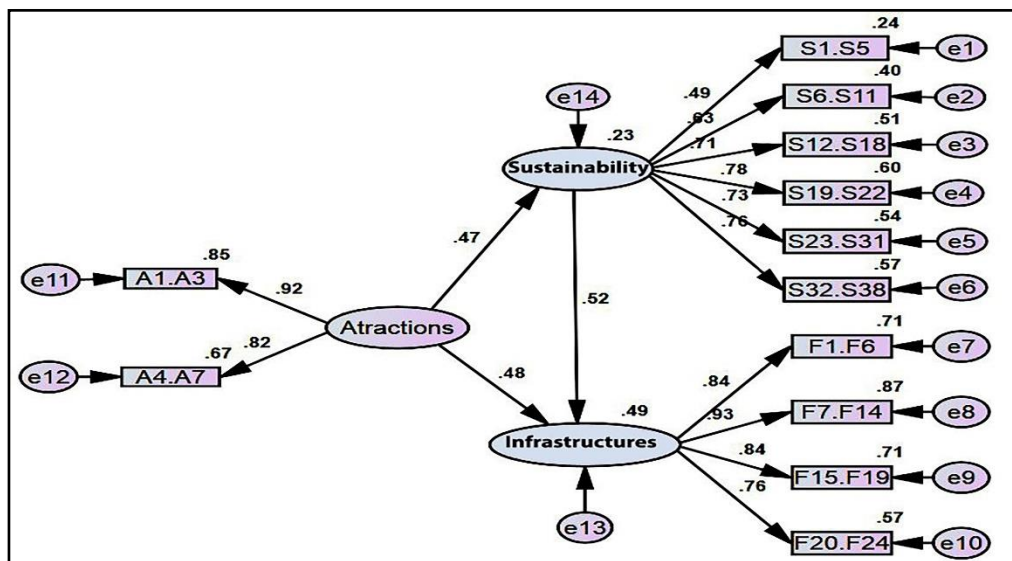


Figure 1. Loading factors of the measurement model of sustainable development of mountain tourism.

Figure 1 shows that the three factors of sustainable development of mountain tourism have been tested in a theoretical model that may be presented as a conceptual research model. Figure 2 is also considered the final research model. In this model, the sub-components of each factor are arranged in order of priority.

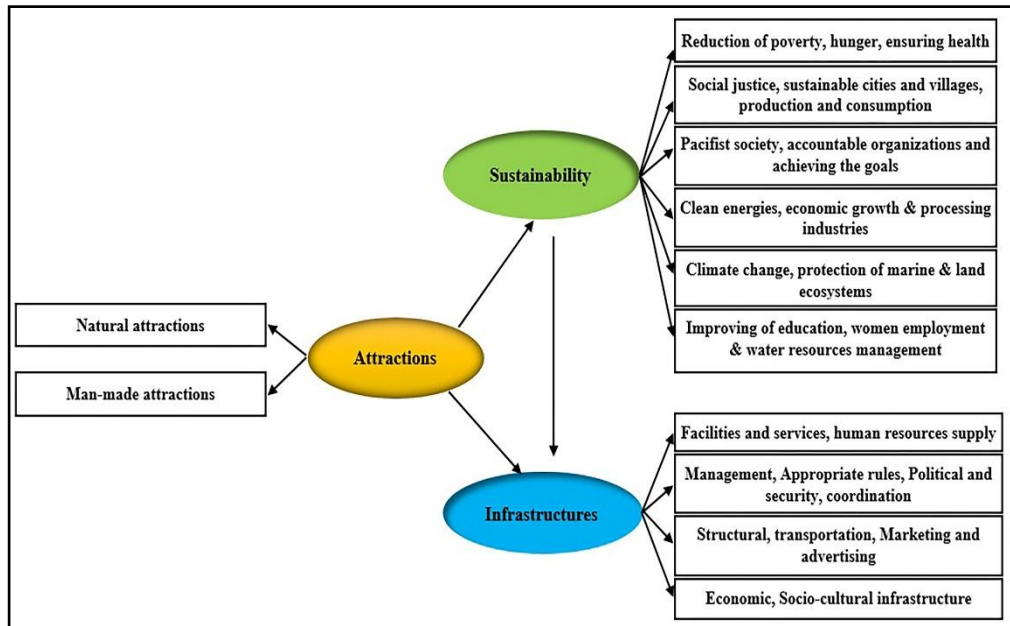


Figure 2. Conceptual model of sustainable development of mountain tourism.

5. Managerial implications

It is expected that the results of this research will be used by the managers and stakeholders of this field and can help reduce the existing barriers to the presence of domestic and incoming tourists interested in mountain sports. They obtained positive economic, cultural, social, and educational results for tourism destinations. The researchers hope that the results of this research will help the officials and managers of sports and tourism in the country and the region, as well as mountain tourism institutions and local communities in mountainous areas, to be more successful in the sustainable development of mountain tourism and to provide services to domestic and incoming tourists.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Travel and tourism are among the most essential and strategic policies for many countries because this industry's turnover and economic benefits have a special place in the classification of exports among countries around the world. One of the most attractive destinations for most tourists is the mountains and related activities. Due to its climatic diversity in all seasons, Iran allows tourists to enjoy the pristine and unique nature in the peaks above 4000 meters from sea level, pristine and water-filled valleys, hiking and

cycling routes in the foothills, and other types of activities. Despite the abundant natural and mountainous resources in Iran, it seems that for various reasons, this country has not been able to achieve its position in international tourism with programs leading to sustainable development. Shortage and sometimes the lack of necessary information in this direction are among the most important reasons for being deprived of this profitable market in the tourism industry. Therefore, this study was conducted to explain the model of sustainable development of mountain tourism in Iran.

The research findings showed that the average age of the interviewees was 49.27 and the respondents to the questionnaire were 42.05 years old. Their age, educational qualifications, and field of activity indicate the use of experienced samples related to the subject for this research. To a large extent, the findings can be considered following the current realities in mountain tourism.

The results of the research identified 100 descriptive codes and 29 interpretive codes and determined three important and influential factors in the sustainable development of mountain tourism: Infrastructure, Attractions, and Sustainability. The components of these three factors include several concepts that include various topics such as economic, social, political, educational, and environmental aspects. The research results of [Colabi \(2022\)](#), [Mobasheri et al. \(2022\)](#), [Haghi and Heidarzade \(2021\)](#), [Ghorbani et al. \(2020\)](#), [Karimi et al. \(2020\)](#), [Asadi et al. \(2020\)](#), [Jaferi et al. \(2019\)](#), [Scott \(2021\)](#), [Chakraborty \(2020\)](#), [Latip et al. \(2020\)](#), [Bracher et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Kuščer \(2012\)](#) are consonant in many aspects with the results of this research. According to UNESCO, the sustainable development goals have an introduction stating that the leaders and people of the world want to end poverty, hunger, violence, corruption, trafficking, etc., by 2030 and move towards human dignity, peace, justice, prosperity, management sustaining natural resources, expanding health, empowering women and girls, supporting vulnerable groups, improving the environment, developing rural areas, respecting cultural diversity, developing general and technical and professional education, job creation and so on.

[Colabi \(2022\)](#) considers infrastructure one of the most important and influential concepts for a sustainable tourism ecosystem ([Colabi, 2022](#)). [Mohammad Nezhad \(2013\)](#) also concluded that the attractions of Mount Damavand include the use of pristine nature, the use of hot mineral waters on the slopes of the peak, seeing wildlife attractions, mountaineering and mythological and epic tourism (such as the story of Arash Kamangir), are the first five priorities of Mount Damavand attractions. The factor of interest by influencing infrastructure and sustainability points out that, for the sustainable development of mountain tourism, attention should be paid to the attractions of these areas, such as diverse weather, high altitude, variety of routes and sports fields that can be implemented in the mountains and providing the base for the creation of the necessary infrastructure, Paying attention to the principles of the concept of sustainability by the public and private sectors facilitates the process of sustainable development. The infrastructure factor can affect sustainability. It will be possible to deal with issues such as environmental aspects, training and empowering the local community, and improving the urban/rural context in the mountainous by creating the necessary infrastructure and paying attention to the headings of the sustainability concept (long-term growth and development with minimal environmental, cultural, social, and economic damage).

The attractiveness factor has two components: natural and artificial attractions, which have a factor load of 0.942 and 0.929, respectively, in the research model. The importance of the presence of high mountains, climate diversity, variety of visual attractions, and unique flora and fauna can remind the effect of the attraction factor in the model of sustainable mountain tourism development. The natural mountain resources in Iran are very diverse due to their location in a wide latitude ranging from 25 degrees and three minutes to 47 degrees and 39 minutes north latitude. This unique and diverse asset can attract many tourists to mountain tourism destinations. The possibility of performing various mountain sports such as rock climbing, big wall climbing, ski mountaineering, flying with a paraglider or wingsuit, hillside climbing, and many other sports applicable in this environment requires the preparation of the initial conditions for the use of mountain sports. These infrastructures can include finding and preparing the access route, drinking water, camp and night shelter location, rescue helicopter landing site, etc., as an artificial attraction. Preparing various routes for mountain climbing, hillside climbing, rock climbing, and big wall climbing is also a manufactured attraction to attract and return tourists in this field.

Regional festivals and cultural events, historical mountain attractions, and museums of mountainous regions can become complementary attractions to make the travel experience more lasting in the minds of mountain tourists. According to (Richins et al., 2016) globally, mountain tourism development is unique in time and place. Mountain areas are second to coasts and islands as popular tourist destinations, generating 15-20% of annual global tourism. The progress and development of mountain tourism on a worldwide scale and in temporal and spatial dimensions are unique. For many regions, the development process has been characterized by a period of exploration or discovery, followed by community/ regional development that creates destinations for travel and tourism (Richins et al., 2016). Related government institutions such as the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts (MCTH) and the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Organization (EPNRO), with the help of non-governmental organizations and local communities, should take the necessary measures to preserve and maintain these resources with appropriate management and planning.

On the other hand, manufactured attractions in mountain tourism, such as maintaining and creating various mountain and rock-climbing routes, hiking and hill climbing routes, organizing events, competitions, sports camps, and the possibility of performing multiple mountain sports, can provide more capacity to attract and satisfy tourists. Artificial attractions can be developed, preserved, and maintained with the management and guidance of governmental and semi-governmental organizations such as the MCTH and the Mountaineering and Sports Climbing Federation of Iran (MSFI) and with the cooperation of mountaineering clubs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). With the supportive-supervisory role of the government instead of taking over, it can lead to sustainable development.

The components of the infrastructure factor include management and planning infrastructures, applicable laws and regulations, policy, security, and organizational and institutional coordination, with a factor load of 0.930. The infrastructure of structural factors, transportation, marketing, and advertising with a factor load of 0.883; Economic

and cultural-social infrastructures have a factor load of 0.880. And facilities, services, and providing human resources infrastructures have a factor load of 0.811. In terms of research samples, creating the ground and having experienced, trained, efficient, and expert managers with appropriate and specialist planning, proper decision-making, and policy-making that considers the priority of national interests, friendly, deep, and long-term political relations with other countries, creating security and peace for tourists and finally having proper coordination and consensus between organizations and institutions related to mountain tourism has a very high impact on the infrastructures of this area. Creating motivation and cooperation to provide structural infrastructures such as accommodation, shelter, and mountain camps and creating suitable conditions for diverse, safe, fast, and quality transportation along with providing updated infrastructures for advertising and marketing in the field of mountain tourism also is one of the most effective components in the model. Contextualizing the participation of economic activists and investment in this area, along with strengthening and creating cultural and social infrastructures among the beneficiaries, is also very important. The results of the research of (Paunović & Jovanović, 2017),

Colabi (2022), Wang et al. (2019), Rai (2017), Drábová-Degro and Krnáčová (2017) and Kuščer (2012) have been in line with the research results in this field. The existence of trained and qualified human resources, including managers, experts, and operational staff, is one of the main pillars of the success of any organization. The organizations and institutions of the public and private sectors can take advantage of the experiences of famous countries in this field and consider quality and specialized training as the correct way of education instead of passing some course units and awarding a certificate. It will provide the growth and development of mountain tourism, attracting and revisiting these tourist destinations. Uncertainty of the necessary criteria for providing human resources in different parts of mountain tourism services and consolidating proper and friendly political relations with other countries are critical issues in this field. Security, stability, peace, adaptation to the world's political and social developments and friendly relations with other countries will attract tourists and increase their desire for mountain tourism destinations.

The sustainability factor with six components has the largest number of components in the mountain tourism sustainable development model. Peaceful societies, responsive institutions, and participation in achieving sustainable development goals have the highest factor loading of 0.829, among other components. Climate changes and preservation of habitats in water and land with a factor load of 0.780; Clean energy, economic growth, and transformation industries have a factor load of 0.766; Social justice, improvement of urban and rural context, production and consumption pattern with a factor load of 0.751; The education development, women's employment and water resources management with a factor load of 0.717 and poverty and hunger reduction and promoting health with a factor load of 0.713 have the highest and lowest effects on the sustainability factor, respectively. The mutual attention of tourists and the local community to cultural differences and respect for each other's customs and cultural views, having institutions with specific guidelines that are accountable for all their decisions and performance, and the participation of all levels of society, including managers and employees of related organizations, the local community, and tourists to achieve the specified goals of

sustainable development can lead to the achievement of sustainable mountain tourism in the medium and long term.

Another important component is attention to climate change and planning and implementing international guidelines to deal with climate change. Preservation, maintenance, and restoration of plant and animal habitats in water and land directly related to the mountain environment are also among the important items in achieving sustainable development. The government sector supports the local community and investors interested in this field to create and use clean energy such as solar, wind, geothermal, and other environmentally friendly energy. This support can protect the fragile mountain environment against the damage of fossil energy exploitation, reduce the costs imposed on residents and make them healthier, the wider cleanliness of the foothills, and the beauty of the scenery of the tourist destination. The investment and support of the public and private sectors in transformation industries help the local community on the path of wider productivity of its products in the foothills, such as agricultural and animal husbandry products. Suppose we pay deep and continuous attention to the local community's business and create the necessary conditions to create and maintain sustainable employment. In that case, economic growth will occur in the lives of the residents of the mountainous areas. Reducing the gap between the rich and the poor by creating productive and sustainable employment, improving and strengthening the urban and rural context in the geography of the mountain, and introducing and teaching the appropriate patterns of production foothills products and the correct way of consuming resources in this environment is also important and placed in the relevant model. Among the components of the sustainability factor, the lowest impact belongs to reducing poverty, hunger, and promoting health. If the public and private sectors pay attention to the well-being and physical and mental well-being of local communities in the foothills and create the necessary conditions to reduce poverty and hunger, such as entrepreneurship, help, and training to sell local products to tourists, training and promoting small businesses and empowering the local community, can lead to the reduction and eradication of absolute poverty. Standard health care, reducing infectious and non-infectious diseases, and helping improve the health, health services, and well-being of mountainous local communities can be expected for the sustainable development of tourism in the mountains.

Scott (2021), Wang et al. (2019), Rai (2017), Paunović and Jovanović (2017), Drábová-Degro and Krnáčová (2017) also reached similar results in their research. Suppose the managers and officials of public and private organizations and institutions in this field have the necessary training and awareness about the importance of mountains and their fragility in the face of the indiscriminate human invasion of these areas. In that case, they will pay more attention to the sustainability factor in their organization and planning. To preserve, restore and appropriate and sustainable use of mountains, forests, and dry areas such as deserts, adequate and quality education and the necessary incentives in local communities should be seriously considered. Environmentally friendly waste management, expansion, and promotion of technology to produce new and sustainable energy, reduction of pollution caused by human excrements, and improvement of waste recycling methods in mountainous areas with planning, assistance, and supervision of the

public sector and cooperation and implementation by the non-governmental sector can speed up sustainable development of mountain tourism. Development of social justice, modernization, and development of cities and villages in mountainous areas, promotion of responsible production and consumption patterns and reduction of food waste in the foothills, sustainable economic growth, creation of quality transformation industries, and access of the local community to clean and cheap energy are among other components of the sustainability factors, which will provide the possibility of sustainable development of mountain tourism by creating sufficient and effective incentives to attract the private sector and the supervision and support of the government sector.

One of the limitations of the research was not being successful in interviewing and asking for opinions from some government and political officials about tourism and mountains. The lack of similar scientific studies and the difficulty of accessing mountain tourism development strategies and related models in leading countries due to the limited available information on the global Internet network were other limitations of this research.

It is suggested to prepare up-to-date guidelines and criteria in service provision, training, human resources standards, waste management, and human excrements in high altitudes and other cases to take advantage of the experiences of leading countries in mountain tourism. It is also suggested that further research be conducted about comparative study of the process and content training in mountain tourism for managers, experts, mountain guides, and local communities, methods of providing services, along with the mountain environment preservation in Iran and selected countries.

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توسعه پایدار گردشگری کوهستان در ایران

محسن مختاریان^۱، عباس خدایاری^{۲*}، مهدی کهن دل^۲

^۱ دانشجوی دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، واحد کرج، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، کرج، ایران.

^۲ دانشیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، واحد کرج، کرج، ایران.

کلیدواژه

توسعه پایدار
جهانگردی
گردشگری کوهستان
گردشگری ورزشی
مسافرت

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: گردشگری از اهمیت بسیار زیادی در میان کشورها برخوردار است و گردشگری کوهستان به واسطه امتیازات آن، در سراسر دنیا مورد توجه قرار دارد. لیکن، کشور ایران با وجود داشتن طبیعت کم نظیر و جاذبه‌های کوهستانی خاص نتوانسته سهم خود را از این صنعت کسب نماید. هدف از تحقیق حاضر تبیین مدل توسعه پایدار گردشگری کوهستان در ایران بود.

روش: این تحقیق از نوع کاربردی و از نظر استراتژی اجرا از نوع توصیفی-تحلیلی است. گردآوری داده‌های اولیه با بهره‌گیری از مصاحبه نیمه ساختاریافته با ۲۲ نفر از اساتید و صاحب‌نظران گردشگری کوهستان و همچنین مطالعه مبانی نظری و اسناد کتابخانه‌ای انجام شد. در ادامه پرسش‌نامه محقق‌ساخته طراحی و روائی آن با استفاده از نظرات هشت نفر از متخصصان و خبرگان تأیید شد. پایایی پرسش‌نامه که دارای ۱۲۳ گویه بود تأیید ($\alpha=0/973$) و به روش تصادفی ساده بین ۵۷۶ نفر از گردشگران، مدیران، راهنمایان گردشگری کوهستان، مسئولین شوراها و ده‌یاران مناطق کوه‌پایه‌ای توزیع گردید. برای تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها از روش تحلیل مضمونی کینگ و هاروکز و آزمون‌های کولموگروف-اسمیرنوف، تحلیل عامل اکتشافی و تأییدی بهره‌گیری شد.

یافته‌ها: یافته‌های بخش کیفی شامل ۱۰۰ کد توصیفی، ۲۹ کد تفسیری و ۳ مضمون فراگیر زیرساخت، جذابیت و پایداری است. یافته‌های بخش کمی نشان‌داد عوامل توسعه پایدار گردشگری کوهستان به ترتیب زیرساخت دارای ۲۴ مؤلفه در ۴ زیرشاخه، جذابیت دارای ۷ مؤلفه در ۲ زیرشاخه جذابیت‌های طبیعی و انسان‌ساخت و عامل پایداری دارای ۳۸ مؤلفه در ۶ زیرشاخه هستند. ارزشیابی نشان‌داد مدل حاصل، از برازش مطلوب و قابل قبول برخوردار است و مؤلفه‌های عوامل سه‌گانه دارای بار عاملی مناسبی هستند و در مدل مفهومی تحقیق قرار می‌گیرند.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: این مقاله به تعیین عوامل اصلی و مؤثر، ارتباط این عوامل با یکدیگر و تبیین مدل توسعه پایدار گردشگری کوهستان در ایران پرداخته است. هدف از انجام آن گسترش دانش موجود برای بهره‌مندی ذی‌نفعان حوزه گردشگری کوهستان در مسیر توسعه پایدار می‌باشد.

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از خداوند مهربان بابت حمایت‌های معنوی و مادی متداوم *دانشگاه الزهراء (س)* و همچنین همراهی‌ها و حمایت‌های علمی همکاران مدیریت ورزش برای داوری و ارسال مقالات ارزشمند خود در زمینه تخصصی تجارت در ورزش کمال تشکر را داریم. خرسندیم که تا به این مرحله، کارنامه نسبتاً موفق‌تری را به مخاطبان و دلسوزان متخصص حوزه ارائه کرده‌ایم.

در این شماره (سال دوم، شماره ۲)، تمرکز پژوهشگران در ارسال مقالات بر موضوعاتی مانند گردشگری ورزشی، کیفیت خدمات، نقش ورزش نخبگان در توسعه تجارت در ورزش، ارزش ویژه برند و آکادمی‌های فوتبال و نقش آنها در توسعه ورزش بانوان است. بنابراین، بسی خرسندیم که تنوع موضوعی آنها قابل توجه است. امیدواریم با حفظ اعتماد روزافزون دانشمندان مدیریت ورزشی، بتوانیم مقالات ارسالی بیشتری در زمینه اقتصاد ورزش، حمایت مالی ورزشی، حقوق ورزشی، رسانه و شبکه‌های اجتماعی داشته باشیم. ما سعی می‌کنیم مقالاتی با کیفیت بالا برای انتشار به مخاطبان ارائه دهیم. همچنین از مسئولین *انجمن مدیریت کسب و کار ایران* برای همکاری در انعقاد تفاهم نامه همکاری، کمال تشکر و قدردانی را داریم. امیدواریم در زمینه حضور پررنگ در هیئت تحریریه، داوری و ارسال مقالات ارزشمند خود به همکاری بیشتر خود با این نشریه ادامه دهند. همچنین امیدواریم در مرحله بعد از مشارکت نویسندگان خارجی در مقالات ارسالی برای رویت‌پذیری بیشتر نشریه و مقالات همکاران در کسب نمایه‌های بین‌المللی بهره‌مند گردیم. همین جا این وعده را می‌دهیم که چنانچه مقالاتی در فهرست نویسندگان خود از نویسندگان معتبر خارجی بهره بگیرند، در صورت رعایت اسکوپ و سایر استانداردهای نشریه، در اولین فرصت مقاله‌شان در نوبت داوری سریع قرار گیرد. همچنین، از نویسندگان درخواست می‌کنیم که بدین منظور در صفحاتی چون گوگل اسکولار، ریسرچ گیت، پابلون، آکادمیا و سایر صفحات دانشگاهی بیشتر فعال باشند.

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محسن مختاریان پورزواره؛ عباس خداپاری؛ مهدی کهن‌دل

نشریه

نشریه دو فصلنامه علم

دانشگاه الزهراء (س)

کسب و کار

دوره دو - شماره دو، شماره پیاپی ۴

تابستان و پاییز ۱۴۰۱

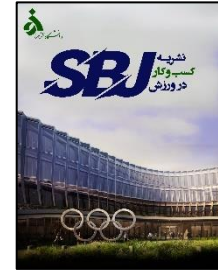
در ورزش

صاحب امتیاز: دانشگاه الزهراء (س)

سر دبیر: دکتر محمد احسانه

مدیر مسئول: دکتر ژاله معماری

مدیر اجرایی و صفحه‌آرا: مهری پوینده‌کیا



طراح جلد:
حمیدرضا عطالهی

اعضای هیئت تحریریه

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| استاد مدیریت ورزشی، گروه تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس، تهران، ایران. | دکتر محمد احسانه |
| دانشیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه تهران، تهران، ایران. | دکتر محمد خبیبی |
| استاد گروه اقتصاد دانشگاه الزهراء (س)، تهران، ایران. | دکتر حسین رفیقر |
| استاد گروه تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی و اجتماعی، دانشگاه کردستان، کردستان، ایران. | دکتر سعید صادق بروجری |
| دانشیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه الزهراء (س)، تهران، ایران. | دکتر ناهید تقیا |
| استاد مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه فردوسی، مشهد، ایران. | دکتر مهدی طالب‌پور |
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| استاد برنامه مدیریت ورزشی در دانشگاه ایندیانا پنسیلوانیا، آمریکا. | دکتر ریچارد هاسیو |
| دانشیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه الزهراء (س)، تهران، ایران. | دکتر ژاله معماری |
| دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود، سمنان، ایران. | دکتر رضا اندام |
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| استاد مدیریت و ورزشی، دانشگاه محقق اردبیلی، اردبیل، ایران. | دکتر مهرکد محرم‌زاده |

لیست داوران

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|--|-----------------------------|
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نشریه

کسب و کار

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نشریه دو فصلنامه علمی دانشگاه الزهرا (س)

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آدرس: ایران، تهران، میدان شیخ بهایی، خیابان ده ونک، دانشگاه الزهرا (س)

• تلفن: + ۹۸۲۱۸۸۰۴۱۴۶۸

• فاکس: + ۹۸۲۱۸۸۰۳۰۶۶۱

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ایمیل نشریه: Sportbj@alzahra.ac.ir

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