eSports Branding in a Globalized Era: A Multimethod Analysis of the FIFAe World Cup

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The research focuses on esports branding in the era of globalization, with a multimethod analysis of the FIFAe World Cup.

Methodology: This research was conducted in two parts: quantitative and qualitative. The statistical population of this study was experts in the field of brand and esports. Twenty people from the research community were interviewed and selected as the statistical sample of the research. This research uses Fuzzy Delphi, the balanced scorecard, and the Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchical Process.

Finding: The qualitative section identified the most critical challenges in developing the FIFAe World Cup brand using the Fuzzy Delphi method, resulting in 17 concepts. In the quantitative part, the fuzzy analytic hierarchical process determined the priority of each challenge affecting brand development. The study found that Weakness in the management structure was the most critical challenge from the perspective of internal processes, neglect of research was the most significant challenge from the perspective of growth and learning, ignorance of new methods of monetization and sponsorship were the most critical challenges from the standpoint of financial aspects, and Weakness in service quality was the most vital challenge from the perspective of customers.

Originality: The implications of this research suggest that using this model can help familiarize managers with priorities for addressing brand development challenges of the FIFAe World Cup and enable the integration of brand performance evaluation. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the challenges and strategies for developing the brand of the FIFAe World Cup and offers a structured approach for addressing these challenges.

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, globalization has spurred vast changes in all business areas. Globalization, the interaction of businesses (or firms) and people worldwide, has accelerated due to advances in technology and communication. As business environments become increasingly competitive, the chances of success decrease. Hence, for firms to remain competitive, they must be flexible and develop effective business strategies; however, the factors necessary for firm success (or performance) can be challenging to identify (Tallman et al., 2017). Identifying operational factors relevant to firm performance is crucial for small and mid-size enterprises (SMEs) operating with limited resources. Azimzadeh et al. (2014) likely emphasized the significance of understanding and optimizing operational factors such as production efficiency, supply chain management, cost control, and quality management to enhance the overall performance of SMEs. By focusing on these operational factors, SMEs can improve their competitiveness and sustainability in the marketplace despite resource limitations, as Sui and Baum (2014) discussed. This underscores the importance of strategic and efficient management of operational factors for SMEs to thrive in challenging business environments.

One industry that embodies the effects of globalization is the esports industry. Esports are organized competitive video gaming tournaments and competitions (Jang & Byon, 2020). The esports industry includes video game publishers and producers, content distribution platforms, events and tournaments, media organizations, sponsors, and the fans, teams, and players that support the industry (Mohammadi et al., 2023). Major esports competitions have become high-profile international events and are increasingly a part of the established sports pantheon (Pizzo et al., 2021). For instance, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) will produce the Olympic Virtual Series (OVS), a series of esports competitions designed to encourage physical and non-physical forms of sports (Abdolmaleki et al., 2023).

A brand contains elements such as a name, logo, symbol, or combination. These elements distinguish the goods and services of a company from a rival company (Kotler, 2019). Brands can have a competitive advantage in selling products and services and gaining value (Bridgewater, 2010; Lee, 2017). A strong brand creates an integrated image of the company in the minds, and as a result of using this brand for other company goods, it will bring high efficiency, growth, and reduction of costs (Naha & Hassan, 2018; Saber Sheikh, 2013).

On the other hand, the development of information technology worldwide and its rapid entry into everyday life have created new issues and necessities, and e-business has replaced traditional methods. Nevertheless, the e-business world is confusing for many newcomers, and many face a paradox that makes them hesitant to stay in this kind of business (Finch et al., 2020). The term esports is used to describe competitive and organized video games. This growing sector of the sports industry can potentially affect millions of young people around the world. For example, it is predicted that in 2020, this sector will have a $ 23.5 billion turnover (Cunningham et al., 2018; Funk et al., 2018; Pizzo et al., 2018). Today, about 385 million people worldwide are involved in esports,

and by 2020, that number will reach 589 million (Baker & Pizzo, 2021; Dilek, 2019; Finch et al., 2020; Pizzo et al., 2021). For the citizens of Katowice, Poland, it is a familiar sight to see thousands of young people visiting the city to watch video games. For many other people, watching video games may seem unusual, but the people of this city have a different experience. Since 2013, when the first league of esports was held in the city, the tournament has quickly become a fun event, and every year, many people from all over Poland and around the world come to this city to compete and meet esports enthusiasts (Scholz, 2019).

The FIFA Interactive World Cup (FIWC) is a renowned tournament in competitive gaming. It has a rich history, starting in Switzerland in 2004 and expanding over the years. The competition gained recognition in the Guinness World Records in 2010, and by 2013, it had attracted over 2.5 million players. 2015, the tournament integrated game consoles, allowing participants to compete using Xbox One and PlayStation 4. Subsequently, in 2018, the FIWC was renamed the FIFAe World Cup (FeWC), and more recently, it has been rebranded as the FIFAe World Cup. Since 2016, the qualifying rounds of the FeWC have been held online using the PlayStation and Xbox networks, with players competing in the EA Sports FIFA game. They can qualify for the final by participating in FIFA Global Series tournaments throughout the season or by excelling in online qualifiers or playoffs to reach the final 16 players. During the Grand Finals of the FeWC, 32 players compete, divided into four groups (two for each console). The top 16 players from these groups move on to the knockout stage. The tournament format includes a group stage, round of 16, quarterfinals, and semi-finals, with the final being a two-leg match played on both consoles. The FeWC Grand Finals is a multi-day event with draws and competitions spread over three days. The winner receives a substantial prize of $250,000 and a ticket to the Best FIFA Awards, where they can meet prominent figures from the real football world. The Grand Finals are streamed live on platforms like YouTube and Twitch and have been broadcast on TV in over 100 countries worldwide. The tournament's growing popularity, global reach, and significant prize money and exposure through live broadcasts underscore its importance in competitive gaming.

Depending on their feelings toward the brand, brand customers act differently (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). In essence, positive emotions toward the brand lead to the facilitation of recommendatory advertising for the brand, making customers more loyal and increasing people's willingness to forget brand misbehavior (Mahmoudabadi, 2019). Negative feelings about the brand are often considered inappropriate because it lead to negative recommendatory advertising, increased complaints and protests, reduced support, and retaliatory behaviors (Osuna Ramírez et al., 2019; Rasooli et al., 2016). The brand management process, if done correctly and consistently, can increase the value of organizations. Recent research has also placed great emphasis on the concept of strategic branding (Abdolmaleki, 2020; Jensen & Beckmann, 2009; Price et al., 2013; Saatchian et al., 2012; Schnitzer et al., 2014; Slavich et al., 2018; Tomlinson, 2014). Research has been done on the branding of sports clubs (Chanavat, 2017; Rezaei, 2015; Richelieu, 2008), sports leagues (Khabiri et al., 2004; Kunkel et al., 2014; Najafikolori et al., 2012; Slavich et al., 2018) and sports organizations (Asagba, 2009; Richelieu & Lessard, 2014; Tomlinson, 2014). Although researchers have suggested that academic research into

esports should be developed (Funk et al., 2018), esports is still neglected as a fledgling part of the sports industry.

It should be noted that no research has been done to examine the brand's development in the esports field. Also, no research has examined branding strategy in sports in general and esports in particular with a balanced scorecard approach. Therefore, proper brand management and reviewing the challenges of implementing the league branding strategy are essential to achieve international standards. In this regard, in this study, we try to identify the barriers affecting the development of the FeWC brand, classify and prioritize them based on BSC and fuzzy analytic hierarchical process (FAHP), and finally provide solutions for removing the barriers. So, the main research question is, what are the challenges of developing FeWC brand?

2. Methodology

The current study involved two phases. In the first phase, we developed an initial set of challenges and strategies affecting the brand of the FIFAe World Cup. We refined this list by applying Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) with a panel of esports branding experts. This phase allowed us to identify the most critical factors affecting the brand of the FIFAe World Cup.

In the second phase, we collected data from esports branding experts and evaluated the relative importance of each factor according to the Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (FAHP) method. We review the procedures associated with each phase in the following sections.

2.1. Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM)

The Delphi method is a research method that seeks to establish consensus on a complex problem amongst a group of experts in a particular field (Dalkey et al., 1970). Experts' opinions are converged via several questionnaires (Abdolmaleki et al., 2020). The approach is well-established in studying sports organizations (Abdolmaleki et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2019; Costa, 2005). The Delphi method is an effective process of establishing consensus expert opinions in a given field. However, the technique does have weaknesses, including 1) multiple survey cycles are time-consuming for both participants and researchers; 2) multiple surveys are expensive to administer and analyze; 3) repeated expert cooperation is required before consensus emerges, needlessly increasing the difficulty of coordination and communication; 4) lack of complete consensus amongst experts makes it easy to misinterpret the collective position, especially for complex contexts; 5) the analytical process can weaken or exclude minority opinions (Hsu & Yang, 2000; Ishikawa et al., 1993).

To overcome these limitations, Abdolmaleki et al. (2023) proposed integrating fuzzy set theory Abdolmaleki et al. (2023) with the Delphi method. Fuzzy set theory enables representation of the uncertainty and imprecision in natural world systems. The key underlying principle of fuzzy set theory is that while some sets have sharply defined inclusion criteria, that is not true in many applications. It can be helpful to consider setting membership along a continuum from totally not a member to totally a member

(Abdolmaleki et al., 2023). Thus, fuzzy theory can represent vague or imprecise data, directly incorporating a measure of uncertainty. Applied to the Delphi method, a membership degree establishes the membership function of each expert's perspective on each study element. Further refining the Fuzzy Delphi method (FDM), Ishikawa et al. (1993) introduced the max-min algorithm and fuzzy integration, which allow the compilation of expert opinions into fuzzy numbers.

Consistent with previous Fuzzy Delphi studies (Abdolmaleki, 2020; Abdolmaleki et al., 2018; Hsu & Yang, 2000; Ishikawa et al., 1993; Kashtidar et al., 2017), we deployed a four-step approach to data analysis. In the first step, we established an initial list of brand management by applying the BSC method and the four perspectives of finance, customer, internal processes, and growth and learning, drawing candidate factors from the researchers' opinions and interviews with esports branding experts. During this review, we identified 20 factors as potentially effective in affecting the brand management of FIFAe World Cup. Five esports branding experts (faculty members in sports management with publications and practical experiences in esports and sports branding) evaluated each barrier as an initial filtering step. The 20 factors were discussed with each participant as part of a semi-structured interview. Most questions used the identified barrier as a prompt, and the participant was asked, "Does this make sense?" or "Do you recognize this a factor that is important in esports brand management?" All items were retained.

The second step involved collecting expert opinions on the importance of each factor in the success of esports brand management. We surveyed experts to determine the final version of the criteria. In this way, the factors obtained in the first step were sent to them in the form of an electronic questionnaire on the Likert scale, and they were asked to determine the importance of each of these factors from 1 (very insignificant) to 5 (very important).

In the third step, the expert opinions collected from the questionnaires were organized into estimates and triangular fuzzy numbers that were established to permit further evaluation. Triangular fuzzy numbers are established by allocating weights (between zero and one) to the minimum, maximum, and most likely values. A triangular fuzzy number is shown in Figure 1. The most likely value is best represented by the geometric average of the experts' opinions (Saaty, 2000), a common approach in practical studies using FDM (Wu & Fang, 2011). Thus, we adopted the geometric average for the most likely value score. For each business strategy attribute, we established a fuzzy weight represented by the triple: $\tilde{A} = (L_A, M_A, U_A)$, where L_A represents the lower bound, M_A is the geometric mean, and U_A represents the upper bound of expert opinions. That is, for all experts i:
$L_A = min(X_{Ai}); U_A = max(X_{Ai}); M_A = (\prod_{i=1}^{n} X_{Ai})^{1/n}.$
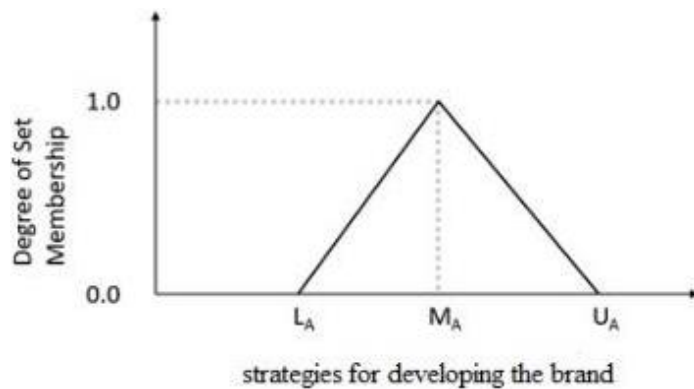
strategies for developing the brand

Figure 1. Triangular fuzzy number.

In the fourth step, de-fuzzification was used to filter the criteria. De-fuzzification converts from triangular fuzzy numbers to crisp representations that can be evaluated relative to pre-established criteria. Based on previous studies (Abdolmaleki et al., 2018; Abdolmaleki et al., 2020), we used geometric mean $D(Ã)$ of each indicator's triangular fuzzy number to denote the consensus of the expert group on the indicator's appraisal value. For the threshold value *r*, the 70/30 rule was adopted with *r* set as 0.7 (Abdolmaleki et al., 2018). This indicated that among the factors for selection, ''30% of the factors account for a 70% degree of importance of all the factors'' (Hsu & Yang, 2000, P30). The selection criteria were:

$$D(Ã) = \frac{(L_A + (4 \times M_A) + U_A)}{6}$$

If $D(Ã) \geq 0.7$, then the factor is retained

If $D(Ã) < 0.7$, then the factor is deleted

2.2. Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (FAHP)

The Analytic hierarchy process (AHP) is a popular method for solving complicated decision problems. AHP has been applied extensively by professionals and academics in engineering and management (Pedroso et al., 2018). In traditional AHP, a nine-point scale establishes the pairwise comparisons between criteria and sub-criteria. However, the method has been criticized because the discrete scale cannot handle uncertainty and ambiguity (Chan & Kumar, 2007). Assigning a triangular fuzzy number (TFN) to each linguistic scale, as summarized in Table 1, provides a resolution.

Table 1. Linguistic Scale (Hsu & Yang, 2000).

Linguistic scale for the importance	Crisp value	Fuzzy number
Equally important	1	(1,1,1)
Judgment values between equally and moderately	2	(1,2,3)
Moderately more important	3	(2,3,4)
Judgment values between moderately and strongly	4	(3,4,5)

Linguistic scale for the importance	Crisp value	Fuzzy number
Strongly more important	5	(4,5,6)
Judgment values between strongly and very strongly	6	(5,6,7)
Very strongly more important	7	(6,7,8)
Judgment values between very strong and extremely	8	(7,8,9)
Extremely more important	9	(8,9,9)

FAHP adds fuzzy logic to the AHP method to deal with the impreciseness of opinions from the experts. In this research, we use the extent analysis method proposed by Chang (1996) to implement the fuzzy AHP method. The technique uses pairwise comparisons to evaluate the importance of criteria concerning the primary goal, and the alternatives concerning each criterion. The following are the five steps of the FAHP method:

1) Problem definition: the goal is to rank challenges and strategies for developing the brand of the FIFAe World Cup.
2) Hierarchy structure set up: As shown in Figure 2, the hierarchy structure consists of three levels. The top-level states the final goal of the problem. The middle layer contains four perspectives of BSC, and the bottom layer includes the challenges and strategies for developing the brand of the FIFA World Cup, which are the outputs from the Delphi method.
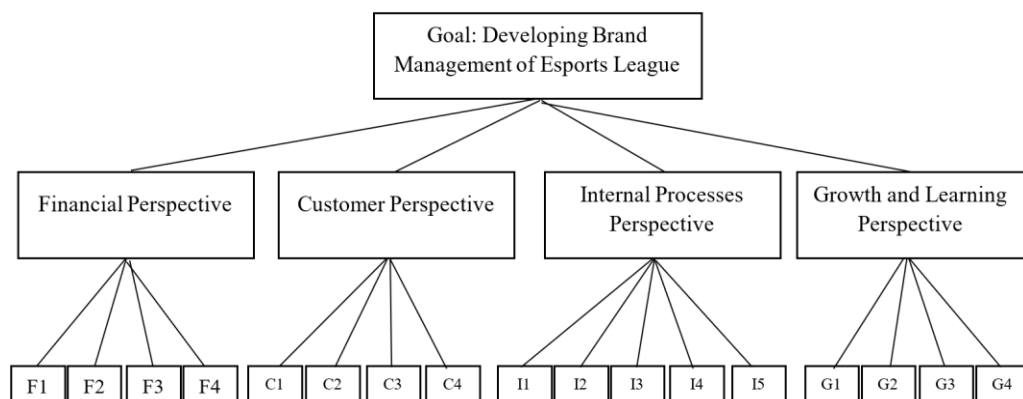

Figure 2. Hierarchy of the fuzzy framework.

3) Pair-wise comparisons: The pairwise comparisons involve a linguistic response where experts, based on their knowledge and experience, decide on the relative importance of one item over another. Table 2 defines the linguistic scales and the associated fuzzy numbers.
4) Fuzzy weight determination per criterion: Since uncertainty is one of the most common features of decision-making problems, FAHP method was developed to answer this problem. This method allows decision makers (esports branding experts - faculty members in sports management with publications and practical experiences in esports and sports branding) to express their finite or flexible precedents with fuzzy numbers and, in these cases, introduce uncertainty in the judgments. Fuzzy theory is a mathematical theory designed to understand vague

human behaviors. The decision maker can generally express their opinion in the form of optimistic, pessimistic, moderate, wholly relevant, and the like (Lotfi et al., 2012).

This hierarchy is prepared by comparing the options two by two instead of prioritizing the options together simultaneously, and these judgments are presented as a degree of precedence. Table 2 is defined for different degrees of priority when comparing the pairs between the indicators (Saaty, 1980; Saaty, 2000).

Table 2. Different degrees of precedence for triangular fuzzy numbers.

Linguistic scales	Triangular fuzzy numbers	Inverse triangular fuzzy numbers
Extreme strong	(9,9,9)	(1.1,9.1,9.9)
Very strong	(8,7,6)	(1.1,8.1,7.6)
Strong	(4,5,6)	(1.1,6.1,5.4)
relatively strong	(4,3,2)	(1.1,2.1,3.4)
Equivalent	(1,1,1)	(1,1,1)
Middle numbers	(3,2,1) (5,4,3) (7,6,5) (9,8,7)	(1,1.1,2.3) (1.1,3.1,4.5) (1.1, 5.1, 6.7) (1.1,7.1,8.9)

The numbers used in this method are triangular fuzzy numbers. Consider the two triangular numbers $M_1 = (l_1 + m_1 + u_1)$ and $M_2 = (l_2 + m_2 + u_2)$ drawn in Figure 3.
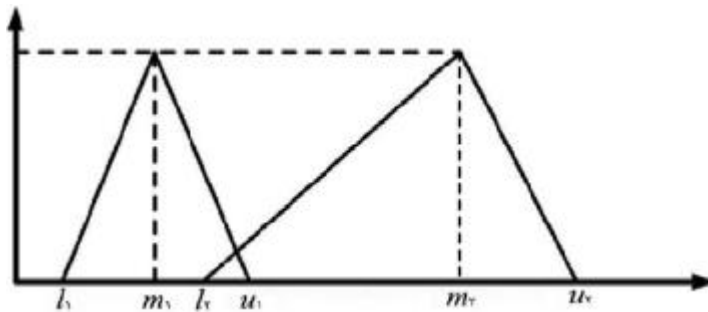

Figure 3. Triangular numbers M1 and M2.

Its mathematical operators are defined as relations (1), (2), and (3).

(1)
$$M_1 + M_2 = (l_1 + l_2, m_1 + m_2, u_1 + u_2)$$

(2)
$$M_1 * M_2 = (l_1 * l_2, m_1 * m_2, u_1 * u_2)$$

(3)
$$M_1{}^{-1} = (\frac{1}{u_1}, \frac{1}{m_1}, \frac{1}{l_1}) \qquad M_2{}^{-1} = (\frac{1}{u_2}, \frac{1}{m_2}, \frac{1}{l_2})$$

It should be noted that the multiplication of two triangular fuzzy numbers, or the inverse of a triangular fuzzy number, is no longer a triangular fuzzy number. These relations express only an approximation of the real multiplication of two triangular fuzzy numbers and the inverse of a triangular fuzzy number. In this method, for each row of the

pairwise comparison matrix, the value of SK, which is itself a triangular number, is calculated by Equation (4):

$$(4) \qquad S_k = \sum_{j=1}^{n} M_{kj} * \left[\sum_{i=1}^{m} \sum_{j=1}^{n} M_{ij} \right]^{1}$$

In this equation, k represents the row numbers, and i and j represent the options and indicators. In the next step, the possibility degrees of SK should be calculated. In general, if two numbers of M1 and M2 are two triangular fuzzy numbers, the possibility degree of M1 to M2, denoted by V, is defined as Equations (5):

$$(5) \qquad \begin{cases} V(M_1 \geq M_2) = 1 & \text{if } M_1 \geq M_2 \\ V(M_1 \geq M_2) = \text{hgt}\left(M_1 \bigcap M_2\right) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

We also have:

$$\text{hgt}\left(M_1 \bigcap M_2\right) = \frac{u_1 - l_2}{(u_1 - l_2) + (m_2 - m_1)}$$

A convex triangular fuzzy number's possibility degree to be bigger than k convex triangular fuzzy numbers is obtained using Equations (6):

$$(6) \qquad V(M_1 \geq M_2 \ldots M_k) = V(M_1 \geq M_2), \ldots V(M_1 \geq M_k)$$

To calculate the weight of the indices in the pairwise comparison matrix, Equation (7) is used:

$$(7) \qquad W'(x_i) = \text{Min}\{V(S_i \geq S_k)\}, \qquad k = 1,2,\ldots n. \qquad k \neq i$$

Therefore, the weight vector of the indicators will be as follows:

$$(8) \qquad W'(x_i) = [W'(C_1), W'(C_2), \ldots W'(C_n)]^T$$

That is the vector of the abnormal coefficients of the FAHP. With the help of Equation (9), the abnormal results obtained from Equation (8) are normalized. The normalized result of Equation (9) is called w.

$$(9) \qquad W_i = \frac{w'_i}{\sum w'_i}$$

5) Evaluate the weights of the criteria: The final weights of the challenges and strategies for developing the brand of the FIFAe World Cup are the product of each perspective of finance, customer, internal processes, and growth and learning of BSC.

2.3. Data Collection and Participants

We sent 28 invitations to experts, and twenty marketing practitioners accepted our invitation. This number was consistent with the widely accepted size of 15–20 participants for a Delphi panel (Dalkey et al., 1970). To be included in the theoretical sample, individuals must have the following characteristics:

1- At least a university degree, master of sports management/marketing, or related field.
2- At least five years of marketing experience in esports and sports branding.

Table 3 shows sample characteristics.

Table 3. Demographic characteristics.

Characteristics		Number
Region	Asia	4
	Europe	5
	America	9
	Australia	2
Age	Under 40	1
	40-50	8
	50-60	6
	More than 60	5
Sex	Men	16
	Women	4
University degree	Master degree	4
	Doctorate	16
Years of experience	Five years	4
	5-15	13
	More than 15	3

The data collection from each expert was implemented in two steps. For the FDM, responses were received from 20 of the 28 participants. For the FAHP survey, 20 participants ranked the importance of the factors. Microsoft Excel and MATLAB Software were used to analyze the data.

3. Results

According to the Delphi panel members, 17 factors related to the brand development challenges of the FIFA eWorld Cup were obtained. As illustrated in Table 4, 17 factors were placed in four perspectives of BSC.

Table 4. Results of the Fuzzy Delphi Method in four perspectives.

Row	Perspective	Factor	IndexD(A)~
1	Internal processes	Weakness in the management structure	0.761
2		Perceptual issues	0.867
3		Weakness in communication with the media	0.774
4		Technological problems	0.853
5		Legal gaps	0.792
6	Growth and learning	Neglect of research	0.740
7		Weakness in fostering creativity	0.790
8		Weakness in staffing management	0.788

Row	Perspective	Factor	IndexD(A)~
9		Weaknesses in the process of talent identification	0.711
10		Ignorance of new methods of monetization and sponsorship	0.730
11	Financial	Ignoring the monitoring position	0.769
12		Lack of attention to players' rights	0.708
13		Lack of attention to a target market	0.767
14		Weakness in brand philosophy	0.772
15	Customer	Weakness in culture building	0.811
16		Ignorance of fan loyalty	0.813
17		Weakness in service quality	0.717

The obtained 17 factors were then ranked using FAHP method, as shown in Table 5. Weakness in management structure is an essential challenge from the perspective of internal processes, neglect of research is the most critical challenge from the standpoint of growth and learning, and neglect of new revenue and sponsorship methods is a crucial challenge from the perspective of financial and Weakness in service quality is the most critical challenge from the perspective of the customer.

Table 5. The final weight of the indicators according to FAHP.

Row	Perspective	Indicator	Final weight (W_i)
1		Weakness in the management structure	0.134
2		Perceptual issues	0.095
3	Internal processes	Weakness in communication with the media	0.115
4		Technological problems	0.122
5		Legal gaps	0.081
6		Neglect of research	0.129
7	Growth and learning	Weakness in fostering creativity	0.106
8		Weakness in staffing management	0.122
9		Weaknesses in the process of talent identification	0.088
10		Ignorance of new methods of monetization and sponsorship	0.133
11	Financial	Ignoring the monitoring position	0.096
12		Lack of attention to players' rights	0.103
13		Lack of attention to a target market	0.118
14		Weakness in brand philosophy	0.118
15	Customer	Weakness in culture building	0.084
16		Ignorance of fan loyalty	0.098
17		Weakness in service quality	0.125

4. Discussion and conclusion

This study evaluated the FIFAe World Cup's brand development challenges using the BSC model and FAHP. By interpreting the obtained results, 17 challenges in brand

development were identified and then prioritized by FAHP. We are going to discuss our findings according to the four perspectives.

4.1. Internal process

Weakness in management structure was the first obstacle to brand development. The following were sub-themes of the challenge of Weakness in the management structure of the FIFAe World Cup brand. Management instability, lack of reliable approved charts and undefined jobs, lack of strategic plan, Lack of a specific trustee in the brand management issue, secrecy in doing all things and making them look secure, lack of transparency of operations, rule of taste in acting according to regulations and abuse of existing gaps, Lack of command unity in the administration of affairs, personal performance of managers in enforcing laws, reworking due to lack of coordination of managers, which also in researches done by (Rasooli et al., 2016) and (Rezaei, 2015), weaknesses in the football management structure has been noted. The next barrier was legal gaps. The following were sub-themes of the challenge of legal gaps for the FIFAe World Cup brand: Lack of new and coherent laws, lack of executive guarantees for scheduled plans, frequent changes in laws, regulations, and directives, ignoring legal issues, lack of specific criteria for concluding contracts, the unclear legal contribution of individuals in the organization.

Weaknesses in communication with the media and technology management were other challenges in this area. The following were sub-themes of the challenge of poor communication with the media of the FIFAe World Cup brand: Lack of interaction between the media and the officials of the organization, marginalization of events by the media due to unclear media strategy. Weak media coverage of matches may lead to a decrease in sports fans (Schnitzer et al., 2014). Also, substantial and systematic interactions must be established between the media and the FIFAe World Cup to develop the brand. Holding news conferences and establishing dedicated media for the FIFAe World Cup will help you do more effective marketing.

The last obstacle in the internal process dimension was the perceptual barrier. The following were the sub-themes of the challenge of perceptual problems of the FIFAe World Cup brand: Negative view of members towards each other, lack of confidence in perspectives and policies, lack of systemic thinking, getting used to problems, lack of common aspirations of members, feeling of narcissism in managers, weak self-confidence. Therefore, the FIFAe World Cup should solve the perceptual challenges by promoting organizational culture.

4.2. Growth and learning

Weakness in staffing management was identified as another strategic barrier to developing the FIFAe World Cup brand. The following were the sub-themes of the challenge of Weakness in staffing management of the FIFAe World Cup brand: Inefficiency and agility of some human resources in the body of the organization, lack of specialized staff, non-practical training of managers due to separation from the natural environment of the organization, the existence of inefficient and inexperienced managers and their lack of knowledge about branding, Lack of managers' evaluation indicators. According to the

study of Kumar (2005), one of the most essential elements in the marketing system is human resources, and the functions of this element are irreplaceable and influential. In this regard, Chanavat (2017) has positively identified the role of the managers of Paris Saint-Germain, especially the CEO of the team, in the internationalization of the club's brand. Rasooli et al. (2016) also considered the Weakness of human resources as one of the internal challenges of brand management. In this regard, the managers of the FIFAe World Cup can provide the necessary ground for developing human resource productivity by holding workshops and in-service training courses focusing on branding. Manoli (2020), who examined the brand's capabilities in English Premier League clubs, considered the existence of training for employees and the provision of specific regulations in the field of a brand for taking advantage of brand capacity. Weakness in talent identification was another barrier to developing the FIFAe World Cup brand. The following were the sub-themes of the challenge of Weakness in the process of talent identification of the FIFAe World Cup brand: Lack of cooperation and coordination with other organizations in potential countries, lack of attention to training skilled staffing in the field of talent identification, lack of integrated, executive and structured plan in talent identification, lack of facilities and equipment for talent identification in some less developed countries, financial problems in talent identification, lack of a strategic plan, unfamiliarity with scientific methods of talent identification, ignoring the competitions and sports talents of remote deprived areas. One of the most important things to consider in the field of talent identification is the income of talented players from this sport. If the income level of the players is appropriate, it will be a good model for teenagers and young players, and they will be more inclined to be attracted to this field. Given the complexity and importance of the talent identification process, especially in esports, where the ability to identify talent can be slightly different from that of traditional sports, the talent identification process must be done correctly.

Neglect of research and innovation was another known barrier in this research. The following sub-themes were the challenge of ignoring the research of the FIFAe World Cup brand: The gap between esports and the university, non-use of research nuclei, Distance of research from existing realities, lack of cooperation between managers and academics, lack of marketing research and development units. Research by Pizzo et al. (2018) has shown that the university-esports relationship model was unsuccessful. Keshavarz et al. (2017) stated that the relationship between university and sports is usually considered one of the main challenges in sports development. Therefore, the relationship between esports and the university must be improved; it is also necessary to provide a platform for the brand to flourish by using the methods and modeling of the world's leading clubs.

4.3. Financial

Lack of attention to the other players' rights was another challenge. The following sub-themes of the challenge of ignoring players' rights in the FIFA World Cup are lack of awareness and ability to protect their rights, such as brand and copyright, and not allocating part of the revenue to all players. Although $500,000 was distributed among

the finalists in 2019, it is not enough for professional athletes participating in the competitions. For example, a player who successfully competes in the qualifying rounds climbs to 32 finalists and ranks 17th in this round, receiving only a $750 prize. Eizadi et al. (2017); Rasooli et al. (2016) state that to receive football clubs' rights, people proficient in sales negotiation techniques should be selected. Individuals skilled in negotiating, buying, and selling club shares in the stock market on time should be chosen and have bargaining power to obtain the most television and internet broadcasting rights. Ignoring the position of supervision and financial corruption was another challenge. The following were sub-themes of the challenge of ignoring the position of supervision in the brand of the FIFAe World Cup: Lack of a capable supervisory organization, lack of reporting as a control tool, laws being written and not implemented, formal, relational, and illegal assessments, not punishment of the offenders. Corruption and lack of proper supervisory endanger the organization's liquidity. Najafikolori et al. (2012) stated that cultural factors are the most critical factor affecting the incidence of corruption in the football federation, and privatization is the best solution to prevent corruption. The existence of tax evasion tricks, the lack of protection and enforcement laws in these contracts, and the Weakness of disciplinary and civil laws have contributed to the spread of these problems. Ignoring the target market was another challenge of the financial dimension. The following sub-themes were the challenge of ignoring the target market in the brand of the FIFAe World Cup: Ignoring potential fans in countries where the FIFAe World Cup is less well known, Lack of use of international development capacities. The FIFAe World Cup, due to international and global management institutions, has a single specialized language and a global representation. Therefore, it can attract spectators worldwide, just like global professional clubs like Real Madrid, which have countless fans worldwide. In their research, Kim et al. (2020) stated that fans are essential in creating or destroying brand value. Despite the research conducted in identifying advocacy motives, it is observed that most of the actions taken in the field of loyalty are only focused on finances, such as shopping discounts. At the same time, the motivation of many fans is emotional, and more attention should be paid to this dimension.

The present study also found that new methods of monetization and sponsorship have a broad impact on brand development. The following were sub-themes of the challenge of ignoring the new ways of monetizing and sponsoring the FIFAe World Cup: Traditional methods of monetization and marketing, cross-sectional economic activities, not using existing monetizing capacities, The low and unknown reputation of e-football at the international level, the lack of use of new technologies in marketing, short-term contracts between the organization and the sponsor, the inadequacy of attractive factors in attracting and retaining sponsors. Among the sources of income, the FIFA World Cup has only been able to use sponsors, ticket sales, and advertising, and it is deprived of other sources of revenue. Creating wealth requires new marketing strategies, which is also weak. Using the experiences of reputable football clubs can be helpful in this regard. Manchester United, for example, has brand stores that sell various goods. It also has teams at different levels in football and basketball (Richelieu & Lessard, 2014). There will be less incentive to invest when there is not enough correlation between sponsors' expenses and incomes.

4.4. Customer

Weakness in brand philosophy was one of the challenges in the customer dimension. The following were sub-themes of the challenge of Weakness in brand philosophy in the brand of the FIFAe World Cup: Ignoring branding and identity building in sports fans, ignoring brand associations, ignoring word of mouth on social media, neglecting to hold side events to increase brand awareness, ignoring social responsibility. Manoli (2020) stated that the English Premier League brand is strong enough to protect itself, and this powerful brand results from paying attention to the brand philosophy. The elements that make up the brand identity must be considered to present the desired brand philosophy. Ignorance of fan loyalty was another strategic barrier. The following sub-themes were the challenge of ignoring the loyalty of the fans of the FIFAe World Cup brand: Weakness in the use of advocacy systems, ignoring the diverse needs of the fans, ignoring the interaction and communication with the fans, not paying attention to the needs of the stakeholders, acting passively in attracting new fans, not planning according to the needs of the fans. Rasooli et al. (2016) have introduced insufficient attention to meet the needs of the fans as one of the influential factors in the unfavorable image of football. Despite research in identifying advocacy motives, it is observed that most of the actions taken in the field of loyalty are focused only on finances, such as shopping discounts. At the same time, the motivation of many fans has been emotional. Also, the weakness of advocacy systems, debts, and the lack of transparency of these systems make the fans hesitate to join and pay. Weakness in service quality of the FIFAe World Cup was another barrier in this research. The following were the sub-themes of the challenge of Weakness in the quality of services of the FIFAe World Cup: Poor service to fans, poor attraction and use of international celebrities during events, the existence of alternative entertainment, which is consistent with the findings by Akbari Yazdi et al. (2014) who assessed the quality of services of the Iranian Football League as poor. Therefore, to improve the quality of services at the FIFA World Cup, all aspects affecting the quality of services should be considered. Slavich et al. (2018) mentioned electronic facilities, physical facilities, and team privileges as influential factors in service quality and fan satisfaction. Weakness in culture building, especially fan culture, was another identified strategic barrier to promoting the brand's reputation. The following were sub-themes of the challenge of weak culture-building in the fans of the FIFAe World Cup brand: Vandalism, lack of advocacy centers, margins, unprofessional and immoral behavior, hooliganism and aggression, and disregard for culture-building in fans. In this regard, researchers who refer to the new moral and social challenges in football and other sports have stated that ethical standards should be based on the latest priorities and responsibilities of good governance in today's globalized sports e.g. (Naha & Hassan, 2018; Tomlinson, 2014).

Like any other study, we had limitations in this study. First, the study's statistical population was limited to experts and specialists in esports. The size of the population was limited, and access to individuals was complicated. On the other hand, the coronavirus epidemic exacerbated this problem; therefore, the researcher used virtual or in-person interviews to obtain the required information. This problem can be solved by eliminating the coronavirus outbreak, and researchers can use face-to-face interviews in future

research. Second, we only examined the FIFAe World Cup, the results of which cannot be generalized to all esports because other essential events in esports are different from the present study; therefore, researchers are advised to review other valid esports leagues and compare the results with the present study to reveal the differences.

The final result of the present study is the possibility of achieving a combined model of BSC and FAHP to evaluate the challenges of implementing a balanced scorecard in strengthening the FIFAe World Cup. Although some barriers in branding were examined in previous research, a model with a balanced scorecard approach was presented in this research. These barriers were examined more comprehensively, and strategies in the direction of these barriers were presented that lack of them have been felt in previous research. Using this model can familiarize managers with the priorities of addressing the challenges of developing the brand of the FIFAe World Cup and provide the possibility of integrating the performance evaluation of the brand of the FIFAe World Cup. This study can help as an active system by considering the contribution of identified criteria in achieving strategic goals and visions.

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برندسازی ورزشی در عصر جهانی‌شدن: تجزیه و تحلیل چندگانه جام جهانی فوتبال الکترونیک

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چکیده

هدف: این تحقیق بر روی تحلیل چالش‌ها و استراتژی‌های توسعه برند جام جهانی فوتبال الکترونیکی تمرکز دارد.

روش: این مطالعه از روش‌های تحقیق کمی و کیفی استفاده کرده و افراد متخصص در زمینه برند و ورزش الکترونیک را به عنوان جمعیت آماری در نظر گرفته است. در این تحقیق از ترکیب روش‌های فازی دلفی، کارت امتیازی متوازن و فرایند تحلیل سلسله مراتبی فازی استفاده شده است.

یافته‌ها: بخش کیفی شناسایی مهم‌ترین چالش‌ها در توسعه برند جام جهانی فوتبال الکترونیکی با استفاده از روش فازی دلفی صورت گرفت و در نهایت ۱۷ مفهوم مشخص شد. در بخش کمی، اولویت هر چالش در توسعه برند با استفاده از فرایند تحلیل سلسله مراتبی فازی مشخص شد. این مطالعه نشان داد که ضعف در ساختار مدیریت از دیدگاه فرآیندهای داخلی، نادیده گرفتن تحقیقات از دیدگاه رشد و یادگیری، نادیده گرفتن روش‌های جدید برای پول‌گرفتن و حمایانگی از دیدگاه جنبه‌های مالی، و ضعف در کیفیت خدمات از دیدگاه مشتریان، مهم‌ترین چالش‌ها بودند.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: پیامدهای این تحقیق نشان می‌دهد که استفاده از این مدل می‌تواند به مدیران کمک کند تا با اولویت‌بندی برای رفع چالش‌های توسعه برند جام جهانی FIFAe آشنا شوند و اجازه دهد تا ارزیابی عملکرد برند را به صورت یکپارچه انجام دهند. به‌طور کلی، این مطالعه به نکات قابل ارزشی درباره چالش‌ها و استراتژی‌های توسعه برند جام جهانی FIFAe پرداخته و روش ساختارمند برای پرداختن به این چالش‌ها ارائه کرده است.

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