

*In The*

*Name of*

*God*



# Sports Business Journal

Scientific Quarterly Journal  
of **Alzahra University**

Summer 2024

Vol. 4, Issue. 3, Serial Number 11

---

## Contact Us

**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](mailto:Sportbj@alzahra.ac.ir)

**Alternate E-mail:** [Supportsbj@alzahra.ac.ir](mailto:Supportsbj@alzahra.ac.ir)

**Journal website:** <https://sbj.alzahra.ac.ir/>

# Sports Business Journal

Scientific Quarterly Journal  
of Alzahra University

Summer 2024  
Vol. 4, Issue. 3, Serial Number 11



Cover designer:  
Hamidreza Attaollahi

**License Holder:** Alzahra University  
**Editor-in- Chief:** Dr. Mohammad Ehsani  
**Director- in-Charge:** Dr. Zhaleh Memari  
**Journal Internal Manager & Pages Designer:**  
Mehri Pouyandekia

---

## Editorial Board

---

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Dr. Mohammad Ehsani</b>          | Professor of Sport Management, Physical Education and Sport Sciences Department, Humanities Faculty, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.                                       |
| <b>Dr. Mohammad Khabiri</b>         | Department of Kinesiology, Brooklyn College, City University of New York, US.  |
| <b>Dr. Hossein Raghfar</b>          | Full Professor, Economics Department, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran.  |
| <b>Dr. Saeed Sadeghi Boroujerdi</b> | Professor of Sports Management, Professor, Department of Physical Education and Sports Science, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Kurdistan, Kurdistan, Iran. |
| <b>Dr. Asghar Afshar Jahanshahi</b> | Professor of Strategy and Innovation, IPADE Business School, Panamerican University Mexico City, Mexico.   |
| <b>Dr. Mehrzad Hamidi</b>           | Associate Professor, Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.   |
| <b>Dr. Fariba Askarian</b>          | Professor, Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sports Sciences and Health, Tehran University, Tehran, Iran.   |
| <b>Dr. Nahid Atghia</b>             | Associate Professor of Sports Management, Department of Sports Management, Faculty of Sport Science, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran.   |
| <b>Dr. Mohamed Mousa</b>            | Professor of Human Resource Management at the Centrum PUCP Graduate School of Business, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.  |
| <b>Dr. Mahdi Talebpour</b>          | Professor in Sport Management, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran.   |
| <b>Dr. Richard Hsiao</b>            | Professor for the Sport Management program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, United States.   |
| <b>Dr. Zhaleh Memari</b>            | Associate Professor of Sports Management, Department of Sports Management, Faculty of Sport Science, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran.   |
| <b>Dr. Neda Abdolvand</b>           | Associate Professor of Information Technology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran.   |
| <b>Dr. Mehrdad Moharamzadeh</b>     | Professor of Sport Management, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardebil, Iran.  |

---

---

---

## Reviewers List

---

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Dr. Saeed Sadeghi Boroujerdi</b>     | Professor of Sports Management at University of Kurdistan                  |   |
| <b>Dr. Mohammad Khabiri</b>             | City University of New York, US.   |   |
| <b>Dr. Neda Abdolvand</b>               | Associate Professor of Information Technology at Alzahra University        |   |
| <b>Dr. Ebrahim Ali Doost Ghahfarkhi</b> | Professor of Sport Management at Tehran University                         |   |
| <b>Dr. Reza Andam</b>                   | Associate Professor of Sport Management at Shahrood University             | - |
| <b>Dr. Nahid Atghia</b>                 | Associate Professor of Sports Management at Alzahra University             |   |
| <b>Dr. Zhaleh Memari</b>                | Associate Professor of Sports Management at Alzahra University             | - |
| <b>Dr. Ali Bensbord</b>                 | Assistant Professor of Sport Management at Hakim Sabzevari University      | - |
| <b>Dr. Rasool Norouzi Seyed Hossini</b> | Associate Professor of Sports Management at Tarbiat Modares University     | - |
| <b>Dr. Alireza Elahi</b>                | Associate Professor of Sports Management at Kharazmi University            |   |
| <b>Dr. Hassan Gharehkhani</b>           | Assistant Professor of Sports Management at University of Zanjan, Zanjan   |   |
| <b>Dr. Vajihe Javani</b>                | Assistant Professor of Sports Management at Tabriz University              | - |
| <b>Dr. Maryam Mokhtari Dinani</b>       | Associate Professor of Sports Management at Alzahra University             |   |
| <b>Dr. Zeinab Mondalizadeh</b>          | Assistant Professor of Sport Management at Arak University                 | - |
| <b>Dr. Mohamad Hasan Peymanfar</b>      | Assistant Professor of Sports Management at Kharazmi University            | - |
| <b>Dr. Marjan Saffari</b>               | Assistant Professor at Tarbiat Modares University                          |   |
| <b>Dr. Roghayeh Sarlab</b>              | Assistant Professor at Urmia University                                    |   |
| <b>Dr. Ehsan Mohamadi Turkmani</b>      | Assistant Professor at University of Tehran                                | - |
| <b>Dr. Ali Karimi</b>                   | Assistant Professor at Payame Noor University                              | - |
| <b>Dr. Seyed Morteza Azimzadeh</b>      | Assistant Professor of Sports Management at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad |   |
| <b>Dr. Maryam Rahbar</b>                | Assistant Professor of Sports Management at Alzahra University             | - |
| <b>Dr. Leila Moslehi</b>                | Assistant Professor of Sports Management at Alzahra University             | - |
| <b>Dr. Maryam Niazi Tabar</b>           | Ph.D. in Sports Management   | - |
| <b>Dr. Maryam Fallah Kazemi</b>         | Ph.D. in Sports Management   |   |
| <b>Dr. Ali Nazemi</b>                   | Ph.D. in Sports Management   | - |
| <b>Dr. Rahim Khosromanesh</b>           | Ph.D. in Sports Management   |   |

---

---

# Guides for authors

---

## Peer Review and Ethics

SBJ is committed to peer-review integrity and upholding the highest standards of review. Once your paper has been assessed for suitability by the editor, it will then be double-blind peer-reviewed by independent, anonymous expert referees. Because a blind review process is used to evaluate manuscripts, all clues to the identity of the author must be eliminated throughout the manuscript. Make sure that all references to the author and to other publications by the author are referenced as “author” and not by name. The reference list should not include these references. The first page of the manuscript should not include author names or affiliations, but it should include the title of the paper and the date of submission.

## Ethics for authors

Being published in a peer-reviewed journal is an essential part of every researcher's career. Benefits to you as the author (and to your funder and institution) come from the work that is done to ensure that every article adheres to specific standards. For example, researchers must report their work accurately so that other people can use it and apply it.

## Case 1: Authorship

Every author listed in a journal article should have made a significant contribution to the work reported. This could be in terms of research conception/ design, acquisition of data, or the analysis and interpretation of data. As an author or co-author, you share responsibility and accountability for the content of your article.

## What to avoid

- Gift (guest) authorship: where someone is added to the list of authors who have not been involved in writing the paper.
- Ghost authorship: where someone has been involved in writing the paper but is not included in the list of authors.

## Case 2: Plagiarism

"When somebody presents the work of others (data, words or theories) as if they were his/her own and without proper acknowledgement." Committee of Publications Ethics (COPE)

When citing others' (or your own) previous work, please ensure you have:

- Marked quoted verbatim text from another source with quotation marks.
- Attributed and referenced the source of the quotation clearly within the text and in the Reference section.
- Obtained permission from the original publisher and rightsholder when using previously published figures or tables.

- If you discuss one particular source at different points in your paper, make sure you correctly cite every instance.

### **Make sure you avoid self-plagiarism**

Self-plagiarism is the redundant reuse of your work, usually without proper citation. It creates repetition in the academic literature and can skew meta-analyses if you publish the same data sets multiple times as "new" data. Therefore, if you're discussing your previous work, make sure you cite it.

*Sports Business Journal* uses Crosscheck to screen for unoriginal material. Authors submitting to it should be aware that their paper may be submitted to Crosscheck at any point during the peer-review or production process.

The editor of the journal will investigate any allegations of plagiarism or self-plagiarism made to a journal. If the allegations appear to be founded, we may also choose not to accept future submissions.

### **Case 3: Data fabrication**

All data must be accurate and representative of your research. Data sharing is more and more prevalent, increasing the transparency of raw data. We may then ask authors to provide supporting raw data where required. We may also ask Journal Editorial Board members to assist in further evaluation of the paper and allegations. If the explanation is not satisfactory, we will reject the submission. We may also choose not to accept future requests.

### **Case 4: Competing interests**

It is essential to be honest about any competing interests, whether sources of research funding; suppose an author does not declare a competing claim to the journal upon submission or during the review. It affects the actual or potential interpretation of the results. In that case, the paper may be rejected or retracted.

### **Ready to submit your paper? Your ethics checklist**

#### **Before you submit, make sure you've:**

- Read the journal's instructions for authors and checked and followed any instructions regarding data sets, ethics approval, or statements.
- Named all authors on the paper and the online submission form.
- Referenced all material in the text clearly and thoroughly.
- Carefully checked data and included any supplemental data required by the journal.
- Declared any relevant competing interests to the journal.
- Obtained (written) permission to reuse any figures, tables, and data sets.
- Only submitted the paper to one journal at a time.

Finally, notify all the co-authors once you have submitted the paper.

## **Preparing Your Paper**

Thank you for choosing to submit your paper to us. Before you submit your manuscript, it's important you read and follow the guidelines below. These instructions will ensure we have everything required so your paper can move through peer review, production, and publication smoothly. Please take the time to read and follow them as closely as possible, as doing so will ensure your paper matches the journal's requirements. Manuscripts should be submitted online at [https://sbj.alzahra.ac.ir/contacts?\\_action=loginForm](https://sbj.alzahra.ac.ir/contacts?_action=loginForm).

## **Formatting and Templates**

Article files should be provided in Microsoft Word format. Word templates are available for this journal. Please save the template to your hard drive, ready for use. Please note that this journal only publishes manuscripts in English. Please use the American spelling style consistently throughout your manuscript.

## **Article length/word count**

- Manuscript Structure: title page; abstract; introduction; theoretical background or literature review; method; results; managerial implications; conclusion; acknowledgments; declaration of interest statement; references; appendices (as appropriate); table(s); figures.
- A manuscript paper should have at least 5000 words and not exceed 8,000 words, all-inclusive (reference lists, tables, figures). In Meta-synthesis or Systematic review, can have 10,000 words count.

## **Structured abstract**

All submissions must include a structured abstract, following the format outlined below. These four sub-headings and their accompanying explanations must always be included:

- Purpose
- Design/methodology/approach
- Findings
- Originality

Should contain a structured abstract of 250 words. Should contain a structured abstract of 300 words in English and 350 words in Persian (exact translation of the English abstract).

**Note that:**

Title fonts in English (Times New Romans 14), abstract text fonts in English (Times New Romans 10), full-text fonts of the manuscript (Times New Romans 11) as well as headings (Times New Romans Bold 12), and subheadings (Times New Romans Italic 11). Title fonts in Persian (B Titr 14) and abstract text fonts in Persian (B Nazanin 10).

**References**

All references in your manuscript must be formatted using EndNote software based on APA7th styles.

The bibliography of references text font should be (Times New Romans 10).

The number of references of each manuscript should be between 40 and 50 references. Systematic review and Meta-synthesis manuscripts are excepted. However, sending the list, names, and complete details of the articles used for review in a table as a supplementary file is necessary.

**References examples:****Journal article**

Memari, Z., Rafei Boldaji, S., & Pouyandekia, M. (2021). How is the Football Schools Franchise Using a Valuable Approach to Revenue-Generating Capacity in Iranian Football Clubs? *Sports Business Journal*, 1(1), 31-44. <https://doi.org/10.22051/sbj.2021.36864.1008>

**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>

**Conference proceeding**

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](https://wcss-rennes2017.sciencesconf.org/data/pages/Proceedings_WCSS_17.pdf)

**Dissertation**

Kim, J. (2008). *An Analysis of Talent Development in Korean and German Football* [Seoul National University]. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/An-Analysis-of-Talent-Development-in-Korean-and-Kim/5fff3eeafe4f5a4465bc1fbb0714ff7367392d55>



### Print Newspaper Article

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>

### Blog Post

Amigone, M. (2015, June 23). Dutch Soccer Coach Jan Pruijn Shares Secrets from His Years Training Youth Players. *ACIS Educational Tours*. <https://acis.com/blog/dutch-soccer-coach-jan-pruijn-shares-secrets-from-his-years-training-youth-players/>

### Report

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>

### Webpage

Fuller, J. (2020, August 5). *Football Coaching Courses: How to become qualified?* Pitch Hero Ltd. <https://blog.pitchero.com/football-coaching-courses>

## Checklist: What to Include

- **Author details.** All authors of a manuscript should include their full name and affiliation on the cover page of the manuscript. Where available, please also include ORCID IDs and social media handles (Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn). One author will need to be identified as the corresponding author, with their email address normally displayed in the article PDF (depending on the journal) and the online article. Authors' affiliations are the affiliations where the research was conducted. If any of the named co-authors moves affiliation during the peer-review process, the new affiliation can be given as a footnote. Please note that no changes to affiliation can be made after your paper is accepted.
- **Figures.** Figures should be high quality (1200 dpi for line art, 600 dpi for grayscale, and 300 dpi for color, at the correct size). Figures should be supplied in one of our preferred file formats: EPS, PS, JPEG, TIFF, or Microsoft Word (DOC or DOCX) files are acceptable for figures that have been drawn in Word.
- **Tables.** Tables should present new information rather than duplicating what is in the text. Readers should be able to interpret the table without reference to the text. Please supply editable files.
- **Equations.** If you are submitting your manuscript as a Word document, please ensure that equations are editable.



## Editor-in-Chief Note

---

While we published the first **Sports Business Journal** issue, the Journal has found its position among researchers and reviewers and has been accepted worldwide. Although most visitors to its articles are from other countries, its monthly visits exceed 4,000, half of which are from researchers abroad and five continents. By complying with the necessary form and content standards, we can be more successful in increasing the visibility of the articles and be indexed in more specialized databases. The keywords cloud of the articles also shows that we are still required to comply with the Journal's scope, and we have been able to maintain its specialized position. With the continuous cooperation of dear colleagues and authors, we will be more successful in how we have taken.

Once again, we thank the esteemed vice president for research at **Alzahra University** and our dear colleagues in this field for their support and guidance. We are also grateful to the honourable managers of the Iranian Journals' Commission of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, and we hope that they will continue to support the new English language Journals and continue their technical and material support for publishing such publications until the results are achieved. Also, we hope to continue receiving valuable specialized articles towards the publication of technical articles and other activities for the growth of the field and the improvement of the level of writing articles in English.

## Table of contents

---

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>eSports Fever in Iran: Examining Consumer Behaviors and Cultural Dynamics in eSports Consumption</b>                        | 13  |
| Rasool Norouzi Seyed Hossini   |     |
| <b>eSports Branding in a Globalized Era: A Multimethod Analysis of the FIFAe World Cup</b>                                     | 39  |
| Maryam Koohfallah; Hossein Abdolmaleki; Mahvash Noorbakhsh; Parivash Noorbakhsh  |     |
| <b>The Role of Attractive Social Media Content on Fan Loyalty with the Mediating Role of Athletes' Popularity</b>              | 61  |
| Vajiheh Javani; Yasser Jabbar Abdel-Milaji   |     |
| <b>Developing a Business Model for Extreme Sports Clubs: An Approach based on Financial and Capital Interaction</b>            | 75  |
| Maryam Amini; Seyed Hossein Marashian; Amin Khatibi; Esmail Veisia   |     |
| <b>Influences on the Endorsed Brand in Celebrity Athlete Social Media Interactions: The Moderating Role of Trustworthiness</b> | 99  |
| Morteza Mohammadi; Syrous Jafari; Zahra Hedayatnia   |     |
| <b>Identifying the Consequences of Strategic Innovation in the Football Industry</b>   | 115 |
| Seyedeh Roya Kalati; Asadollah Kordnaeij; Ali Saberi; Yong-Jin Yoon; Hamid Reza Yazdani; Ghodratollah Bagheri Ragheb           |     |



## eSports Fever in Iran: Examining Consumer Behaviors and Cultural Dynamics in eSports Consumption

Rasool Norouzi Seyed Hossini<sup>1</sup>

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

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Exploring Consumer Behaviors in eSports Consumption in Iran and its Implications for the Cultural Landscape.

**Methodology:** This qualitative research employed a grounded theory approach to investigate Consumer Behaviors in eSports Consumption in Iran. The study utilized situational analysis as the chosen approach within the grounded theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of the context, arena/social worlds, and positions of eSports Consumption.

**Findings:** The findings reveal that Consumer Behaviors of eSports Consumption in Iran are significantly influenced by two key factors: (1) game preferences and (2) social interactions. The study identifies five distinct eSports Consumption positions that emerge from these factors' interplay. These findings contribute to the literature by comprehensively describing consumer behaviors in eSports consumption, shedding light on the cultural dynamics and preferences within the Iranian context.

**Originality:** This research has practical implications for stakeholders, including eSports industry professionals, marketers, and policymakers. The insights gained from understanding consumer behaviors in eSports consumption can inform strategic decision-making processes, such as game development, marketing campaigns, and creating engaging social environments for eSports enthusiasts. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this study paves the way for developing tailored approaches to cater to the unique needs and preferences of Iranian eSports consumers.

### Keywords

Casual Consumer  
eSports  
Game Preferences Situational  
Analysis  
Serious Consumer

### Article Type

Original Article

**Received:** 2024/04/20

**Accepted:** 2024/07/06

### How to Cite this Article:

Norouzi Seyed Hossini, R. (2024). eSports Fever in Iran: Examining Consumer Behaviors and Cultural Dynamics in eSports Consumption. *Sports Business Journal*, 4(3), 13-37. <https://www.doi.org/10.22051/SBJ.2024.46500.1144>



## 1. Introduction

In recent years, new types of sports have emerged, referred to as competitors of traditional sports (Bousquet & Ertz, 2021; Jenny et al., 2017; Summerley, 2019). These sports are commonly known as eSports or eSports, where players compete using personal computers such as laptops, desktops, and various game consoles (Dominteanu et al., 2023; Egliston, 2018; Lepp et al., 2023; Pu et al., 2021). Simply put, eSports is a competitive arena where players engage in video games on computers or consoles, governed by specific rules (Formosa et al., 2022; Funk et al., 2018; Jeong et al., 2023). Some of the most notable eSports leagues include DOTA2, CS: GO, and League Of Legends (Formosa et al., 2022; Johnson, 2021; Oh et al., 2023; Wulf et al., 2018). eSports has garnered immense interest, particularly among young people, leading to increased investments and advertising by various organizations (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). Consequently, the eSports industry is continuously evolving (Block & Haack, 2021; Kovács & Szabó, 2022; Mangeloja, 2019). Despite its substantial growth, the income of the eSports industry still lags behind that of the most famous traditional sports (Macey et al., 2022; Mangeloja, 2019; Summerley, 2019). In 2019, eSports revenue amounted to 980 million dollars, compared to 7,920 million for the NBA and 15,260 million for the NFL (Kovács & Szabó, 2022).

At present, eSports stands as one of the fastest-growing industries globally. Cunningham et al. (2018) reported 191 million eSports enthusiasts worldwide in 2017. Moreover, Newzoo (2021) predicts that the total number of eSports audiences will reach 435.9 million by 2020, with an estimated 577 million viewers in 2024. Besides these figures, the financial turnover associated with eSports is worth mentioning. Formosa et al. (2022) revealed that video game revenue in 2020 amounted to \$159.3 billion. Furthermore, the growth of eSports in popular press media is also on the rise, with outlets such as Forbes, ESPN, Sports Illustrated, and The Guardian extensively covering eSports-related events (Cunningham et al., 2018). Global reports indicate that by the end of 2019, with the outbreak of COVID-19, participation in traditional sports reached its lowest level, but eSports did not witness such a decline; instead, participation saw an increasing trend (Goldman & Hedlund, 2020; Rietz & Hallmann, 2023). However, it is essential to note that eSports also faced challenges due to the pandemic. Many events had to be canceled at short notice or shifted to online platforms (Anderson et al., 2021; Fakazlı, 2020; Formosa et al., 2022; McLeod et al., 2021; Sweeney et al., 2019).

Despite the increasing legitimacy and resemblance to traditional sports events and competitions, a debate continues regarding whether to classify eSports as a sport (Bousquet & Ertz, 2021; Funk et al., 2018; Huston et al., 2021; Jonasson & Thiborg, 2010; Siuda et al., 2023). There have been discussions about the relationship between eSports and traditional sports (Cunningham et al., 2018; Kovács & Szabó, 2022; Pizzo et al., 2017). Generally, some researchers and experts have agreed that eSports can be considered as sports due to their requirement for skill, competitive nature, level of stability (e.g., coaches, sponsors, and a large following), and institutionalization of rules, records, and standards (Cunningham et al., 2018; Formosa et al., 2022; Funk et al., 2018; Hallmann & Giel, 2018; Pizzo et al., 2017). According to Jenny et al. (2017) eSports refers to organized video game competitions, often in the form of tournaments. Pizzo et al. (2017)

state that eSports encompass various platforms, including personal computers and gaming consoles, covering genres such as sport-themed games like FIFA Online 3 and real-time strategy (RTS) games like StarCraft II. [Johnson \(2021\)](#) also notes that sport-themed and RTS games rank among the most popular genres in eSports. Sport-themed eSports simulate physical sports, while RTS games depict fighting or military battles ([Örsoğlu et al., 2023](#); [Wulf et al., 2018](#)). Like traditional sports, eSports use comparative measures to assess players' performance within the game. In sport-themed eSports, these measures may align with the rules of the corresponding physical sport ([Crawford & Gosling, 2009](#); [Johnson, 2021](#)). In the realm of modern video games, various genres exist, including first-person shooter games (FPS), fighting games, racing games, real-time strategy games (RTS), massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG), and multiplayer online battle arena games (MOBA). Notably, sports-themed video games (SVG) have emerged as pioneers in the convergence of sports and gaming ([Egliston, 2018](#); [Formosa et al., 2022](#); [Jeong et al., 2023](#); [Oh et al., 2023](#)).

eSports features organized tournaments and leagues with structured rules, formats, and schedules akin to traditional sports ([Jeong et al., 2023](#)). These competitions often boast substantial prize pools, professional teams, and dedicated eSports organizations overseeing the events, paralleling professional leagues and governing bodies in traditional sports ([Siuda et al., 2023](#)). eSports fosters a dedicated community, fan clubs, and online forums, creating a vibrant fan culture akin to traditional sports ([Steinkuehler, 2019](#)). eSports events are broadcast extensively and streamed online, generating viewership numbers that rival or surpass traditional sports. eSports broadcasts offer commentary, analysis, and production elements akin to traditional sports broadcasts ([Dominteanu et al., 2023](#); [Wohn & Freeman, 2019](#)). eSports consumption encompasses activities, engaging people through various eSports-reports-indices ([Anderson et al., 2021](#); [Formosa et al., 2022](#); [Lepp et al., 2023](#)). Viewers can stream live matches, tournaments, and championships online through platforms, drawing millions of viewers. Live events in arenas provide a unique atmosphere for fans to connect, cheer for their favorite teams, and experience the excitement firsthand ([Johnson, 2021](#); [Sweeney et al., 2019](#); [Wohn & Freeman, 2019](#)). The scope of activity and consumption of eSports differs from that of traditional sports ([Huston et al., 2021](#)). eSports consumers include gamers -professional or amateur- and spectators who watch others play through dedicated streaming platforms or up close in stadiums ([Lee & Schoenstedt, 2011](#)). Watching online or streaming, which involves observing others playing video games, has gained significant attention ([Macey et al., 2022](#); [Wohn & Freeman, 2019](#)).

Twitch is the most popular and widely used streaming platform for eSports, acquired by Amazon in 2014 for approximately \$1 billion ([Lettieri & Orsenigo, 2020](#); [Wohn & Freeman, 2019](#)). Online viewership records are equally impressive, with the League of Legends Finals, the most popular eSports tournament, attracting over 27 million viewers, surpassing the 18 million viewers of the 2014 NBA Finals ([Jenny et al., 2018](#); [Oh et al., 2023](#); [Steinkuehler, 2019](#)). In the US professional sports industry, a new trend involves professional sports teams, like the Philadelphia Sixers, acquiring professional eSports teams to expand their presence in digital arenas and reach new sports consumers ([Huston et al., 2021](#); [Jang & Byon, 2020](#)). Additionally, major companies such as Microsoft,

Samsung, and Red Bull are showing increased interest in the industry as eSports becomes more organized and attracts a broader audience of consumers and participants (Pizzo et al., 2017). Identifying consumer behavior in eSports is crucial for various reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into the preferences and expectations of stakeholders such as game developers, event organizers, sponsors, and advertisers, informing product development, marketing strategies, and business decisions. Understanding consumer behavior helps eSports organizations engage fans by creating personalized experiences and content. Thirdly, consumer behavior insights are essential for revenue generation in the eSports industry. Fourthly, identifying consumer behavior aids in demonstrating the value of eSports as a marketing platform to potential advertisers and sponsors. It helps industry stakeholders identify emerging trends and opportunities, facilitating strategic planning and investment decisions. Finally, understanding consumer behavior is vital for market understanding, fan engagement, revenue generation, sponsorship, and advertising, enabling organizations to make informed decisions and build sustainable relationships with their target audience in the dynamic world of eSports.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Understanding eSports consumption and cultural dynamics through Bourdieu's social capital theory

Pierre Bourdieu's social capital theory provides a robust framework for analyzing consumer behavior and cultural dynamics within eSports consumption (Mostafa, 2021). This theoretical perspective centers on three interconnected concepts: habitus, field, and capital, offering insights into how individuals navigate and participate in social spaces (Siisiainen, 2003). In Bourdieu's framework, habitus refers to the dispositions and inclinations individuals develop through socialization (Bourdieu, 2011). Within the esports, habitual engagement with gaming and digital culture shapes consumers' preferences and consumption patterns. Those who grew up gaming likely possess a habitus that predisposes them to view eSports as legitimate entertainment and competition, influencing their preferences and behaviors within the eSports field. Bourdieu conceptualizes fields as arenas where individuals and groups compete for resources and recognition (Bourdieu, 2018). The eSports ecosystem constitutes a distinct field with its power dynamics, hierarchies, and rules (Block & Haack, 2021). This field encompasses various stakeholders, including players, teams, sponsors, organizers, and fans, each vying for different forms of capital. Bourdieu (2011) identifies three primary forms of capital: economic, cultural, and social. Economic capital manifests in eSports through financial investments from sponsors, advertisers, and tournament organizers. Cultural capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and credentials valued within the field, such as gaming expertise, familiarity with gaming culture, and recognition within the community. Social capital pertains to the networks and relationships individuals leverage to access resources and opportunities, ranging from professional connections to broader fan networks.

In Iran, eSports has garnered significant traction, with a growing number of players, teams, and tournaments. Popular games like Dota 2, League of Legends, Counter-Strike:



Global Offensive (CS: GO), and FIFA have established substantial player and viewer bases in the country. The Iran Computer Games Foundation (ICVGF) serves as the primary association for eSports in Iran, annually releasing statistics on eSports in the country (DIREC, 2019). According to the latest ICVGF report published in early 2023, there are 34 million active gamers in Iran, with 58% engaging in online play. Interestingly, there is a relatively balanced gender representation among gamers, with 59% being men and 41% women. The average age of gamers is 23 years old, with the most significant demographic (34%) falling within the 18-34 age group. On average, gamers spend 95 minutes per day playing games, with male gamers spending nearly twice as much time gaming as female gamers (DIREC, 2019). The report highlights smartphones as the most popular and attractive gaming platform, likely due to the affordability of smartphones compared to gaming consoles and their portability. The total number of Iranian gamers has steadily increased from 2010 to 2022, with a compound annual growth rate of 7%, and the initial years of the 2010s witnessed higher growth, driven by the popularity of mobile games and increased internet penetration, providing more comprehensive access to mobile devices and the internet. Among the gamer population in Iran, 4 million individuals are considered professional or advanced gamers, dedicating more than 21 hours per week to gaming. This group constitutes 12% of all gamers. The largest segment of the eSports market consists of casual gamers who play between 1 and 5 hours a week, making up 45% of the population, totaling 15.5 million people (DIREC, 2019). According to ICVGF statistics (2019), 48% of Iranian gamers are interested in watching games, with 38% doing so on YouTube. Notably, 86% of gamers' expenses are allocated to purchasing hardware, especially game consoles. The strong growth of the exchange rate and its direct influence on hardware prices have resulted in a significant financial turnover in the gaming industry.

Habitual engagement with gaming and digital culture shapes Iranian consumers' preferences and consumption patterns within the eSports field. This includes factors such as familiarity with gaming mechanics, preferred game genres, and cultural norms within the gaming community (Bourdieu, 2004; Huang, 2019). The Iranian eSports ecosystem represents a distinct field with its power dynamics, hierarchies, and rules. This includes interactions between players, teams, sponsors, organizers, and fans, competing for various forms of capital within the eSports landscape. Economic, cultural, and social capital are evident in Iranian eSports. Economic capital is reflected in financial investments from sponsors and advertisers, while cultural capital encompasses gaming expertise, familiarity with gaming culture, and recognition within the Iranian eSports community. Social capital is crucial in accessing resources and opportunities, such as professional connections and fan networks. By applying Bourdieu's social capital theory to studying Iranian eSports consumption, this research provides insights into the complex interplay of habitus, field, and capital in shaping consumer behavior and cultural dynamics. Understanding how individuals and groups accumulate, deploy, and contest different forms of capital offers valuable insights for stakeholders, including eSports marketers in Iran, aiding decision-making, market segmentation, and developing effective marketing strategies. Overall, the eSports landscape in Iran is thriving, with a diverse and engaged gaming community, indicating the immense potential and popularity of eSports in the country. Identifying

consumer types, motivations, and consumption behaviors in eSports can benefit stakeholders, especially eSports marketers in Iran. It can aid them in making decisions, planning marketing strategies, and implementing tactics such as market segmentation. Moreover, conducting this research can partially bridge the existing gaps in the cultural studies of eSports consumption and provide a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of Iranian eSports consumers.

### **3. Methodology**

In our current research, we utilized the Situational Analysis (SA) method, which was introduced by Clarke (2003). Grounded theory researchers find SA valuable for gaining a detailed and nuanced understanding of complex social phenomena within their specific context (Clarke, 2003; Clarke et al., 2017). SA offers a data-driven framework for analyzing information and developing theories, enabling a deeper comprehension of the social world being studied (Clarke, 2021). SA involves creating visual maps based on qualitative data to illustrate the characteristics and connections among different components constituting the phenomenon under investigation. These maps, including situational maps, arena/social worlds maps, and positional maps, help identify the critical human and non-human factors involved and explore their relationships. Arena/Social world maps focus on the actors, significant non-human elements, and areas of involvement that contribute to understanding organizational situations. On the other hand, positional maps outline the critical positions taken (or not taken) in response to the complex issues related to the phenomenon being studied (Clarke, 2003, 2022). We chose the SA method as our grounded theory approach because it enables us to provide a comprehensive description of the context, arena/social worlds, and positions related to eSports consumption in Iran.

#### **3.1. Participants**

In the present study, participant recruitment was carried out through a multi-stage process to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives within the Iranian eSports community. Initially, potential participants were identified through purposive sampling, aiming to include individuals with varied roles, expertise, and experiences related to eSports consumption in Iran. This approach involved selecting participants from key stakeholder groups, including academics, website and online forum managers, gamers, game fans, policymakers eSports managers, and eSports experts. Within the purposive sampling framework, maximum variation sampling was employed to capture various perspectives and characteristics among participants. This approach facilitated the inclusion of individuals with diverse demographic backgrounds, levels of involvement in eSports, and viewpoints on the subject matter. To supplement the initial participant selection and identify additional individuals with specialized knowledge or unique insights, a snowball sampling technique was utilized. This method involved asking participants to refer other individuals who they believed could contribute valuable perspectives to the study. The final sample size comprised 43 individuals, selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods. The selection criteria focused on ensuring representation

from various segments of the Iranian eSports community, including players, enthusiasts, industry professionals, and policymakers for a comprehensive understanding, [Table 1](#) presents a detailed overview of the characteristics of the participants involved in the current study.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of research participants.

| Variables                       | Division                         | N  | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----|------------|
| Gender                          | Female                           | 11 | 25.82      |
|                                 | Male                             | 32 | 74.18      |
| Age                             | 18 to 30 years                   | 6  | 13.95      |
|                                 | 31 to 40 years                   | 13 | 30.25      |
|                                 | 41 to 50 years                   | 12 | 27.90      |
|                                 | 51 to 60 years                   | 9  | 20.93      |
|                                 | 61 years and older               | 3  | 6.97       |
| Degree of education             | Diploma and under                | 12 | 27.90      |
|                                 | BA                               | 19 | 44.21      |
|                                 | MA                               | 5  | 11.62      |
|                                 | PhD                              | 7  | 16.27      |
| Field of activity               | Esports experts and researchers  | 7  | 16.28      |
|                                 | Amateur gamer                    | 7  | 16.28      |
|                                 | Professional gamer               | 7  | 16.28      |
|                                 | Directors of ICVGF               | 4  | 9.30       |
|                                 | Esports manager and PPolicymaker | 6  | 13.96      |
|                                 | Managers of gaming forum         | 7  | 16.28      |
|                                 | Esports Club owners              | 5  | 11.62      |
| Duration of activity on Esports | 1 to 2 years                     | 6  | 13.95      |
|                                 | 3 to 4 years                     | 13 | 30.23      |
|                                 | 5 to 6 years                     | 10 | 23.25      |
|                                 | 7 to 8 years                     | 8  | 18.61      |
|                                 | More than 8 years                | 6  | 13.96      |
| Sum                             |                                  | 43 | 100        |

### 3.2. Data collection

In-depth interviews were conducted as the primary method of data collection to explore individuals' perceptions of eSports consumption in Iran. Open-ended questions were utilized to elicit detailed responses and insights from participants. Questions included: "What factors and elements are involved in the consumption of eSports?", "How is eSports consumption changing?", and "What forms of consumption are there in eSports?"

Interview Procedures are as follows:

- Each interview lasted between 60 to 85 minutes, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives.
- Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim.
- Following transcription, data were coded using thematic analysis techniques. Initial codes and categories were extracted from the transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns.
- Analytical memos and notes were written during and after the interviews to capture important points, reflections, and emerging ideas. These memos aided in the refinement of codes and categories through iterative analysis.
- Two focus groups were convened among the research participants to further explore and validate emergent themes and concepts identified in the individual interviews. Focus Group Procedures are as follows:
- Each focus group comprised 6 and 5 participants, respectively, selected from the initial pool of interviewees.
- Participants were grouped based on their diverse perspectives and experiences related to eSports consumption.
- Focus group sessions lasted approximately 75 minutes and were facilitated by the researcher, who provided general concepts and categories for discussion.
- Key questions addressed during the focus group discussions included: (1) why is eSports consumption experiencing significant growth? (2) What factors influence the consumption of eSports? And (3) what forms of consumer behaviors are observed in eSports consumption?
- Field notes were recorded during the focus group discussions to capture participant interactions, insights, and responses.
- Audio recordings of focus group sessions were transcribed promptly after each session for subsequent analysis.
- Analytical memos and notes were generated during and after the focus group discussions to document participant experiences, perceptions, and feelings regarding eSports consumption. These memos played a crucial role in refining emerging themes and theories.

Transcribed interview and focus group data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Themes, patterns, and categories were identified, refined, and compared across individual interviews and focus groups to develop a comprehensive understanding of eSports consumption behaviors and cultural dynamics in Iran.

### ***3.3. Data analysis***

The data analysis process was iterative and conducted concurrently with data collection, allowing for constant comparison of data and initial ideas to refine the emerging theory. To complement primary data sources, various supplementary sources were utilized, including gaming social networks, eSports-related documents, observations from eSports competitions, published interviews with professional gamers, statistics published by the Iran Computer Games Foundation (ICVGF), and media reports from news agencies.

Following Clarke's suggestions (Clarke, 2003, 2021), multiple sources of information were employed to enrich the situational analysis and enhance the refinement of the emerging theory.

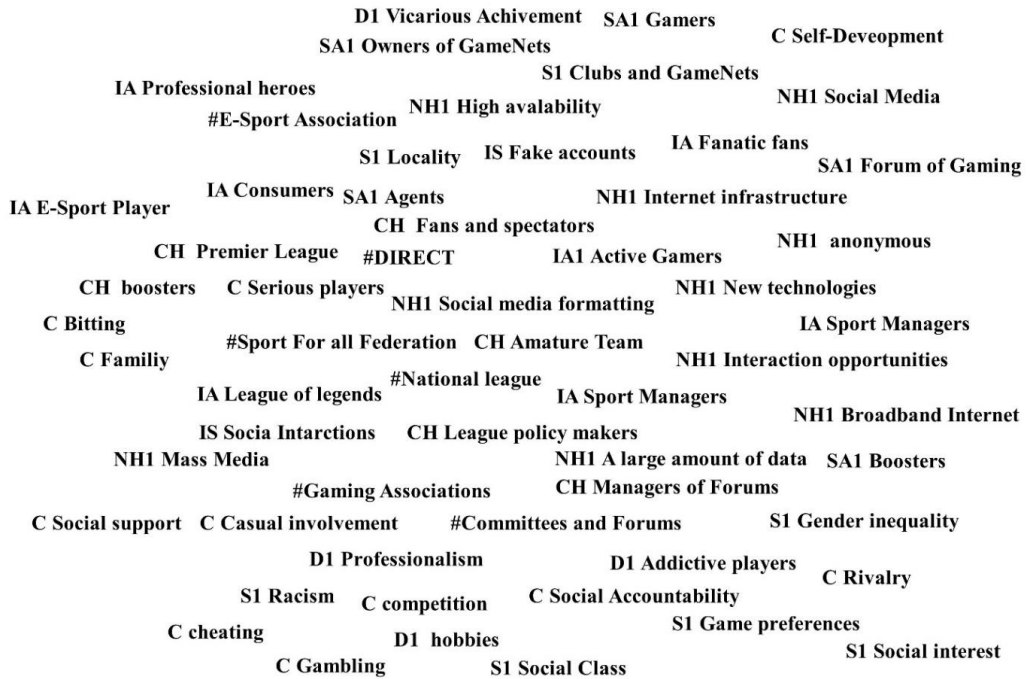
The researcher systematically collected and analyzed relevant data from primary and supplementary sources to identify patterns, establish relationships, and assess the trustworthiness of the findings. The analysis was conducted using situational analysis methodology, as outlined by Clarke (2003, 2021), which involves the creation and refinement of situational maps to comprehensively represent all elements and components of the phenomenon under investigation. Initially, messy situational maps were constructed, incorporating all identified components derived from data collection instruments. This stage facilitated the identification of important categories and their relationships with related concepts.

Abstract Relational Maps were then developed to categorize and integrate identified concepts, following Clarke (2003, 2021)'s instructions. This process enabled the researcher to visualize and organize complex relationships among various elements. Subsequently, arenas/social worlds related to eSports consumption were depicted to further categorize and integrate identified concepts, reflecting the involvement of various individuals, organizations, institutions, and communities in eSports consumption. An Abstract Positional Map was drawn to illustrate five positions of consumer behaviors in eSports consumption based on game preferences and social interactions. Throughout the analysis, data was collected and analyzed simultaneously with a critical perspective, ensuring thorough exploration and interpretation of the data. The maps were revised and rewritten multiple times until data saturation was achieved, in line with Clark's recommendation (2022) to refine maps effectively. Supplementary sources played a vital role in enhancing the refinement and modification of the maps, providing additional context and insights throughout the analysis process.

## **4. Results**

### ***4.1. Abstract messy situational map***

This map illustrates the various elements associated with the dissemination of eSports consumption, encompassing both human and non-human factors, as well as material and symbolic/discursive aspects. The creation of this map involved gathering data from interviews with participants and focus groups, along with supplementary materials. The primary objective was to comprehensively review and analyze all the components of the situation without imposing any constraints. The map was constructed by recording all the information obtained from the participants and information materials on separate sheets, followed by multiple revisions and iterations of the concepts and components. As a result, the map appears untidy and lacks a specific logical or analytical structure, as it includes all components without any predefined order. Figure 1 provides a representative example of this abstract and unordered situational map.



**Figure 1.** Abstract messy situational map of esports consumption.

Following the creation of the initial disorderly and chaotic map, a relational map was subsequently devised to demonstrate the interconnections among the diverse components and concepts. By establishing links based on logical relationships and analytical frameworks, this map presents a visual depiction of the intricate associations and interactions between the various elements, thereby aiding in gaining a more profound insight into the investigated phenomenon. [Figure 2](#) illustrates an example of these connections between the components.

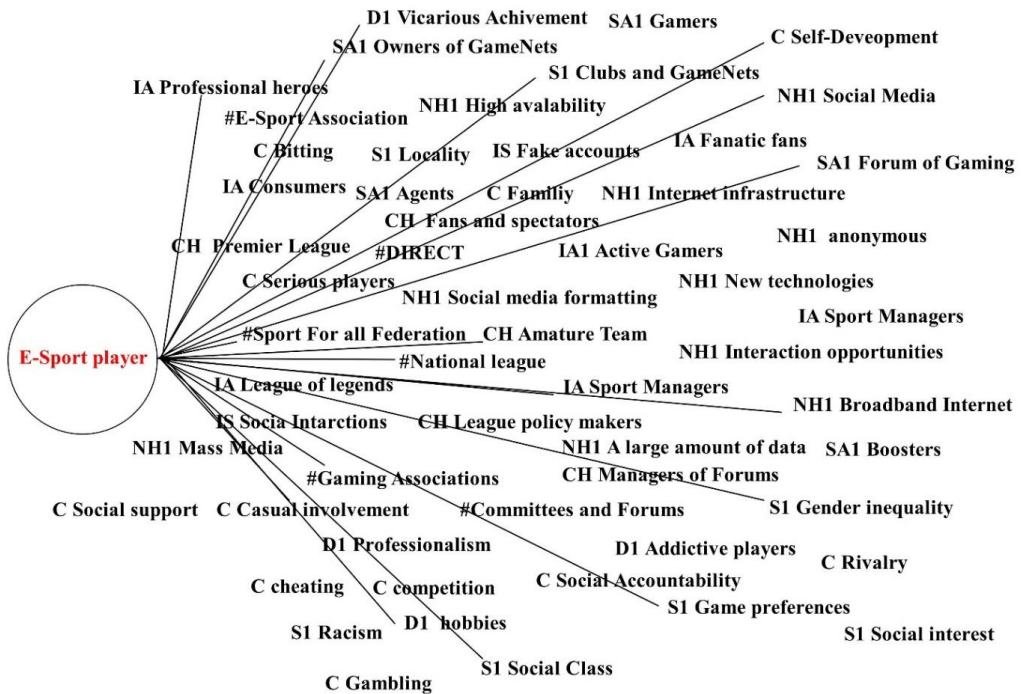


Figure 2. Abstract relational map of esports consumption.

#### 4.2. Abstract ordered situational map

After consulting multiple sources and thoroughly examining the concepts discussed in the interviews and focus groups, the original disorderly and abstract situational map was refined into a more structured format. This newly organized map offers a lucid and condensed representation of the different elements related to the eSports consumption phenomenon and their interconnections. The ordered situational map, which outlines the components involved in eSports consumption, can be seen in Figure 3.



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Individual Human Elements/Actors:</b><br/>Gamers, Active gamers, Fake accounts, Managers, Players, Managers of Forums, Fake gamers, Families, Brokers, Agents, Boosters, Consumers, Serious players</p>                                      | <p><b>Nonhuman Elements/Actants:</b><br/>Social media, Internet infrastructure, Broadband Internet, New Technologies, Gaming Platforms, Interaction algorithms, Formats of competitions, News agencies</p>                         |
| <p><b>Collective Human Elements/Actors:</b><br/>Owners of GameNets, Social classes, Fans, Spectators, League of Legends, Sport for all Federation, Teams, PPolicymakers Sports managers, Committees and associations, Forum of gaming, DIRECT</p>  | <p><b>Implicated/Silent Actors/Actants:</b><br/>Politicians, Ordinary players, Owners of the games, Wealth Status, Academics actors, owners of the premier league, shadow gaming Associations</p>                                  |
| <p><b>Discursive Constructions of Individual And/Or Collective Human Actors:</b><br/>The celebrification of Active players, Professional heroes, Branding the Teams, supporting the Player, Social Activism, Professionalism, Wining all costs</p> | <p><b>Discursive Constructions of Nonhuman Actants:</b><br/>Gaming as a collective entertainment, fandom in the new world, Extreme rivalry, Gaming as a serious leisure, Vicarious achievement, Gaming addiction</p>               |
| <p><b>Political/Economic Elements:</b><br/>Sponsors of players, Sponsors of clubs, Games boosters, Cultural politics of gaming, Economic disturbances, Political sanctions, Social accountability</p>  | <p><b>Sociocultural /Symbolic Elements:</b><br/>Gender, Nationality, Ethnicity, Social capital, Logos of Games, National champions, E-sport legends, Social interest</p>   |
| <p><b>Temporal Elements:</b><br/>Casual involvement, Suspension of players, Increased activity during holidays, Holding simultaneous sports events, Holding periodical mega-events, Premier League, Social support</p>                             | <p><b>Spatial Elements:</b><br/>the multicultural position of teams, high availability, Ease of involvement, The possibility of anonymity, Shared hobbies, Interaction opportunities</p>   |
| <p><b>Major Issues/Debates (Usually Contested):</b><br/>Cheating, Biting, Immorality of players, Economic scandals, Breaking the norms, Insulting social groups and minorities, Marginalization of competitors, Gambling, Racism</p>               | <p><b>Related Discourses (Historical, Narrative and/or Visual):</b><br/>Emphasis on winning all costs, Instrumentalization of players, Game preferences, Social media formatting, Directing the games, Abusing of young gamers</p> |
| <p><b>Other Kinds of Elements:</b><br/>Economic crisis, Self-censorship of players, social replacement of players, Conspiracy for rival teams, Media crises</p>  |  |

**Figure 3.** Abstract ordered situational map of esports consumption.



#### 4.4. Abstract social worlds/arenas map

Clark (2003, 2021) has highlighted one of the key strengths of grounded theory in the SA (Situational Analysis) approach, which lies in its Meso-level analytical framework. This framework is effectively illustrated using the social worlds/arenas map. According to Clark (2022), the Meso-level analysis captures the interplay and overlaps between discourses, social arenas, and organizations. The social worlds/arenas map presents a comprehensive view of the situation, incorporating social worlds, arenas, regimes of action, current discourses, and other pertinent structures and agencies. By utilizing this map, researchers can conduct a thorough analysis of the investigated phenomenon (Clarke, 2021). This map facilitates an insightful examination of the interconnected relationships between actors, social arenas, and organizations that contribute to the development of eSports consumption. In this particular study, Figure 4 portrays the social worlds/arenas involved in the formation of eSports consumption.

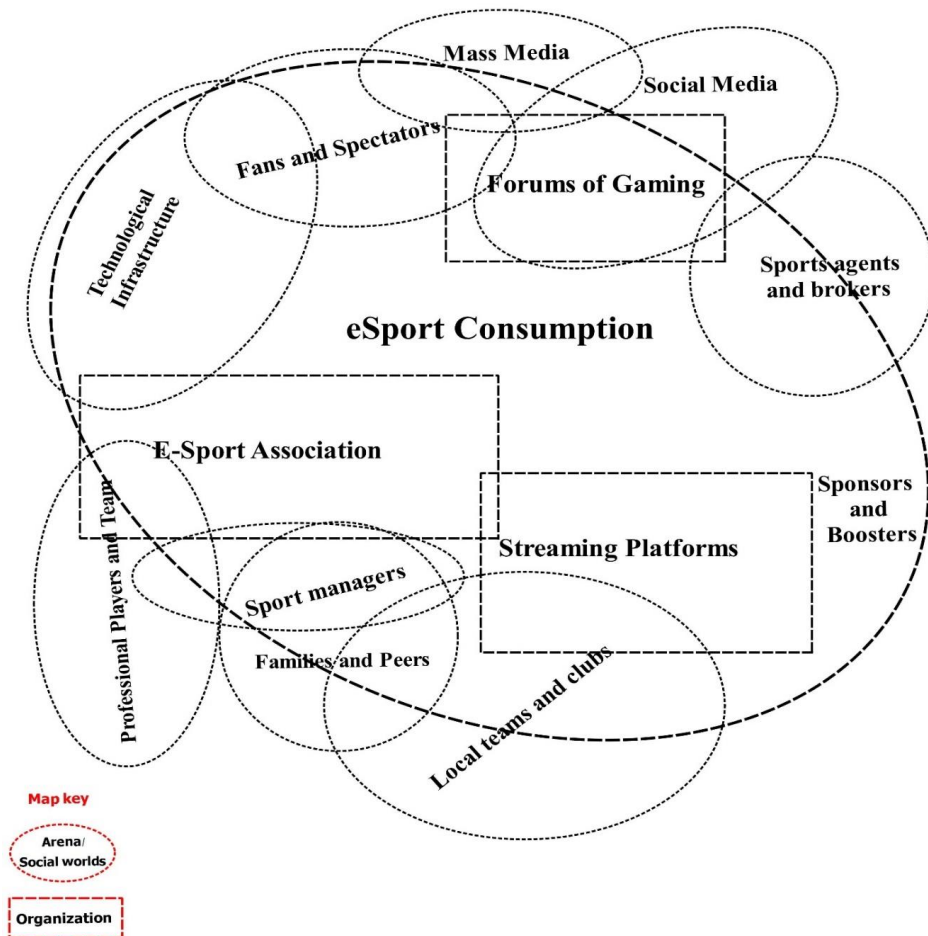


Figure 4. Abstract social worlds/arenas map of esports consumption.

#### 4.5. Abstract positional map

Abstract positional maps serve as effective tools for simplifying and identifying the adopted and un-adopted positions within a given situation (Clarke, 2003). When creating positional maps, it is crucial to accurately represent the existing diversity and distinctions. Hence, in this study, we aimed to elucidate the differences between various forms of consumer behaviors in eSports consumption using two indicators: (1) game preferences, and (2) social interactions. By utilizing these indicators, we successfully identified different consumer behavior patterns related to eSports consumption and described their respective positions within the phenomenon. The resultant abstract positional map of consumer behaviors in eSports consumption is displayed in Figure 5.

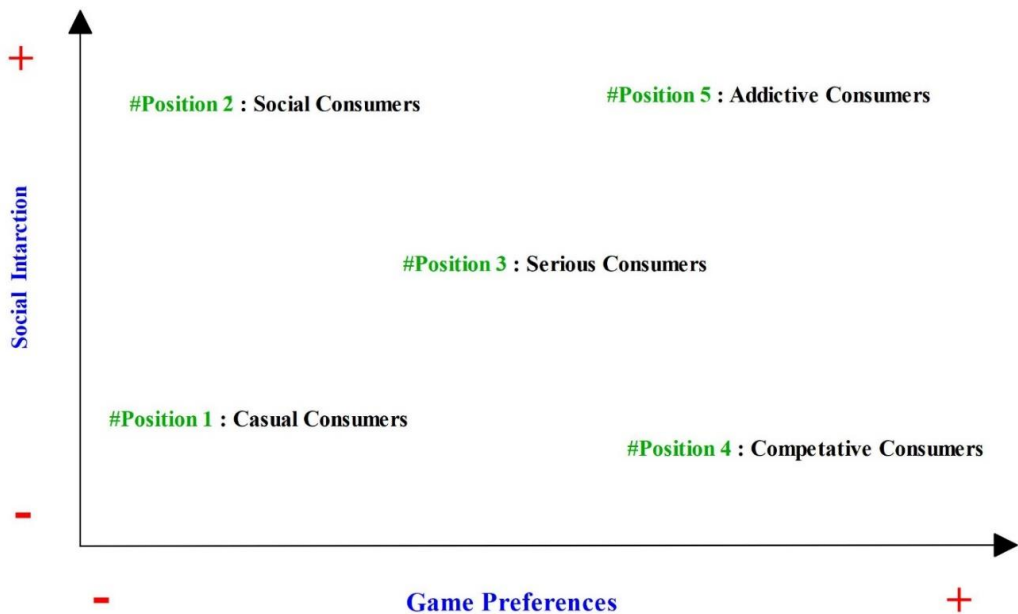


Figure 5. Abstract positional map of consumer behaviors of esports consumption.

#### 4.6. Generated grounded theory of Consumer Behaviors of eSports Consumption in Iran

We can develop the following theory in light of your research's conclusions regarding the popularity of eSports in Iran. The consumption of eSports in Iran is a cultural and social phenomenon that is influenced by the intricate interplay of many different elements. The process of consuming eSports involves both human and non-human components and is influenced by social, political, economic, and cultural factors. These factors are further directed by various discourses and social arenas. People from all walks of life can now take part in eSports thanks to the growth of online and internet platforms, which has greatly increased their accessibility and popularity. The high accessibility of eSports in Iran, which are less common in this type of sports despite the restrictions on traditional sports, is one of the most significant issues raised by this theory. The growing popularity

of these sports in Iran is evidence that people can still participate in them despite the country's economic difficulties and international sanctions. Numerous Key Components make up eSports consumption. Cultural and social influences come first. Iran's cultural and social fabric is heavily woven with the consumption of eSports. Two main factors affect how eSports fans are formed. (1) Game Preferences: Individuals' levels of commitment and involvement in eSports consumption are greatly influenced by the kinds of games they enjoy playing. (2) Social Interactions: Both online and offline social interactions within the eSports community help to define different consumer types. Five different types of eSports fans are identified based on how these two factors interact: (1) *Casual Consumers*: People who occasionally watch eSports and do so primarily for fun and entertainment. (2) *Social Consumers*: eSports fans who value the social component of gaming and participate in eSports events to socialize. (3) *Serious Consumers*: People who show a lot of interest in and dedication to eSports and consider it to be a significant hobby or pastime. (4) *Addictive Consumers*: Individuals who engage in compulsive actions and have a strong dependence on eSports viewing. (5) *Competitive Consumers*: People who actively compete in eSports and aim to succeed in competitive gaming environments. The theory contends that eSports consumption in Iran is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, where several variables interact to influence the attitudes and preferences of various eSports consumers. Understanding these components can aid in creating focused strategies for encouraging sustainable and responsible eSports consumption and advancing the development of the eSports sector in Iran.

## 5. Discussion

One of the key findings from the research is that the consumption of eSports can be analyzed based on two factors: Social Interaction and Game Preferences. Social Interaction refers to the opportunity eSports offer for communication, group interactions, community formation, and shared experiences. On the other hand, Game Preferences encompass the desire to play, compete, and challenge others, or even oneself. Through the lens of Bourdieu's social capital theory (Bourdieu, 2011), these factors reveal how our social networks and the cultural capital we gain through them shape our engagement with eSports. The desire for social interaction within eSports reflects the pursuit of social capital. Watching matches with friends, discussing strategies in online forums, or joining a team all contribute to building this capital. These connections provide access to exclusive information, shared experiences, and a sense of belonging to a specific community. Game preferences can also be understood through social capital. High engagement with competitive aspects of eSports (playing, competing) signifies a desire for cultural distinction. Mastering a specific game and achieving high ranks signifies possessing valuable cultural capital within the eSports community. This capital grants access to recognition, respect, and potentially, opportunities within the professional scene. The interplay of these two factors gives rise to five distinct types of eSports consumer behaviors. The first type is known as casual consumers, characterized by low levels of both social interaction and game preferences. Casual consumers in the realm of eSports are individuals who show an interest in eSports but do not engage with it at a highly

competitive or professional level. Instead, they may enjoy watching eSports events, following teams and players, playing eSports genres, or interacting with eSports content purely for entertainment and leisure purposes. Their social capital comes from the connections and shared experiences within the community. For casual consumers, eSports is akin to traditional sports or other forms of media content, providing them with enjoyment and excitement. According to the Diffusion of Innovations Theory proposed by Rogers (2014), which explains the spread of innovations (in this context, eSports) within a social system, casual consumers can be considered part of the "early majority" or "late majority" groups (Jenny et al., 2021). These consumers adopt eSports after the initial innovators and early adopters have already embraced it. They follow the trend set by the majority of society and groups, gradually turning to the consumption of eSports.

Drawing from Bourdieu's theory of social capital, the second type of eSports consumers is identified as Social Consumers. Within this category, social interaction takes precedence, while the level of Game Preferences remains relatively low. Social consumers in the realm of eSports are individuals who actively engage with eSports content and communities to foster social interactions, build networks, and establish relationships with like-minded individuals. They perceive eSports as a platform that enables them to connect with others, discuss shared interests, and be part of a larger gaming community. Social consumers frequently participate in discussions, forums, and social media platforms related to eSports to remain updated and immersed in the eSports scene. They actively comment on social media posts, share content, and engage in live chat during eSports streams. Additionally, these consumers often exhibit strong attachments to specific eSports teams or players. They provide unwavering support to their favorites, cheering for them during matches, and cultivating a sense of belonging and loyalty within the community. Social Identity Theory can be used to explain the behavior of social consumers. This theory explores how individuals derive their self-concept from group affiliations (Hogg, 2016). In the context of eSports, social consumers may identify strongly with eSports communities or specific teams, using this affiliation to reinforce their social identity. To maintain their active engagement, social consumers utilize various online platforms associated with eSports, such as Twitch, YouTube, Reddit, Discord, Twitter, and dedicated eSports forums. These platforms serve as channels for staying connected, sharing content, and discovering new information about the eSports scene (Gros et al., 2017; Sjöblom et al., 2017; Wulf et al., 2018). It is important to note that while some social consumers may casually play eSports genres, their primary involvement lies in being spectators. They derive immense enjoyment from watching eSports tournaments and events, often participating in watch parties or viewing live streams alongside fellow fans.

The third type of eSports consumers is referred to as Serious Consumers. Within this category, there exists a moderate level of both social interaction and game preferences. Serious consumers in the eSports realm are individuals who consider eSports an integral part of their lifestyle and are deeply committed to it. They invest substantial time, effort, and resources into various eSports-related activities, which may include competitive gaming, closely following professional leagues, attending events, and staying abreast of the latest industry trends. Serious consumers often harbor a profound passion for eSports

and may be dedicated professional gamers or enthusiastic enthusiasts. Drawing from Bourdieu's theory of social capital (Bourdieu, 2011), Serious consumers integrate eSports into their lifestyle, investing significant time and resources. They actively participate in competitive gaming, follow professional leagues, attend events, and stay updated on trends. By experiencing a balance of social interaction, skills development (competence), and community belonging (relatedness), Serious Consumers demonstrate sustained engagement with eSports. The pursuit of social and cultural capital alongside personal needs fulfillment fuels their commitment to the eSports world. Their engagement with eSports aligns well with the principles of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which helps elucidate the underlying motivations and behaviors of individuals heavily involved in eSports activities (Qian et al., 2022). According to SDT, proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985), human motivation is influenced by three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Autonomy reflects the need to feel in control of one's actions and decisions. Serious eSports consumers actively participate in gaming activities based on their interests and preferences. They exercise autonomy in choosing the games they play, the roles they adopt, and the teams they support, enabling them to make decisions that resonate with their gaming objectives (Reitman et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2021). Competence, on the other hand, pertains to the need to feel capable and effective in one's actions. Serious eSports consumers are highly motivated to develop and exhibit their gaming skills. They consistently strive to enhance their performance, advance in rankings, and achieve success in competitive settings, thereby satisfying their need for competence in the gaming sphere. Furthermore, serious eSports consumers often find a profound sense of community and belonging within the eSports ecosystem (Bányai et al., 2019; Trail & James, 2001). They establish connections with fellow players, fans, and content creators who share their passion for gaming, thus fulfilling their need for social connection. By experiencing a sense of autonomy, competence, and social connection within the eSports community, Serious Consumers are more likely to demonstrate sustained participation and commitment to eSports-related activities (Biegun et al., 2020).

The fourth type of eSports consumers is known as Competitive Consumers. Within this category, Game Preferences are highly pronounced, but Social Interaction is relatively low. Competitive consumers in the realm of eSports are individuals who place significant emphasis on competitive games and actively engage in sports competitions, leagues, and other competitive events. Their driving force is the desire to excel in gameplay, earn recognition within the eSports community, and compete at a high level. These consumers dedicate substantial time and effort to practicing and refining their skills, aiming to be among the top players in their chosen titles. Skill development and improvement in gameplay take precedence in their pursuit of excellence. Competitive consumers demonstrate a profound understanding of the eSports industry, including professional players, teams, tournaments, and game updates. The behavior of competitive consumers in eSports aligns closely with the principles of the Achievement Motivation Theory (Bányai et al., 2019). They exhibit distinct characteristics and behaviors indicative of their strong motivation to succeed in the gaming context. Bourdieu's social capital theory (Bourdieu, 2011) helps us understand their motivations. Competitive consumers prioritize honing their skills and excelling in eSports. They

actively participate in competitions, leagues, and events, driven by the desire to accumulate cultural capital within the community. Their relentless pursuit of mastery and recognition translates to a strong desire to be among the top players. By consistently practicing, refining their skills, and achieving success, they gain respect and admiration from their peers. Social interaction holds less significance for Competitive Consumers compared to others. While they might connect with other players for strategy discussions or training purposes, building a broader social network within the eSports scene isn't their primary focus. Goal orientation is a prominent feature, as they set specific and challenging objectives related to their game performance, such as achieving higher ranks, winning tournaments, or improving particular aspects of their gameplay (Wagner, 2006). Furthermore, competitive consumers derive satisfaction and fulfillment from outperforming their opponents, climbing the ranks, and gaining recognition within the eSports community. This desire for success in competitive games serves as a powerful motivating force. Persistent and dedicated, competitive consumers invest significant effort in enhancing their gaming skills. They willingly devote time and energy to training and practicing, all in pursuit of their objectives. Their drive to excel and surpass previous records and achievements is evident (Bányai et al., 2019; Rietz & Hallmann, 2023). Receiving recognition from peers, teammates, or the wider eSports community serves as a reinforcement for their continued efforts. Such acknowledgment reinforces their determination to persistently strive for improvement.

The final type of eSports consumers is Addictive Consumers. Within this category, both the level of social interaction and game preferences are extremely high. Addictive consumers in the realm of eSports refer to individuals who display compulsive and excessive behaviors concerning their involvement with sports activities. They may spend an excessive amount of time playing eSports genres, watching eSports events, or consuming eSports content, to the detriment of other important aspects of their lives. Prioritizing eSports over other responsibilities, their gaming habits may have negative effects on their physical and mental health. They may struggle to control the time they spend on eSports, frequently losing track and playing for longer than initially intended. The behavior of addictive consumers of eSports closely aligns with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Gaming Addiction Framework. According to this framework, a mental health condition known as gaming disorder is characterized by diminished control over gaming activities and persistent gaming despite adverse effects on various aspects of one's life (Balhara et al., 2020; Kuss & Griffiths, 2012). Addictive consumers may become excessively preoccupied with gaming, constantly thinking about it, planning their gaming sessions, and prioritizing it over other responsibilities and interests. Based on this framework, it can be inferred that eSports addiction may be driven by a need for escape, where addicted consumers use gaming as a means to escape from real-life stress, problems, or negative emotions. Despite experiencing negative consequences in their physical health, psychological well-being, relationships, or academic/professional life, addictive consumers may persist in excessive gaming (Kuss, 2013; Wu et al., 2021). eSports addiction can disrupt the daily lives of these consumers, impacting their sleep patterns, eating habits, and overall performance. Therefore, it is crucial for eSports organizations, families, and individuals to recognize the signs of addiction and to seek



professional help and support when necessary to address and manage eSports addiction healthily and productively. In summary, the study of eSports consumer behavior in Iran provides valuable insights into the factors influencing the popularity of eSports in the country. By recognizing the different types of eSports consumers and their motivations, policymakers, eSports organizations, and stakeholders can develop strategies to foster a holistic eSports ecosystem.

## **6. Conclusion**

Iran's eSports scene is flourishing thanks to the active use of streaming services like YouTube by gamers and eSports enthusiasts to produce and share content. It is crucial to understand that the world of eSports is constantly changing because it is a sociocultural domain that has been influenced by numerous factors. The development of different gaming preferences and the involvement of various social classes in Iran show how eSports is becoming a more popular sport. Comparing eSports to traditional sports, it stands out for its high accessibility and opportunities for participation. According to official statistics, this has helped to lessen gender inequality in Iranian eSports. The noteworthy 41% participation rate of women in these sports demonstrates improved opportunities for female engagement, a departure from the norms seen in traditional sports. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge the multiple behaviors and social arenas that influence eSports consumption. Various human and non-human elements determine and direct the level of access and participation opportunities. Nevertheless, the two primary factors influencing eSports consumption are the degree of social interaction and game preferences. These two factors give rise to five distinct consumer behaviors in the context of eSports, each exhibiting specific characteristics. Understanding these consumer behaviors and their preferences is critical for the success of eSports businesses and marketing activities in Iran. Some characteristics are culturally and socially specific, while others have universal appeal. To ensure success, eSports players must take into account global trends in eSports and tailor their marketing and advertising efforts to resonate with the Iranian audience.

## **7. Implications for policy and future research**

The knowledge of various consumer types can be used by eSports organizations and developers to customize their offerings. They can appeal to a wider audience and boost engagement by finding a balance between competitive gameplay and supporting social communities. This might entail planning both competitive tournaments and social gatherings that promote communication between players and spectators. The eSports industry has identified Addictive Consumers, which calls for proactive action to address gaming addiction. To educate gamers, parents, and educators about the warning signs and potential dangers of gaming addiction, policymakers and mental health specialists should work together to create awareness campaigns and educational initiatives. Public health programs can encourage people to play responsibly and strike a healthy balance between their gaming and other responsibilities. Additionally, eSports organizations can add tools

and features to their platforms that encourage players to take breaks, set time limits on their gaming, and offer resources for getting help if addiction problems develop.

The overall gaming experience can be improved by giving eSports fans more chances to interact with their favorite players and teams. This can strengthen the relationship between players and their audiences. Policymakers may need to take into account the best regulations as Iran's eSports market expands to guarantee fair competition, player welfare, and consumer protection. As well as addressing potential problems with match-fixing and doping, this may entail establishing guidelines for eSports organizations regarding player contracts, salaries, and working conditions. Due to the global nature of e-sports, Iranian policymakers can engage in international cooperation with other countries to share best practices, promote cross-cultural understanding, and develop joint initiatives to drive the growth and positive impact of eSports globally.

### Disclosure statement and funding

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest. The present study received no financial support from any organization or institution.

### Acknowledgment

We would like to give special thanks to all the participants in this study.

### References

- Anderson, D., Sweeney, K., Pasquini, E., Estes, B., & Zapalac, R. (2021). An exploration of esports consumer consumption patterns, fandom, and motives. *International Journal of eSports Research (IJER)*, 1(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJER.20210101.oa3>
- Balhara, Y. P. S., Singh, S., Saini, R., Kattula, D., Chukkali, S., & Bhargava, R. (2020). Development and validation of gaming disorder and hazardous gaming scale (GDHGS) based on the WHO framework (ICD-11 criteria) of disordered gaming. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 54, 102348. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102348>
- Bányai, F., Griffiths, M. D., Király, O., & Demetrovics, Z. (2019). The Psychology of Esports: A Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 35(2), 351-365. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-018-9763-1>
- Biegun, J., Edgerton, J. D., & Roberts, L. W. (2020). Measuring Problem Online Video Gaming and Its Association With Problem Gambling and Suspected Motivational, Mental Health, and Behavioral Risk Factors in a Sample of University Students. *Games and Culture*, 16(4), 434-456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019897524>
- Block, S., & Haack, F. (2021). *eSports: a new industry* The 20th International Scientific Conference Globalization and its Socio-Economic Consequences 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20219204002>
- Bourdieu, P. (2004). Structures and the habitus. In *Material culture: Critical concepts in the social sciences* (Vol. 1, pp. 107-134). [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Material\\_Culture/ksHMUr7sonEC?hl=en](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Material_Culture/ksHMUr7sonEC?hl=en)
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). The forms of capital. In *The sociology of economic life* (pp. 15). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429494338-6/forms-capital-pierre-bourdieu>



- Bourdieu, P. (2018). Distinction a social critique of the judgement of taste. In *Inequality* (pp. 32). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429499838-20/distinction-social-critique-judgement-taste-pierre-bourdieu>
- Bousquet, J., & Ertz, M. (2021). eSports: Historical Review, Current State, and Future Challenges. In *Handbook of Research on Pathways and Opportunities Into the Business of Esports* (pp. 24). IGI Global. <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/esports/281914>
- Clarke, A. E. (2003). Situational analyses: Grounded theory mapping after the postmodern turn. *Symbolic Interaction*, 26(4), 553-576. <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2003.26.4.553>
- Clarke, A. E. (2021). From grounded theory to situational analysis: What's new? Why? How? In *Developing grounded theory* (pp. 44). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315169170-16/grounded-theory-situational-analysis-adele-clarke>
- Clarke, A. E. (2022). Situating grounded theory and situational analysis in interpretive qualitative inquiry. In *Situational analysis in practice* (2nd ed., pp. 50). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003035923-6/situating-grounded-theory-situational-analysis-interpretive-qualitative-inquiry-adele-clarke>
- Clarke, A. E., Friese, C., & Washburn, R. S. (2017). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the interpretive turn*. Sage publications. <https://books.google.com/books?id=ha8kDwAAQBAJ>
- Crawford, G., & Gosling, V. (2009). More than a Game: Sports-Themed Video Games and Player Narratives. *Sociology of Sport*, 26(1), 50-66. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.26.1.50>
- Cunningham, G. B., Fairley, S., Ferkins, L., Kerwin, S., Lock, D., Shaw, S., & Wicker, P. (2018). eSport: Construct specifications and implications for sport management. *Sport Management Review*, 21(1), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.11.002>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Self-determination theory. In *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (Vol. 1). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446249215>
- DIREC. (2019). *The Most Significant Information of Digital Games Consumption in Iran*. <https://direc.ircg.ir/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/EnglishLandscape13990805.pdf>
- Dominteanu, T., Smîdu, N., Voinea, A., Dinciu, C.-C., Porfireanu, M.-C., & Iacobini, A. (2023). What are Esports? Introduction to the Global Phenomenon of Esports. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business Excellence*, 17(1), 1421-1430. <https://doi.org/10.2478/picbe-2023-0128>
- Egliston, B. (2018). E-sport, phenomenality and affect. *Transformations*, 31, 156-176. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/202495/>
- Fakazlı, A. (2020). The Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic on Digital Games and eSports. *International Journal of Sport Culture and Science*, 8(4), 335-344. <https://doi.org/10.14486/IntJSCS.2020.621>
- Formosa, J., O'Donnell, N., Horton, E. M., Türkay, S., Mandryk, R. L., Hawks, M., & Johnson, D. (2022). Definitions of Esports: A Systematic Review and Thematic Analysis. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 6(CHI PLAY), 1 - 45. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3549490>
- Funk, D. C., Pizzo, A. D., & Baker, B. J. (2018). eSport management: Embracing eSport education and research opportunities. *Sport Management Review*, 21(1), 7-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.008>
- Goldman, M., & Hedlund, D. (2020). Rebooting Content: Broadcasting Sport and Esports to Homes During COVID-19. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 13(3), 370-380. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2020-0227>

- Gros, D., Wanner, B., Hackenholt, A., Zawadzki, P., & Knautz, K. (2017). *World of Streaming. Motivation and Gratification on Twitch Social Computing and Social Media*. Human Behavior, Cham. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-58559-8\\_5#citeas](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-58559-8_5#citeas)
- Hallmann, K., & Giel, T. (2018). eSports—Competitive sports or recreational activity? *Sport Management Review*, 21(1), 14-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.011>
- Hamari, J., & Sjöblom, M. (2017). What is eSports and why do people watch it? *Internet Research*, 27(2), 211-232. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-04-2016-0085>
- Hogg, M. A. (2016). Social identity theory. In *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity Theory* (pp. 3-17). Springer. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-29869-6\\_1](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-29869-6_1)
- Huang, X. (2019). Understanding Bourdieu-cultural capital and habitus. *Review of European Studies*, 11(3), 45. <https://doi.org/10.5539/res.v11n3p45>
- Huston, C., Gracia B Cruz, A., & Zoppos, E. (2021). Dimensionalizing esports consumption: Alternative journeys to professional play. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 22(2), 456-475. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540520982364>
- Jang, W., & Byon, K. K. (2020). Antecedents and consequence associated with esports gameplay. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 21(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-01-2019-0013>
- Jenny, S. E., Gawrysiak, J., & Besombes, N. (2021). Esports. edu: An inventory and analysis of global higher education esports academic programming and curricula. *International Journal of Esports*. <https://hal.science/hal-03731250/>
- Jenny, S. E., Keiper, M. C., Taylor, B. J., Williams, D. P., Gawrysiak, J., Manning, R. D., & Tutka, P. M. (2018). eSports venues: A new sport business opportunity. *Journal of Applied Sport Management*, 10(1), 34-49. <https://doi.org/10.18666/JASM-2018-V10-11-8469>
- Jenny, S. E., Manning, R. D., Keiper, M. C., & Olrich, T. W. (2017). Virtual (ly) athletes: where eSports fit within the definition of “Sport”. *Quest*, 69(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2016.1144517>
- Jeong, D., Youk, S., & Baek, H. (2023). Refining esports: A quantitative cartography of esports literature. *Entertainment Computing*, 47, 100597. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.entcom.2023.100597>
- Johnson, M. R. (2021). Behind the Streams: The Off-Camera Labour of Game Live Streaming. *Games and Culture*, 16(8), 1001-1020. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120211005239>
- Jonasson, K., & Thiborg, J. (2010). Electronic sport and its impact on future sport. *Sport in Society*, 13(2), 287-299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430430903522996>
- Kovács, J. M., & Szabó, Á. (2022). Esport and simracing markets—The effects of COVID-19, difficulties and opportunities. *Society and Economy*, 44(4), 498-514. <https://doi.org/10.1556/204.2022.00012>
- Kuss, D. J. (2013). Internet gaming addiction: current perspectives. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 6, 125-137. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S39476>
- Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2012). Internet Gaming Addiction: A Systematic Review of Empirical Research. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 10(2), 278-296. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-011-9318-5>
- Lee, D., & Schoenstedt, L. J. (2011). Comparison of eSports and traditional sports consumption motives. *ICHPER-SD Journal Of Research*, 6(2), 39-44.
- Lepp, A., Dowdell, B., Yim, B., & Barkley, J. E. (2023). Esports Gamers, Recreational Gamers, and the Active Couch Potato Lifestyle. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, 15598276231184159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15598276231184159>

- Lettieri, E., & Orsenigo, C. (2020). Predicting soccer consumption: do eSports matter? Empirical insights from a machine learning approach. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 10(5), 523-544. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SBM-10-2019-0093>
- Macey, J., Tyrväinen, V., Pirkkalainen, H., & Hamari, J. (2022). Does esports spectating influence game consumption? *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 41(1), 181-197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2020.1797876>
- Mangeloja, E. (2019). Economics of esports. *Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies*, 24(2), 34-42. [http://ejbo.jyu.fi/pdf/ejbo\\_vol24\\_no2\\_pages\\_34-42.pdf](http://ejbo.jyu.fi/pdf/ejbo_vol24_no2_pages_34-42.pdf)
- McLeod, C. M., Xue, H., & Newman, J. I. (2021). Opportunity and inequality in the emerging esports labor market. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 57(8), 1279-1300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902211064093>
- Mostafa, R. B. (2021). From social capital to consumer engagement: the mediating role of consumer e-empowerment. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 15(2), 316-335. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-09-2020-0197>
- Oh, T., Lee, S., & Jang, H. (2023). Outcome Uncertainty and ESports Viewership: The Case of Overwatch League. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 24(8), 971-992. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15270025231187106>
- Örsoğlu, T., Yüzbaşıoğlu, B., & Pekel, H. A. (2023). eSports: Digital Games and Its Future From the Traditional Athletes' and eSports Players' Perspectives. *Simulation & Gaming*, 54(5), 534-553. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10468781231188668>
- Pizzo, A., Baker, B., Na, S., Lee, M. A., Kim, D., & Funk, D. (2017). eSport vs Sport: A Comparison of Spectator Motives. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 27(2), 108-123. <https://doi.org/10.32731/SMQ.272.062018.04>
- Pu, H., Kim, J., & Daprano, C. M. (2021). Can Esports Substitute Traditional Sports? The Convergence of Sports and Video Gaming during the Pandemic and Beyond. *Societies*, 11(4), 129. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc11040129>
- Qian, T. Y., Wang, J. J., Zhang, J. J., & Hulland, J. (2022). Fulfilling the basic psychological needs of esports fans: A self-determination theory approach. *Communication & sport*, 10(2), 216-240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479520943875>
- Reitman, J. G., Anderson-Coto, M. J., Wu, M., Lee, J. S., & Steinkuehler, C. (2019). Esports Research: A Literature Review. *Games and Culture*, 15(1), 32-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019840892>
- Rietz, J., & Hallmann, K. (2023). A systematic review on spectator behavior in esports: why do people watch? *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 24(1), 38-55. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-12-2021-0241>
- Rogers, E. M. (2014). Diffusion of innovations. In *An integrated approach to communication theory and research* (pp. 432-448). Routledge.
- Siisaiainen, M. (2003). Two concepts of social capital: Bourdieu vs. Putnam. *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, 40(2), 183-204. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292604014\\_Two\\_concepts\\_of\\_social\\_capital\\_Bourdieu\\_vs\\_Putnam](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292604014_Two_concepts_of_social_capital_Bourdieu_vs_Putnam)
- Siuda, P., Jasny, M., Mańkowski, D., & Sitek, M. (2023). The problematic nature of evaluating esports' "genuineness" using traditional sports' criteria: In-depth interviews with traditional sports and electronic sports journalists. *Leisure Studies*, 43(2), 235-248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2023.2215471>
- Sjöblom, M., Törhönen, M., Hamari, J., & Macey, J. (2017). Content structure is king: An empirical study on gratifications, game genres and content type on Twitch. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 73, 161-171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.03.036>

- Steinkuehler, C. (2019). Esports Research: Critical, Empirical, and Historical Studies of Competitive Videogame Play. *Games and Culture*, 15(1), 3-8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019836855>
- Summerley, R. (2019). The Development of Sports: A Comparative Analysis of the Early Institutionalization of Traditional Sports and E-Sports. *Games and Culture*, 15(1), 51-72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019838094>
- Sweeney, K., Tuttle, M. H., & Berg, M. D. (2019). Esports Gambling: Market Structure and Biases. *Games and Culture*, 16(1), 65-91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019872389>
- Trail, G. T., & James, J. D. (2001). The motivation scale for sport consumption: Assessment of the scale's psychometric properties. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 24(1), 108. <https://openurl.ebsco.com/EPDB%3Agcd%3A15%3A9135471/detailv2?sid=ebsco%3Aplink%3Ascholar&id=ebsco%3Agcd%3A4114024&crl=c>
- Wagner, M. G. (2006, June 26-29). *On the Scientific Relevance of eSports* Proceedings of the 2006 International Conference on Internet Computing & Conference on Computer Games Development, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220968200\\_On\\_the\\_Scientific\\_Relevance\\_of\\_eSports](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220968200_On_the_Scientific_Relevance_of_eSports)
- Wohn, D. Y., & Freeman, G. (2019). Live Streaming, Playing, and Money Spending Behaviors in eSports. *Games and Culture*, 15(1), 73-88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019859184>
- Wu, Y.-T., Hong, J.-C., Wu, Y.-F., & Ye, J.-H. (2021). eSport addiction, purchasing motivation and continuous purchasing intention on eSport peripheral products. *International Journal of e-Education, e-Business, e-Management and e-Learning*, 11(1), 21-33. <https://doi.org/10.17706/ijeeee.2021.11.1.21-33>
- Wulf, T., Schneider, F. M., & Beckert, S. (2018). Watching Players: An Exploration of Media Enjoyment on Twitch. *Games and Culture*, 15(3), 328-346. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412018788161>



SBJ

# نشریه کسب و کار در ورزش

آدرس نشریه: <https://sbj.alzahra.ac.ir/>

تابستان ۱۴۰۳، دوره ۴، شماره ۳، ص ۱۳-۳۷

شناسه: 10.22051/SBJ.2024.46500.1144



## تب ورزش‌های الکترونیکی در ایران: بررسی رفتارهای مصرف‌کنندگان و پویایی‌های فرهنگی در مصرف ورزش‌های الکترونیکی

رسول نوروزی سید حسینی<sup>۱</sup>

<sup>۱</sup> دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی، گروه علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس، تهران، ایران.

### کلیدواژه

تحلیل موقعیتی  
ترجیحات بازی  
مصرف‌کننده جدی  
مصرف‌کننده گام‌به‌گام  
ورزش الکترونیکی

### نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

### چکیده

**هدف:** این پژوهش به بررسی رفتارهای مصرف‌کننده در مصرف ورزش‌های الکترونیکی در ایران و پیامدهای آن در چشم‌انداز فرهنگی می‌پردازد.

**روش:** این پژوهش کیفی از رویکرد گراند تئوری برای بررسی رفتارهای مصرف‌کننده در مصرف ورزش‌های الکترونیکی در ایران استفاده کرده است. علاوه بر این، این مطالعه از تحلیل موقعیتی (SA) به‌عنوان رویکرد منتخب در گراند تئوری برای ارائه درک جامعی از زمینه، عرصه/جهان‌های اجتماعی و موقعیت‌های مصرف ورزش‌های الکترونیکی استفاده کرده است.

**یافته‌ها:** یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهد که رفتارهای مصرف‌کننده در حوزه مصرف ورزش‌های الکترونیکی در ایران به‌طور قابل توجهی تحت تأثیر دو عامل کلیدی است که عبارت‌اند از: (۱) ترجیحات بازی و (۲) تعاملات اجتماعی. این مطالعه پنج موقعیت متمایز از مصرف ورزش‌های الکترونیکی را که از تأثیر متقابل این عوامل دیدید می‌آیند، شناسایی می‌کند. این یافته‌ها با ارائه توصیفی جامع از رفتارهای مصرف‌کننده در مصرف ورزش‌های الکترونیکی به ادبیات کمک می‌کنند، و پویایی‌ها و ترجیحات فرهنگی در بافت ایران را روشن می‌کنند.

**اصالت و ابتکار مقاله:** این تحقیق پیامدهای عملی برای ذینفعان مختلف از جمله متخصصان صنعت ورزش الکترونیکی، بازاریابان و سیاست‌گذاران دارد. بینش‌های به‌دست‌آمده از درک رفتارهای مصرف‌کننده در مصرف ورزش‌های الکترونیکی می‌تواند به فرآیندهای تصمیم‌گیری استراتژیک، مانند توسعه بازی‌ها، کمپین‌های بازاریابی، و ایجاد محیط‌های اجتماعی جذاب برای علاقه‌مندان به ورزش‌های الکترونیکی کمک کند. این مطالعه با پر کردن شکاف بین تئوری و عمل، راه را برای توسعه رویکردهای مناسب برای پاسخگویی به نیازها و ترجیحات منحصربه‌فرد مصرف‌کنندگان ورزش‌های الکترونیکی ایرانی هموار می‌کند.

تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۲/۱۲/۰۱

تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۳/۰۳/۱۶





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

Maryam Koohfallah<sup>1</sup>, Hossein Abdolmaleki<sup>2\*</sup> , Mahvash Noorbakhsh<sup>3</sup>, Parivash Noorbakhsh<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD Candidate, Department of Sport Management, Karaj branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Sport Management, Karaj branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran.

<sup>3</sup>Professor, Department of Sport Management, Karaj branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran.

### 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.

### Keywords

Balanced Scorecard  
Brand Development  
eSports  
Strategic Analysis

### Article Type

Original Article

**Received:** 2024/01/06

**Accepted:** 2024/04/04

### How to Cite this Article:

Koohfallah, M., Abdolmaleki, H., Noorbakhsh, M., & Noorbakhsh, P. (2024). eSports Branding in a Globalized Era: A Multimethod Analysis of the FIFAE World Cup. *Sports Business Journal*, 4(3), 39-59. <https://www.doi.org/10.22051/SBJ.2024.46102.1135>





## 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. In 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 they 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  $i$ :  $L_A = \min(X_{Ai})$ ;  $U_A = \max(X_{Ai})$ ;  $M_A = (\prod_{i=1}^n X_{Ai})^{1/n}$ .

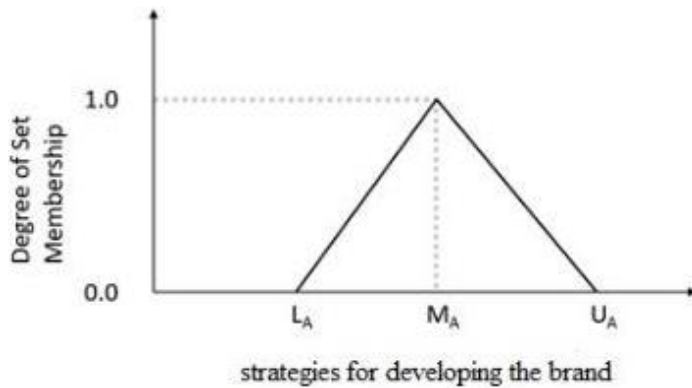


Figure 1. Triangular fuzzy number.

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  $D(\tilde{A})$  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:

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

If  $D(\tilde{A}) \geq 0.7$ , then the factor is retained

If  $D(\tilde{A}) < 0.7$ , 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.

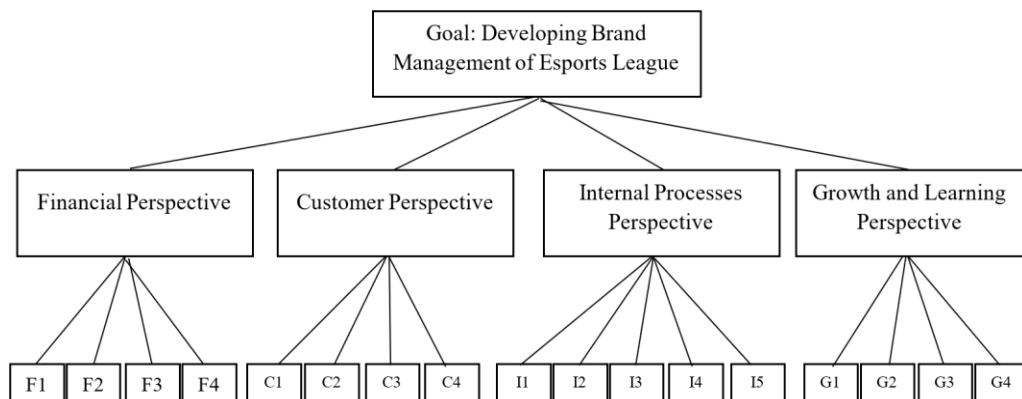


Figure 2. Hierarchy of the fuzzy framework.

- 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

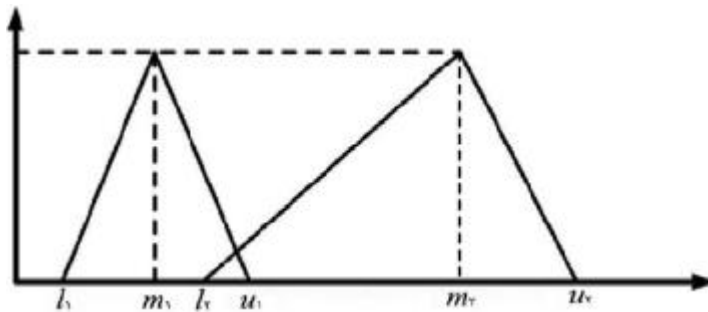
human behaviors. The decision maker can generally express their opinion in the form of optimistic, pessimistic, moderate, wholly relevant, and the like (Lotfi et al., 2012).

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

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):

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

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):

$$(5) \quad \begin{cases} V(M_1 \geq M_2) = 1 & \text{if } M_1 \geq M_2 \\ V(M_1 \geq M_2) = \text{hgt} (M_1 \cap M_2) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

We also have:

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

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

$$(6) \quad V(M_1 \geq M_2 \dots M_k) = V(M_1 \geq M_2), \dots V(M_1 \geq M_k)$$

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

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

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

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

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.

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

- 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) <sup>~</sup> |
|-----|---------------------|--|------------------------|
| 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   | Growth and learning | Legal gaps                               | 0.792                  |
| 6   |                     | Neglect of research                      | 0.740                  |
| 7   |                     | Weakness in fostering creativity         | 0.790                  |
| 8   |                     | Weakness in staffing management          | 0.788                  |



| Row | Perspective | Factor   | IndexD(A) <sup>~</sup> |
|-----|-------------|--|------------------------|
| 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 <sub>i</sub> ) |
|-----|---------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 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.

### Disclosure statement and funding

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest. The present study received no financial support from any organization or institution.

### Acknowledgment

We would like to give special thanks to all the participants in this study.

### References

- Abdolmaleki, H. (2020). Modelling the role of Ergonomy and Sportscape on Service Experience of Clients of E-Sport Business with mediating of E- Word of mouth. *Communication Management in Sport Media*, 8(1), 50-60. <https://doi.org/10.30473/jsm.2020.52424.1405>
- Abdolmaleki, H., Mirzazadeh, Z. S., & Ghahfarokhhi, E. A. (2018). Identify and prioritise factors affecting sports consumer behaviour in Iran. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 18(1-2), 42-62. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSM.2017.10012364>
- Abdolmaleki, H., Mohammadi, S., Babaei, M., Soheili, B., Dickson, G., & Funk, D. (2023). Co-branding drivers between professional sport organizations and on-field sports apparel sponsors. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 24(5), 985-1001. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-03-2023-0048>
- Abdolmaleki, H., Soheili, B., Varmus, M., & Khodayari, A. (2020). Presenting a new mixed method for measuring service quality of health clubs. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 20(5-6), 312. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSM.2020.115117>
- Akbari Yazdi, H., Hamidi, M., Sajjadi, S. N., & Khabiri, M. (2014). The analysis of service quality of I.R.Iran football premier league based on SERVQUAL. *Sport Management Studies*, 6(25), 15-38. [https://smrj.ssrc.ac.ir/article\\_3.html?lang=en](https://smrj.ssrc.ac.ir/article_3.html?lang=en)
- Anderson, A., Dixon, M. A., Oshiro, K. F., Wicker, P., Cunningham, G. B., & Heere, B. (2019). Managerial perceptions of factors affecting the design and delivery of sport for health programs for refugee populations. *Sport Management Review*, 22(1), 80-95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2018.06.015>



- Asagba, B. O. (2009). Perceived impediments to effective sports sponsorship in Nigeria. *International Journal of African & African-American Studies*, 7(1), 67-72. <https://oamg/work/162625618>
- Azimzadeh, S. M., Ehsani, M., Kordnaeij, A. a., & Kozechian, H. (2014). Identifying a conceptual model for starting-up small and medium sized sport enterprises. *Sport Management Studies*, 6(22), 189-208. [https://smrj.ssrc.ac.ir/article\\_216.html?lang=en](https://smrj.ssrc.ac.ir/article_216.html?lang=en)
- Baker, B., & Pizzo, A. (2021). Unpacking nuance among esports consumers: Market partitions within esports based on social media analytics. *International Journal of Esports., Fox School of Business Research Paper Forthcoming*, 1-14. <https://www.ijesports.org/article/53/html>
- Bridgewater, S. (2010). *Football brands*. Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9780230281363>
- Chan, F. T., & Kumar, N. (2007). Global supplier development considering risk factors using fuzzy extended AHP-based approach. *Omega*, 35(4), 417-431. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.omega.2005.08.004>
- Chanavat, N. (2017). French football, foreign investors: global sports as country branding. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 38(6), 3-10. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBS-04-2017-0053>
- Chang, D.-Y. (1996). Applications of the extent analysis method on fuzzy AHP. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 95(3), 649-655. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0377-2217\(95\)00300-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0377-2217(95)00300-2)
- Costa, C. A. (2005). The status and future of sport management: A Delphi study. *Journal of Sport Management*, 19(2), 117-142. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.19.2.117>
- Cunningham, G. B., Fairley, S., Ferkins, L., Kerwin, S., Lock, D., Shaw, S., & Wicker, P. (2018). eSport: Construct specifications and implications for sport management. *Sport Management Review*, 21(1), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.11.002>
- Dalkey, N., Brown, B., & Cochran, S. (1970). Use of self-ratings to improve group estimates: Experimental evaluation of Delphi procedures. *Technological Forecasting*, 1(3), 283-291. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0099-3964\(70\)90029-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0099-3964(70)90029-3)
- Dilek, S. E. (2019). E-Sport Events within Tourism Paradigm: A Conceptual Discussion. *Uluslararası Güncel Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 3(1), 12-22. <https://doi.org/10.30625/ijctr.525426>
- Eizadi, A., Shabani Bahar, G., Goodarzi, M., & Honari, H. (2017). Development of Marketing Strategic Planning for Planning for Iranian Football Premier League Clubs with SWOT Analysis. *Applied Research in Sport Management*, 6(2), 21-34. [https://arsmb.journals.pnu.ac.ir/article\\_4294.html?lang=en](https://arsmb.journals.pnu.ac.ir/article_4294.html?lang=en)
- Finch, D. J., Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., & Mikkelson, A. (2020). Esport sponsorship: Practitioners' perspectives on emerging trends. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, 9(1), 59-74. <https://hstalks.com/article/5630/esport-sponsorship-practitioners-perspectives-on-e/>
- Funk, D. C., Pizzo, A. D., & Baker, B. J. (2018). eSport management: Embracing eSport education and research opportunities. *Sport Management Review*, 21(1), 7-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.008>
- Hollebeek, L. D., & Chen, T. (2014). Exploring positively-versus negatively-valenced brand engagement: a conceptual model. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 23(1), 62-74. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2013-0332>
- Hsu, T., & Yang, T. (2000). Application of fuzzy analytic hierarchy process in the selection of advertising media. *Journal of Management and Systems*, 7(1), 19-39.

- Ishikawa, A., Amagasa, M., Shiga, T., Tomizawa, G., Tatsuta, R., & Mieno, H. (1993). The maximum Delphi method and fuzzy Delphi method via fuzzy integration. *Fuzzy Sets and Systems*, 55(3), 241-253. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0165-0114\(93\)90251-C](https://doi.org/10.1016/0165-0114(93)90251-C)
- Jang, W. W., & Byon, K. K. (2020). Antecedents of esports gameplay intention: Genre as a moderator. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 109, 106336.
- Jensen, M. B., & Beckmann, S. C. (2009). Determinants of innovation and creativity in corporate branding: Findings from Denmark. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(7), 468-479. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2550138>
- Kashtidar, M., Gholizadeh, B., Okhravi, A., & Abdolmaleki, H. (2017). Identify Assess Service Quality and Performance of Women's Health Clubs in Mashhad Using Combined Fuzzy AHP, QFD & BSC Method. *Sport Management Studies*, 9(45), 191-212. <https://doi.org/10.22089/smrj.2017.3708.1726>
- Keshavarz, L., Farahani, A., & Alizadeh Golrizi, A. (2017). An Analysis of Factors Affecting the Beneficiaries' Behavior in Commercialization of Sport Research. *Scientific Journal Of Organizational Behavior Management in Sport Studies*, 4(3), 11-20. [https://fmss.journals.pnu.ac.ir/article\\_3963.html?lang=en](https://fmss.journals.pnu.ac.ir/article_3963.html?lang=en)
- Khabiri, M., Ghaffari, H., & Elahi, A. (2004). *Comparing the current situation of Islamic Republic of Iran's Pro-Football League with the standards of UEFA and selecting clubs from countries such as Japan, Turkey, The Emirates and South Korea*. Tehran, Iran.
- Kim, K., Byon, K. K., & Baek, W. (2020). Customer-to-customer value co-creation and co-destruction in sporting events. *The Service Industries Journal*, 40(9-10), 633-655. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2019.1586887>
- Kotler, P. T. (2019). *Marketing management*. Pearson UK. [https://books.google.com/books?id=\\_YZ-fDwAAQBAJ](https://books.google.com/books?id=_YZ-fDwAAQBAJ)
- Kumar, P. (2005). *Market for ecosystem services*. <http://hdl.handle.net/10919/66967>
- Kunkel, T., Funk, D., & King, C. (2014). Developing a conceptual understanding of consumer-based league brand associations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(1), 49-67. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2011-0153>
- Lee, M. (2017). *Motivated processing of commercial information in televised sports: How team performance influences cognitive information processing and attitude formations*. [PhD Dissertation, Indiana University]. USA. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/5f6c409afd084afd6a2acd0f8e2a04a5/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>
- Lotfi, S., Hossein Zade, A., Faragi, A., & Ahmadi, M. (2012). Investigation of Spatial Distribution of Urban Parks and Site Selections of New Parks Using Fuzzy Logic and Analytical Hierarchic Process (Case Study: Babolsar). *Journal of Environmental Studies*, 38(3), 147-154. <https://doi.org/10.22059/JES.2012.29156>
- Mahmoudabadi, M. Z., Razavi, S. M. J., & Abdolmaleki, H. (2019). A structural model for investigating the role of relationship marketing and brand equity in the development of the business performance of private sport clubs. *International Sports Studies*, 41(1), 13. <https://doi.org/doi:10.30819/iss.41-1.05>
- Manoli, A. E. (2020). Brand capabilities in English Premier League clubs. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 20(1), 30-46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2019.1693607>
- Mohammadi, S., Rayner, M., Ghaffarisadr, S. I., & Abdolmaleki, H. (2023). Sponsorship Strategies and Branding in Esports. In *Sports Sponsorship and Branding* (pp. 39-55). Routledge.
- Naha, S., & Hassan, D. (2018). Introduction: ethical concerns in sport governance. *Sport in Society*, 21(5), 721-723. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1400783>



- Najafikolori, M., Goodarzi, M., Farahani, A., & Esmaeli Bidhendi, H. (2012). Effective Factors of Corruption in Sport Organizations (Case Study : Football Federation of I.R Iran). *Journal of Sport Management*, 4(14), 109-122. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jsm.2012.28907>
- Osuna Ramírez, S. A., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2019). I hate what you love: brand polarization and negativity towards brands as an opportunity for brand management. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 28(5), 614-632. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-03-2018-1811>
- Pedroso, G., Bermann, C., & Sanches-Pereira, A. (2018). Combining the functional unit concept and the analytic hierarchy process method for performance assessment of public transport options. *Case Studies on Transport Policy*, 6(4), 722-736. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cstp.2018.09.002>
- Pizzo, A., Jones, G., Baker, B., Funk, D., & Kunkel, T. (2021). Sensemaking of novelty: The dynamic nature of integrating esports within a traditional sport organization. *Sport Management Review*, 25(3), 383-405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14413523.2021.1935609>
- Pizzo, A. D., Na, S., Baker, B. J., Lee, M. A., Kim, D., & Funk, D. C. (2018). eSport vs. Sport: A Comparison of Spectator Motives. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 27(2), 108-123. <https://doi.org/10.32731/SMQ.272.062018.04>
- Price, J., Farrington, N., & Hall, L. (2013). Changing the game? The impact of Twitter on relationships between football clubs, supporters and the sports media. *Soccer & Society*, 14(4), 446-461. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2013.810431>
- Rasooli, M., Khabiri, M., Elahi, A., & Aghaee, N. (2016). Internal factors and obstacles of brand management in Iran's pro league football clubs. *Sport Management Studies*, 8(35), 51-66. <https://doi.org/10.22089/smrj.2016.718>
- Rezaei, S., Ehsani, M., Kuzhchian, Hashem. Amiri, M. (2015). Designing effective commercialization mechanisms for football clubs in Iran. *Research in Sport Management & Motor Behavior*, 5(9), 119-130. <http://jrsm.khu.ac.ir/article-1-2300-en.html>
- Richelieu, A. (2008). Creating and branding sport products. In *Sport Marketing* (1st ed.). Henry Stewart Talks. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284450143\\_Creating\\_and\\_branding\\_sport\\_products\\_Chap\\_3\\_in\\_S\\_Chadwick\\_Ed\\_Sport\\_Marketing\\_London\\_Great\\_Britain\\_Henry\\_Stewart\\_Talks\\_May\\_2008](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284450143_Creating_and_branding_sport_products_Chap_3_in_S_Chadwick_Ed_Sport_Marketing_London_Great_Britain_Henry_Stewart_Talks_May_2008)
- Richelieu, A., & Lessard, S. (2014). Long gone the glory days: is branding of any help? The case of formerly successful European football teams. *Sport, Business and Management*, 4(4), 284-297. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SBM-11-2013-0043>
- Saatchian, V., Elahi, A., & Rasouli, M. (2012). Power Balance: An Analysis of the Competitive Balance Trend of the Iranian Professional Football League and the European Premier League Using the HICB Index. *Sport Management Studies*, 15, 15. <https://en.civilica.com/doc/194424/>
- Saaty, T. L. (1980). *The Analytic Hierarchy Process: Planning, Priority Setting, Resource Allocation*. McGraw-Hill International Book Company. <https://books.google.com/books?id=Xxi7AAAAIAAJ>
- Saaty, T. L. (2000). *Fundamentals of decision making and priority theory with the analytic hierarchy process*. RWS publications. <https://books.google.com/books?id=wct10TlbbiUC>
- Saber Sheikh, R. (2013). *Identify the parameters that determine the brand value and provide a model for pricing and brand valuation of the International Exhibition Company*. [Master of science, School of Management, Islamic Azad University of Central Tehran Branch]. Tehran, Iran.
- Schnitzer, M., Scheiber, S., Lang, M., Brandstetter, E., & Kopp, M. (2014). Perception of the new competition formats in the Innsbruck 2012 Youth Olympic Games sports

- programme—A spectators' perspective. *Sport Management Review*, 17(4), 432-443. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.01.002>
- Scholz, T. M. (2019). *eSports is Business*. Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-11199-1>
- Slavich, M. A., Dwyer, B., & Rufer, L. (2018). An evolving experience: An investigation of the impact of sporting event factors on spectator satisfaction. *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 3(1), 79-98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24704067.2017.1411162>
- Sui, S., & Baum, M. (2014). Internationalization strategy, firm resources and the survival of SMEs in the export market. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 45(7), 821-841. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2014.11>
- Tallman, S., Luo, Y., & Buckley, P. (2017). Business Models in Global Competition. *Global Strategy Journal*, 8(4), 517-535. <https://doi.org/10.1002/gsj.1165>
- Tomlinson, A. (2014). The supreme leader sails on: Leadership, ethics and governance in FIFA. *Sport in Society*, 17(9), 1155-1169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2013.856590>
- Wu, C.-H., & Fang, W.-C. (2011). Combining the Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process and the fuzzy Delphi method for developing critical competences of electronic commerce professional managers. *Quality & Quantity*, 45, 751-768. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-010-9425-6>



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

مریم کوه‌فلاح<sup>۱</sup>، حسین عبدالمالکی<sup>۲\*</sup>، مهوش نوربخش<sup>۲</sup>، پروش نوربخش<sup>۳</sup>

<sup>۱</sup> دانشجوی دکتری، گروه مدیریت ورزشی، واحد کرج، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، کرج، ایران.

<sup>۲</sup> استادیار، گروه مدیریت ورزشی، واحد کرج، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، کرج، ایران.

<sup>۳</sup> استاد، گروه مدیریت ورزشی، واحد کرج، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، کرج، ایران.

### کلیدواژه

تحلیل استراتژیک  
توسعه برند  
کارت امتیازی متوازن  
ورزش‌های الکترونیکی

### نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

### 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 فرایندهای داخلی، نادیده گرفتن تحقیقات از دیدگاه رشد و یادگیری، نادیده گرفتن روش‌های جدید برای پول گرفتن و حامیانگی 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.

تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۲/۱۰/۱۶

تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۳/۰۱/۱۶





## The Role of Attractive Social Media Content on Fan Loyalty with the Mediating Role of Athletes' Popularity

Vajiheh Javani<sup>1\*</sup>, Yasser Jabbar Abdel-Milaji<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Tabriz, Iran.

<sup>2</sup> MA in Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Tabriz, Iran.

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** With the proliferation of social media platforms, sports clubs are leveraging these channels to foster fan engagement and nurture brand loyalty. This study investigates the intricate interplay between generating Attractive content, player popularity, and football fan loyalty.

**Methodology:** Data was collected via an online survey employing convenience sampling, with the target audience consisting of 300 active social media users who are fans of a particular football team, by using structural equation modeling on the 240 complete responses received.

**Findings:** The research unveils compelling findings. The analysis reveals that generating attractive content exerts a significant direct impact on both player popularity and fan loyalty. Moreover, player popularity acts as a potent mediating force, indirectly enhancing the influence of attractive content on fan loyalty. Notably, over 24% of the effect of generating attractive content on fostering fan loyalty can be attributed to the mediating role of player popularity. These insights underscore the synergistic relationship between captivating content, celebrated athletes, and devoted fan bases. The research suggests that sports managers should: 1) Focus on creating visually appealing, emotionally resonant content; 2) Leverage player popularity to amplify the impact of content on fan loyalty; 3) Foster synergies between content, players, and fans to build a devoted fan base.

**Originality:** In this research, the mediating role of athletes' popularity on fans' loyalty was evaluated.

### Keywords

Athlete Popularity  
Attractive Content  
Fan Loyalty  
Social Media

### Article Type

Research Paper

**Received:** 2024/03/27

**Accepted:** 2024/04/21

### How to Cite this Article:

Javani, V., & Jabbar Abdel-Milaji, Y. (2024). The Role of Attractive Social Media Content on Fan Loyalty with the Mediating Role of Athletes' Popularity. *Sports Business Journal*, 4(3), 61-73. <https://www.doi.org/10.22051/SBJ.2024.46775.1150>



## 1. Introduction

The digitalization of human interactions with information technologies, as well as the expanding role of these technologies in daily life, have precipitated profound transformations across numerous facets of human existence. Consequently, users of these technologies have been exposed to novel experiences in their interactions with the information (Tghipanahi et al., 2019). In the wake of the remarkable surge in technological advancements and adoption over the past few years, a heightened interest has emerged regarding integrating social media platforms into well-established practices such as fostering brand loyalty and nurturing customer relationships (CRM) (Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018). Social media has evolved into a ubiquitous marketing tool, embraced by nearly every organization seeking to expand their business or enhance their appeal to their existing target audience (Alalwan et al., 2017).

Enterprises endeavor to amplify and entrench consumer engagement with their brands, as this phenomenon has been demonstrated to be a significant driving force behind fostering loyalty, which consequently enhances revenue streams (Islam et al., 2018). Furthermore, it strengthens relational bonds (Behnam et al., 2021) and bolsters the firm's competitive edge (Rohm et al., 2013). Consumer engagement is conceptualized as the "behavioral manifestations exhibiting a brand or firm orientation, transcending mere purchase, arising from motivational catalysts." The online interactions between brands and consumers, particularly those facilitated by social media platforms such as Facebook, constitute intricate multi-party discourses, resulting in a deepened state of consumer engagement (Rohm et al., 2013).

In the sporting context, fan engagement constitutes a form of customer engagement behavior centered on the fan's non-transactional extra-role behavior (Yoshida et al., 2014). Fans engage in various activities on social media platforms, some active and others relatively passive (Malthouse et al., 2013). The Consumers Online Brand Related Activities (COBRA) framework categorizes fan activities into consumption, contribution, and creation (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Consumption refers to the mere viewing of shared content. At the same time, contribution encompasses activities such as liking, sharing, or commenting on existing content, and creation involves activities conceived by users, such as posting reviews and photographs and utilizing hashtags (Dolan et al., 2016). The disseminated content can be characterized by (1) content vividness or the extent to which the media richness elicits sensory activation, and (2) content typology, i.e., whether the content pertains to providing information, entertainment, remuneration, or social activities (Luarn et al., 2015).

Consumer engagement through social media platforms holds particular relevance in the context of sports clubs, which rank among the most valuable brands globally and engage a substantial, loyal fan base (Yun et al., 2021). Owing to the robust group cohesion exhibited by sports enthusiasts on the internet (Stavros et al., 2014), social media content presents as a potential instrument for sports clubs to foster engagement with fan communities. However, despite the exponential growth in the volume of social media content disseminated by various brands, the engagement level of social media users has not escalated proportionately (Kaul et al., 2015).

In today's digital landscape, where social media platforms have become integral to consumer engagement strategies, it is essential to investigate the impact of creating attractive content by sports clubs in virtual spaces, leveraging the popularity of athletes. This area of inquiry holds significant relevance as content disseminated through these platforms plays a vital role in shaping consumer engagement (Voorveld, 2019).

This shift towards digital brand-building has become particularly pronounced in the sports industry, where athletes have amassed vast, devoted followings across various social media channels. Leveraging this popularity allows clubs to more directly influence their public perception and how fans consume their brand. Adler (1985, 2006)'s research highlights how popularity-based attributes fundamentally shape a star's brand image. These attributes, as defined by Stigler and Becker (1977), reflect the star's ability to cultivate consumption capital among their fanbase. Similarly, sports clubs must now consider how to harness the popularity and consumption capital of their star athletes to bolster their own brand identity and fan engagement. An essential component of this dynamic is the star's media presence and how they are portrayed across various platforms. Effectively leveraging media channels allows stars to connect directly with fans, showcase their talents, and reinforce their unique persona. The measure of a star's eccentric appearance can be a crucial indicator of how visually distinctive their "human brand" is compared to equivalently talented peers. Sports clubs must apply these same principles to their digital content strategies, using social media to amplify the distinctive visual identities and personalities of their star athletes.

The potential for athlete fame and popularity to act as a mediator in enhancing fan loyalty warrants in-depth exploration. As sports clubs strive to nurture lasting connections with their fan base, understanding the dynamics of how compelling content, infused with the allure of renowned athletes, can captivate audiences and foster enduring loyalty is crucial. Comprehensive research is necessary to provide sports clubs with data-driven insights and actionable strategies. By uncovering the intricacies of consumer behavior, content preferences, and the influence of athlete popularity, clubs can optimize their online presence, customize their content offerings, and cultivate an engaged and loyal fan community. Ultimately, this knowledge can empower sports clubs to effectively leverage the fame and appeal of their athletes, solidifying their brand identity and ensuring long-term success in the highly competitive sports industry.

## **2. Theoretical background**

Social media platforms have become powerful tools for sports clubs to engage with their fan base and cultivate a strong brand image, according to Annamalai et al. (2021) low-visibility content, such as photographs, which garners the highest engagement on these platforms. This finding highlights the importance of visual content in capturing the attention of fans and fostering interaction.

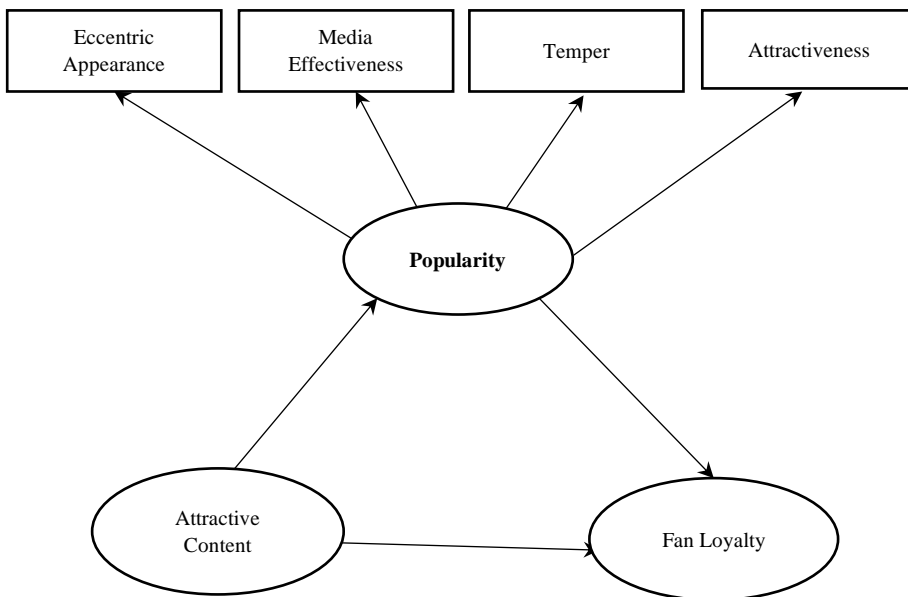
Nisar et al. (2018) Further, it emphasizes the significance of customer interactivity facilitated through social media platforms. Their findings suggest that heightened interactivity can be perceived as an Attractive attribute, consequently augmenting



spectatorship. By engaging with fans through social media channels, sports clubs can create a sense of community and foster a deeper connection with their followers.

Moreover, the popularity of athletes plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior and strengthening brand image (Hofmann et al., 2021). Popularity refers to the level of recognition, acceptance, and desirability that a product, brand, or person enjoys among consumers. By strategically leveraging the fame and charisma of their star players, sports clubs can craft content that resonates deeply with fans, fostering a sense of connection and allegiance.

Furthermore, the popularity of athletes transcends geographical boundaries, enabling sports clubs to expand their reach and tap into new markets (Lardo et al., 2017). By collaborating with influential athletes, clubs can expose their brand to diverse audiences, potentially attracting new fans and broadening their support base. This approach allows sports clubs to capitalize on the widespread appeal of their star players, extending their brand's reach beyond traditional regional or national boundaries. To our knowledge, the impact of athletes' popularity on the association between generating attractive content and brand loyalty has yet to be considered in the context of Iranian football fans.



**Figure 1.** Research Conceptual Model.

### 3. Methodology

This study is applied in its purpose, descriptive in its methodology, and relies on a survey-based approach for data collection. The data was collected through an online questionnaire designed by the researcher and distributed online via convenience sampling. The questionnaire consisted of 23 questions using a 5-point Likert scale. The target audience consisted of 300 active social media users on Instagram and Twitter who

were Iranian football fans of a particular team. A total of 240 complete responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 60%. In structural equation modeling (SEM), a minimum sample size of 5 to 15 observations per variable is recommended. To ensure the questionnaire's effectiveness, we assessed its validity through item cross-loadings, convergent validity, Fornell-Larcker's test, and average variance extracted (AVE). In addition, composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to evaluate the instrument's reliability. The detailed findings of these analyses are presented in the Results section.

## 4. Results

Partial least squares (PLS) software utilizes a variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) technique. This approach enables the simultaneous evaluation of theoretical constructs and their corresponding measurement instruments. The evaluation process consists of two distinct stages: the measurement model and the structural model tests. The measurement model test focuses on establishing the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments used in the study. This ensures that these instruments accurately capture the intended theoretical constructs. On the other hand, the structural model test delves into analyzing the research hypotheses and the relationships between the latent variables. This stage assesses the proposed theoretical model and its ability to explain the observed data. Following this structure, the results of the measurement model test will be presented first, followed by those of the structural model test.

### 4.1. Measurement model test

Table 1 shows the results of computing the extracted average variance, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha.

**Table 1.** Indices of mean-variance extracted, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha.

| Research Variables   | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Attractive           | 0.870            | 0.920                 | 0.794                      |
| Eccentric Appearance | 0.884            | 0.928                 | 0.811                      |
| Fan Loyalty          | 0.896            | 0.928                 | 0.766                      |
| Attractive Content   | 0.944            | 0.960                 | 0.856                      |
| Media Effectiveness  | 0.900            | 0.937                 | 0.833                      |
| Popularity           | 0.780            | 0.872                 | 0.695                      |
| Temper               | 0.829            | 0.898                 | 0.746                      |

The analysis demonstrates the questionnaire's reliability. All composite reliability values exceed 0.7, and average variance extracted (AVE) values surpass 0.5, considered acceptable thresholds. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all latent variables are above the recommended threshold of 0.7. Additionally, the examination of item cross-loadings revealed no need for item removal, indicating good construct validity. The final test in the measurement model section examined the quality of the measurement instruments, whose results are shown in Table 2. SSO is the sum of squares of

observations for each latent variable block, SSE is the sum of squared prediction errors for each latent variable block, and SSE/SSO indicates the commonality validity index.

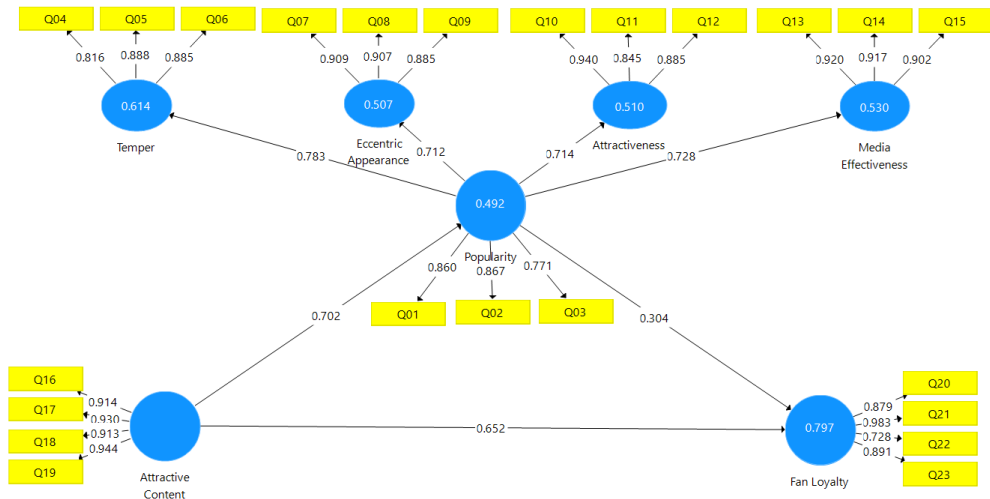
**Table 2.** Index of Construct Cross validity.

| Research Variables   | SSO      | SSE      | Q <sup>2</sup> (=1-SSE/SSO) |
|----------------------|----------|----------|-----------------------------|
| Attractiveness       | 750.000  | 464.371  | 0.381                       |
| Eccentric Appearance | 750.000  | 462.567  | 0.383                       |
| Fan Loyalty          | 1000.000 | 437.425  | 0.563                       |
| Attractive Content   | 1000.000 | 1000.000 |                             |
| Media Effectiveness  | 750.000  | 436.158  | 0.418                       |
| Popularity           | 750.000  | 506.862  | 0.324                       |
| Temper               | 750.000  | 426.921  | 0.431                       |

A positive value for the commonality validity index (Q<sup>2</sup>) of each latent variable indicates acceptable quality in the measurement model. As shown in Table 2, all Q<sup>2</sup> values are positive, confirming the adequacy of the measurement instruments used in this study.

**4.2. Structural model test**

The data analysis results obtained from the software are presented in Figures 1 and 2. To measure the significance of the causal relationships between the variables, the t-value index was used.



**Figure 1.** Path coefficients and factor loading of the variables.

Within PLS software, the t-value serves as a critical indicator for the significance of the relationships between variables. This statistic determines whether to accept or reject the research hypotheses. When the t-value exceeds 1.96 and 2.58, the corresponding hypotheses are confirmed at the 95% and 99% confidence levels, respectively. In simpler

terms, t-values greater than 1.96 are considered statistically significant at the 0.05 level, while those exceeding 2.58 are significant at the 0.01 level.

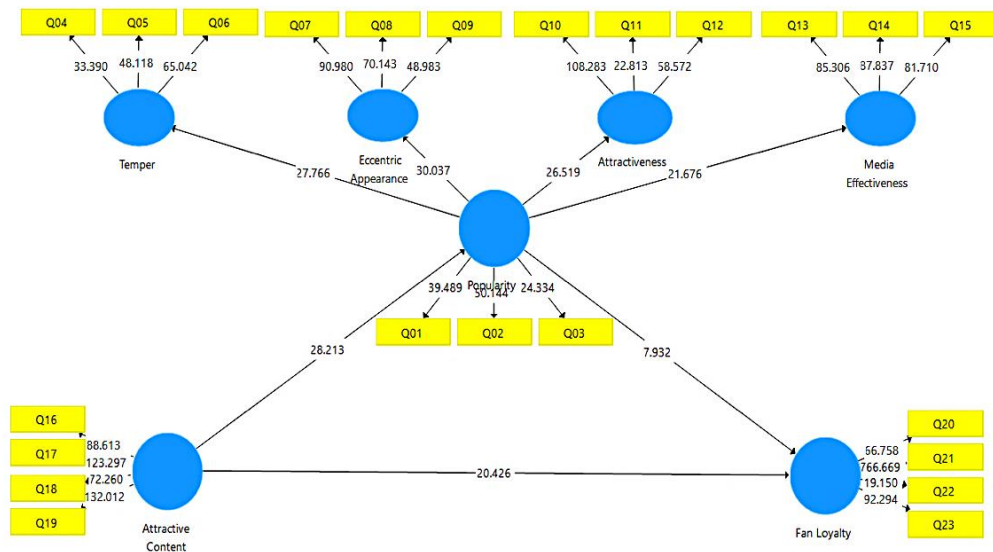


Figure 2. T-values for testing the significance of path coefficients and factor loadings.

Table 4 presents the path coefficients, standard deviations, t-values, and significance levels for all paths in the model, investigating the impact of generating Attractive content by sports clubs on social media on fostering fan loyalty.

Table 3. Original Sample and T Statistic value.

| Research Variables               | Path Coefficient | S. D  | T-statistic | Sig.  |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| Attractive Content→ Fan Loyalty  | 0.652            | 0.030 | 20.426      | 0.001 |
| Attractive Content→ Popularity   | 0.702            | 0.027 | 28.213      | 0.001 |
| Popularity→ Attractiveness       | 0.714            | 0.028 | 25.889      | 0.001 |
| Popularity→ Eccentric Appearance | 0.712            | 0.023 | 30.378      | 0.001 |
| Popularity→ Fan Loyalty          | 0.304            | 0.037 | 7.932       | 0.001 |
| Popularity→ Media Effectiveness  | 0.728            | 0.032 | 22.476      | 0.001 |
| Popularity→ Temper               | 0.783            | 0.030 | 26.241      | 0.001 |

Table 3 reveals that the path coefficients for search engine marketing, social media marketing, content marketing, mobile marketing, and email marketing are all significant at the 0.05 error level. However, the variables of affiliate marketing and retargeting do not exhibit significance at the same level.

Figure 2 presents the multiple determination coefficient (R-squared) value for this study at 0.94. Considering the general benchmarks of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 as weak, moderate, and strong values for this index, respectively, the obtained value can be considered acceptable for the designed model. This implies that the independent variables account for 94% of the variance in the dependent variable.

The combined analysis of composite reliability, extracted variance, model determination coefficient, and goodness-of-fit index strongly suggests that the proposed path analysis model aligns well with empirical observations and theoretical assumptions. This indicates a perfect model fit.

Following the data analysis protocol, the research variables are assessed after validating the measurement model's fitness. This evaluation considers the path coefficient, t-statistic, and information presented in [Figures 1 and 2](#) (factor loadings, path coefficients, and their significance levels). The path coefficient reflects the directional influence of one construct on another. Positive coefficients signify a direct relationship, while negative coefficients indicate an inverse relationship. Notably, a path coefficient is considered statistically significant at the 95% confidence level if its corresponding t-statistic exceeds 1.96. This signifies a confirmed relationship between the associated variables.

According to the research findings based on the significance of paths, the variable of Generating Attractive Content with a path coefficient of 0.652 and the variable of player Popularity with a path coefficient of 0.304 significantly affects fan loyalty. All these paths are essential at the 0.05 level, and the path coefficients are in good condition, confirming the conceptual model designed.

This study employed the Variance Accounted For (VAF) measure to assess the strength of the indirect effect mediated by the variable. VAF ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating a more substantial indirect effect. It quantifies the proportion of the total impact attributed to the indirect pathway. Using the formula (1), the VAF in this study was calculated to be 0.246. This value suggests that over 24% of the influence of generating Attractive content sports clubs on social media on enhancing fan loyalty can be indirectly explained by the mediating effect of player popularity.

$$VAF = \frac{a \times b}{(a \times b) + c} \quad (1)$$

The combined analysis of composite reliability, extracted variance, model determination coefficient, and model goodness index provides strong evidence supporting the model's alignment with empirical observations and theoretical underpinnings. This signifies a good model fit. Therefore, the model of the impact of generating Attractive content for sports clubs on social media on enhancing fan loyalty is confirmed.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The findings from this comprehensive study provide compelling evidence that generating attractive content has a significant impact on fostering brand loyalty, with player popularity serving as a critical mediating force. Through rigorous analysis, it became clear that when brands prioritize creating content that captivates and resonates with their target audience, it triggers a potent ripple effect that strengthens consumer attachment and allegiance. Remarkably, this influence is a future chance by the involvement of famous players or personalities within the respective domain. As these celebrated figures amplify and influence the content, it enhances its appeal and reach, bolstering brand loyalty among fans and followers. This intricate interplay between content appeal, player fame, and

consumer devotion to brands unveils a strategic pathway that savvy organizations can harness to cement enduring relationships with their audiences.

Social media has exploded in popularity over the past few years, becoming a powerful tool for sports clubs to boost their players' fame. The use of social media by sports clubs has significantly increased in recent years, with platforms like Twitter and Facebook being critical tools for fan engagement. In today's digital age, having a solid online presence is crucial for sports organizations to connect with their fanbase, share news, and promote their brand. Clubs using social media to share exciting, engaging content about their players gain a significant advantage. Social media allows this content to spread quickly and reach fans everywhere, not just locally. Platforms like Instagram and Twitter make it easy for clubs to directly connect with their fan base in ways that were impossible before. Fans feel closer to the players when they get a glimpse into their lives off the field. As social media continues to proliferate, its importance in driving player popularity keeps increasing. Sports clubs must make creative, attractive content for social media a top priority to ensure their stars stay relevant and beloved by fans worldwide. Social media has ushered in a paradigm shift in how sports clubs and players connect with their fans and cultivate popularity. These digital platforms have emerged as indispensable tools for clubs to generate and disseminate attractive content that resonates with their audience. By leveraging the ubiquity and real-time nature of social media, clubs can seamlessly share behind-the-scenes glimpses, highlight reels, and personal stories, fostering a sense of intimacy and connection with their players. This constant stream of engaging content not only entertains and informs fans but also amplifies the visibility and relatability of players, propelling them into the limelight. As social media usage continues to surge exponentially, its ability to shape narratives, mold perceptions, and drive conversations has become increasingly influential. Consequently, clubs that adeptly harness the power of social media to deliver captivating content are poised to elevate the popularity of their players, cultivating ardent fanbases and forging deeper emotional bonds with their audiences.

The ability to craft Attractive, captivating content is a potent driver of brand loyalty in today's content-saturated landscape. When brands consistently deliver content that resonates with their target audience, they forge a profound connection that transcends the transactional nature of typical consumer relationships. Attractive content can evoke emotions, spark conversations, and establish a sense of community around the brand. [Mu et al. \(2021\)](#) Emphasize the importance of high-quality, original, and goal-consistent content, particularly highlighting the hedonic features of products. [Weiger et al. \(2017\)](#) Further support this, demonstrating the positive impact of marketer-generated appeals on brand equity and engagement intensity in online brand communities. [Schreiner and Riedl \(2019\)](#) underscore the role of emotion in content engagement, calling for using neurophysiological methods to understand its effects better. Lastly, [Brubaker and Wilson \(2018\)](#) highlight the need for a combination of visual and text-based content to drive engagement and conversation, ultimately strengthening brand relationships. As consumers engage with this content, they develop a more profound affinity and investment in the brand, perceiving it as an entity that understands and speaks to their values, interests, and aspirations. This emotional bond cultivates a sense of loyalty beyond

mere product or service satisfaction. Consumers become advocates, actively seeking out and engaging with the brand's content while defending and promoting it within their social circles. Ultimately, generating Attractive content catalyzes building a loyal and passionate consumer base that remains steadfastly committed to the brand, even in the face of competitors' offerings.

Player popularity wields a potent influence on brand loyalty within the sports industry. When athletes ascend to stardom and captivate the hearts of fans, they inevitably become inextricable from the brand they represent. [Parmentier and Fischer \(2012\)](#) Explore the brand-building practices of athletes, emphasizing the role of professional image and mainstream media persona. [Brown et al. \(2022\)](#) delve into the impact of athlete activism on brand image, finding that fan attitudes and activism type can significantly influence perception. Their on-field exploits, personas, and personal narratives forge an emotional connection that transcends mere athletic prowess. Fans develop a fierce allegiance not just to the player but also to the team and associated brands. This brand loyalty manifests in unwavering support, merchandise sales, and a genuine desire to align with the player's image and values. Consequently, organizations that nurture and promote player popularity can leverage this phenomenon to cultivate a devoted consumer base that remains steadfastly loyal to their brand. The star power of famous players becomes a valuable asset, fostering a deep-rooted sense of pride and identification among fans, ultimately translating into enduring brand loyalty that withstands the test of time.

In conclusion, the findings of this study illuminate a powerful synergy between content appeal, player popularity, and brand loyalty. By developing captivating and resonates with their audience, sports organizations can harness the influential power of their star players to forge unbreakable bonds with fans. As famous athletes amplify and lend their star power to the Attractive content, it catalyzes a self-perpetuating cycle where fan engagement and brand allegiance continually reinforce one another. To fully capitalize on this dynamic, sports marketers should prioritize investing in compelling storytelling, leveraging the latest digital platforms, and fostering authentic connections between players and fans. Collaborating with players to co-create content that offers a window into their lives beyond the game can deepen the sense of intimacy and loyalty. Additionally, harnessing data-driven insights to customize content for specific audience segments can further enhance its appeal and resonance. Ultimately, by seamlessly integrating Attractive content strategies with strategic player promotion, sports brands can unlock a potent pathway to cultivating a vibrant and enduring fan base that remains steadfastly devoted to their organizational identity.

### **Disclosure statement and funding**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest. The present study received no financial support from any organization or institution.

### **Acknowledgment**

We would like to give special thanks to all the participants in this study.



## References

- Adler, M. (1985). Stardom and talent. *The American economic review*, 75(1), 208-212. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1812714>
- Adler, M. (2006). Stardom and Talent. In V. A. Ginsburg & D. Throsby (Eds.), *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture* (Vol. 1, pp. 895-906). Elsevier. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-0676\(06\)01025-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-0676(06)01025-8)
- Alalwan, A. A., Rana, N. P., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Algharabat, R. (2017). Social media in marketing: A review and analysis of the existing literature. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(7), 1177-1190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.05.008>
- Annamalai, B., Yoshida, M., Varshney, S., Pathak, A. A., & Venugopal, P. (2021). Social media content strategy for sport clubs to drive fan engagement. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 62, 102648. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102648>
- Behnam, M., Hollebeek, L. D., Clark, M. K., & Farabi, R. (2021). Exploring customer engagement in the product vs. service context. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 60, 102456. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102456>
- Brown, S., Brison, N., Bennett, G., & Brown, K. (2022). Do Fans Care About the Activist Athlete? A Closer Look at Athlete Activism Effect on Brand Image. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 15(4), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2022-0101>
- Brubaker, P. J., & Wilson, C. (2018). Let's give them something to talk about: Global brands' use of visual content to drive engagement and build relationships. *Public Relations Review*, 44(3), 342-352. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2018.04.010>
- Dolan, R., Conduit, J., Fahy, J., & Goodman, S. (2016). Social media engagement behaviour: a uses and gratifications perspective. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 24(3-4), 261-277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2015.1095222>
- Hofmann, J., Schnittka, O., Johnen, M., & Kottemann, P. (2021). Talent or popularity: What drives market value and brand image for human brands? *Journal of Business Research*, 124, 748-758. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.03.045>
- Islam, J. U., Rahman, Z., & Hollebeek, L. D. (2018). Consumer engagement in online brand communities: a solicitation of congruity theory. *Internet Research*, 28(1), 23-45. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-09-2016-0279>
- Kaul, A., Chaudhri, V., Cherian, D., Freberg, K., Mishra, S., Kumar, R., Pridmore, J., Lee, S. Y., Rana, N., Majmudar, U., & Carroll, C. E. (2015). Social Media: The New Mantra for Managing Reputation. *Vikalpa*, 40(4), 455-491. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0256090915618029>
- Lardo, A., Dumay, J., Trequattrini, R., & Russo, G. (2017). Social media networks as drivers for intellectual capital disclosure. *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, 18(1), 63-80. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIC-09-2016-0093>
- Luarn, P., Lin, Y.-F., & Chiu, Y.-P. (2015). Influence of Facebook brand-page posts on online engagement. *Online Information Review*, 39(4), 505-519. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-01-2015-0029>
- Malthouse, E. C., Haenlein, M., Skiera, B., Wege, E., & Zhang, M. (2013). Managing Customer Relationships in the Social Media Era: Introducing the Social CRM House. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(4), 270-280. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.008>
- Misirlis, N., & Vlachopoulou, M. (2018). Social media metrics and analytics in marketing – S3M: A mapping literature review. *International Journal of Information Management*, 38(1), 270-276. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2017.10.005>

- Mu, J., Zhang, J., Borah, A., & Qi, J. (2021). Creative Appeals in Firm Generated Content and Product Performance. *Information Systems Research*, 33(4), 18-42. <https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.2021.1051>
- Nisar, T. M., Prabhakar, G., & Patil, P. P. (2018). Sports clubs' use of social media to increase spectator interest. *International Journal of Information Management*, 43, 188-195. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.08.003>
- Parmentier, M. A., & Fischer, E. (2012). How Athletes Build their Brand. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 11(1/2), 106-124. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSMM.2012.045491>
- Rohm, A., D. Kaltcheva, V., & R. Milne, G. (2013). A mixed-method approach to examining brand-consumer interactions driven by social media. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 7(4), 295-311. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-01-2013-0009>
- Schreiner, M., & Riedl, R. (2019). *Effect of Emotion on Content Engagement in Social Media Communication: A Short Review of Current Methods and a Call for Neurophysiological Methods* Information Systems and Neuroscience, Cham. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-01087-4\\_24#citeas](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-01087-4_24#citeas)
- Stavros, C., Meng, M. D., Westberg, K., & Farrelly, F. (2014). Understanding fan motivation for interacting on social media. *Sport Management Review*, 17(4), 455-469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2013.11.004>
- Stigler, G. J., & Becker, G. S. (1977). De gustibus non est disputandum. *The American economic review*, 67(2), 76-90. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1807222>
- Tghipanahi, F., Nowkarizi, M., & Dayyani, M. H. (2019). Exploring the Success Factors of Content Creation on Instagram: A Qualitative Approach. *Research on Information Science and Public Libraries*, 25(3), 431-456. <http://publii.ir/article-1-1998-en.html>
- Vale, L., & Fernandes, T. (2018). Social media and sports: driving fan engagement with football clubs on Facebook. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 26(1), 37-55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2017.1359655>
- Voorveld, H. A. M. (2019). Brand Communication in Social Media: A Research Agenda. *Journal of advertising*, 48(1), 14-26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2019.1588808>
- Weiger, W. H., Wetzel, H. A., & Hammerschmidt, M. (2017). Leveraging marketer-generated appeals in online brand communities. *Journal of Service Management*, 28(1), 133-156. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-11-2015-0378>
- Yoshida, M., Gordon, B., Nakazawa, M., & Biscaia, R. (2014). Conceptualization and Measurement of Fan Engagement: Empirical Evidence From a Professional Sport Context. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(4), 399-417. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2013-0199>
- Yun, J. H., Rosenberger, P. J., & Sweeney, K. (2021). Drivers of soccer fan loyalty: Australian evidence on the influence of team brand image, fan engagement, satisfaction and enduring involvement. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 33(3), 755-782. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-07-2019-0444>



## نقش محتوای جذاب در رسانه‌های اجتماعی بر وفاداری هواداران با نقش میانجی محبوبیت ورزشکاران

وجیهه جوانی<sup>۱</sup>، یاسر جبار عبدالملیلاجی<sup>۲</sup>

<sup>۱</sup> دانشیار، گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی، دانشگاه تبریز، ایران.

<sup>۲</sup> کارشناسی ارشد مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی، دانشگاه تبریز، ایران.

### کلیدواژه

رسانه‌های اجتماعی  
محبوبیت ورزشکاران  
محتوای جذاب  
وفاداری هواداران

### نوع مقاله

پژوهشی

### چکیده

**هدف:** با گسترش پلتفرم‌های رسانه‌های اجتماعی، باشگاه‌های ورزشی از این کانال‌ها برای تقویت درگیری هواداران و پرورش وفاداری به برند بهره می‌برند. این مطالعه تعامل پیچیده میان تولید محتوای جذاب، محبوبیت بازیکنان و وفاداری هواداران فوتبال را بررسی می‌کند.

**روش:** داده‌ها از طریق یک نظرسنجی آنلاین با استفاده از نمونه‌گیری در دسترس جمع‌آوری شد، که گروه هدف شامل ۳۰۰ کاربر فعال رسانه‌های اجتماعی بود که هوادار فوتبال یک تیم خاص هستند. با به کارگیری مدل سازی معادلات ساختاری بر روی ۲۴۰ پاسخ کامل دریافت شد.

**یافته‌ها:** این پژوهش یافته‌های جالب توجهی را آشکار می‌کند، نتایج تحلیل‌ها نشان می‌دهد که تولید محتوای جذاب، تأثیر مستقیم قابل توجهی هم بر محبوبیت بازیکنان و هم بر وفاداری هواداران دارد. علاوه بر این، محبوبیت بازیکنان به عنوان نیروی قدرتمند در واسطه‌گری، به طور غیرمستقیم بر تأثیر محتوای جذاب بر وفاداری هواداران افزوده می‌شود. شایان ذکر است که بیش از ۲۴٪ از تأثیر تولید محتوای جذاب بر ایجاد وفاداری هواداران را می‌توان به نقش واسطه‌ای محبوبیت بازیکنان نسبت داد. این دریافت‌ها بر رابطه هم‌افزایی بین محتوای جذاب، ورزشکاران مشهور و پایگاه‌های هواداران وفادار تأکید می‌کند. این تحقیق به مدیران سازمان‌های ورزشی پیشنهاد می‌کند: (۱) بر ایجاد محتوای بصری جذاب و عاطفی تمرکز کنند؛ (۲) از محبوبیت بازیکنان برای تقویت تأثیر محتوا بر وفاداری هواداران استفاده کنند؛ (۳) بین محتوا، بازیکنان و هواداران هم‌افزایی ایجاد کنند تا پایگاه هواداران وفادار بسازند.

**اصالت و ابتکار مقاله:** در این پژوهش، نقش میانجی محبوبیت ورزشکاران بر وفاداری هواداران ارزیابی شده است.

تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۳/۰۱/۰۸

تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۳/۰۲/۰۵





## Developing a Business Model for Extreme Sports Clubs: An Approach based on Financial and Capital Interaction

Maryam Amini<sup>1</sup>, Seyed Hossein Marashian<sup>2\*</sup>, Amin Khatibi<sup>3</sup>, Esmail Veisia<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PhD Student in Sport Management, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran.

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor in Sport Management, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran.

<sup>3</sup> Associate Professor in Sport Management, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran.

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** With the emergence of new and extreme sports, it is very important to examine their various aspects. This research deals with the design of the business model in extreme sports clubs with the approach of capital and financial interactions.

**Methodology:** This qualitative research has used the thematic analysis approach to investigate components, communication, and business model design in extreme sports clubs. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with specialists and experts in extreme sports. The thematic analysis approach of [Brown and Clark \(2006\)](#) was used for data analysis.

**Findings:** The findings show that the business model in extreme sports clubs has three basic elements: tangible assets, intangible assets, and stakeholders. Through the two-way relations of these elements with extreme sports clubs, capacities, and dynamics are created for business. According to the type of participants, styles and levels of extreme sports, financial interactions, and social capital formation can be witnessed. This model has a cyclical nature that depends on the interactions between its components.

**Originality:** This research presents an original business model framework for extreme sports clubs. Prior research on business models has yet to delve into the unique characteristics of this industry. This is the first study to explore the interplay between tangible and intangible assets, stakeholders, and the specificities of extreme sports participation (types, styles, and levels) to understand financial interactions and social capital formation within this domain. By highlighting the cyclical nature of this model.

### Keywords

Business  
Consumer  
Extreme Sports  
Stakeholders  
Tangible Assets

### Article Type

Original Article

Received: 2024/04/08

Accepted: 2024/09/13

### How to Cite this Article:

Amini, M., Marashian, S. H., Khatibi, A., & Veisia, E. (2024). Developing a Business Model for Extreme Sports Clubs: An Approach based on Financial and Capital Interaction. *Sports Business Journal*, 4(3), 75-97. <https://doi.org/10.22051/sbj.2024.46857.1151>



## 1. Introduction

A business model is a comprehensive framework that outlines how an organization creates, delivers, and captures value (DaSilva & Trkman, 2014). It encompasses various components, such as value proposition, revenue streams, cost structure, customer segments, channels, customer relationships, key activities, key resources, and key partnerships (Hedman & Kalling, 2003). In the context of extreme sports clubs, a business model details how these clubs generate revenue, manage expenses and sustain financial viability. This section will delve into how extreme sports clubs can create value for their members through unique offerings and experiences, such as specialized training programs, exclusive events, and high-quality facilities (Ratten & Jones, 2020). Additionally, it will explore strategies for maintaining operational efficiency, such as optimizing resource allocation, reducing unnecessary costs, and implementing effective management practices (Geissdoerfer et al., 2020). Establishing sustainable financial practices, such as diversifying revenue streams and investing in long-term growth, is also crucial. By understanding and applying these components, extreme sports clubs can develop robust business strategies that enhance their growth and long-term success (Lv et al., 2022). The present study explicitly focuses on designing business models for extreme sports clubs. By concentrating on these clubs, the aim is to explore the unique challenges and opportunities they face in the sports industry. We examine the distinctive characteristics of extreme sports, such as the need for specialized equipment that ensures safety and performance, stringent safety measures to protect participants, and targeted marketing strategies that appeal to the adventurous and thrill-seeking demographics (Brymer, 2005; Buckley, 2018b; Donnelly, 2006). The goal is to develop tailored business models that address these unique aspects and provide practical solutions for extreme sports clubs to thrive. This focus helps to delineate our research scope and emphasizes the relevance and applicability of our findings to extreme sports organizations. By addressing these unique characteristics, our study aims to provide extreme sports clubs with practical, actionable strategies to enhance their operational effectiveness, financial health, and overall sustainability.

A recent surge in participation in extreme and adventure sports has been documented (Buckley, 2018a; Saffari & Moradi, 2021; Zuckerman, 2007). This trend coincides with a decline in traditional team and individual sports like golf, basketball, and racquetball over the past decade (Brymer et al., 2020; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). In essence, reports suggest a diminishing appeal of competitive and conventional sports, with adventure sports emerging as a significant alternative (Brymer et al., 2020; Cloutier, 2012; Efstathios, 2012). The rapid growth of extreme sports is a noteworthy global trend in athletics (Apollo et al., 2023; Hajkowicz et al., 2013). This shift can be attributed to the unique emotional intensity and inherent risk associated with adventure sports; elements often absent in traditional, organized activities (Breivik, 2010; Klaus & Maklan, 2011). Extreme sports encompass a diverse range of activities, practiced at various skill levels and locations. Skateboarding, rock climbing, skydiving, surfing, paragliding, mountain biking, nature exploration, and whitewater rafting are all examples (Rinehart & Sydnor,

2003). Each sport utilizes specific equipment and caters to varying experience levels, with new disciplines continually emerging.

The history of extreme sports reveals their emergence in North America, particularly the United States, after World War II. These activities quickly gained popularity in Western developed nations (Rusu & Rusu, 2022). Young people, yearning to break free from the monotony of post-war life, were the initial pioneers (Brymer, 2005). Skateboarding, roller skating, and BMX cycling were among the first extreme sports, often enjoyed in urban spaces or on daring cliffs and mountain edges (Buckley, 2018a, 2018b). The 1970s witnessed a wider embrace of adventure sports, with their rapid spread across various societies (Brymer, 2005). By the late 20th century, these activities garnered significant attention. Competitions, media coverage, sponsorships, and significant investments fueled their growth, culminating in the launch of the X Games in 1995 (Rusu & Rusu, 2022). This surge continued with the inclusion of mountain biking in the 1996 Summer Olympics and snowboarding in the 1998 Winter Olympics (Varley & Semple, 2015). The trend towards integrating extreme sports into the Olympics shows no signs of slowing down. Rock climbing, skateboarding, and surfing are all set to debut as Olympic sports in Paris 2024 (Rusu & Rusu, 2022). This growing interest in extreme sports highlights their acceptance and popularity within the international sporting landscape. Over the past two decades, they have evolved into a global industry. Iran is no exception to this trend. The nation has seen a recent surge in various adventure sports and related activities, including adventure tourism and recreation (Majidi et al., 2020; Saffari & Moradi, 2021). The surge in adventure sports in Iran, coupled with their relatively new presence, poses a unique challenge for sports managers. Understanding these activities is crucial to developing effective policies that support their growth (Brymer, 2005; Brymer et al., 2020). New sports often require specific regulations and safety protocols that may not be readily available within existing frameworks. Additionally, fostering participation and creating a nurturing environment for these sports might necessitate dedicated funding and infrastructure development (Rusu & Rusu, 2022).

Extreme sports offer a stark contrast to traditional athletics. They unfold in demanding environments, demanding high levels of skill and often flirting with significant risk (Breivik, 2010). Sociologists see this rise as a form of rebellion against aspects of modernity. Participants challenge societal norms by pushing boundaries through these daring activities (Elias & Dunning, 1986). This trend is particularly strong among young people. As individualism rises in society, they're drawn to the thrill and excitement that adventure sports provide (Dunning, 1997). In essence, the growth of adventure sports reflects the needs and desires of young people in modern societies, fostering distinct subcultures within the broader sporting landscape. Research by Tomlinson et al. (2005) suggests that adventure sports tend to attract participants over 19 years old, often single with no children, and typically from a higher socioeconomic class. These demographics likely reflect a combination of factors, including a strong desire to experience diverse sports and the resources or opportunities to engage in such activities (Cohen et al., 2018). Interestingly, studies in Iran (Saffari & Moradi, 2021) suggest a similar profile for adventure sports participants within the country.



The expanding popularity of extreme sports across diverse demographics in Iran presents a captivating sociological phenomenon. This surge in participation has attracted the attention of researchers, prompting investigations into the driving forces behind this trend. Several key studies shed light on the motivations for engaging in extreme sports, highlighting the varying influences across population groups. Research [Bennett et al. \(2003\)](#) suggests that the dominant cultural currents of society, coupled with a youthful propensity for risk-taking, contribute significantly to the allure of extreme sports among younger generations. [Donnelly \(2006\)](#) work points to the potential disillusionment with the perceived over-organization and commercialization of traditional sports as a factor pushing some individuals towards the less structured environment of extreme sports. [Celsi et al. \(1993\)](#) emphasize the formation of distinct subcultures and the strong sense of belonging associated with participation in extreme and novel sports as key motivators.

Research by [Rusu and Rusu \(2022\)](#) It highlights the multifaceted impact of extreme sports on individuals and society. They found that these activities affect social, cultural, economic, political and even physical and psychological aspects. Extreme sports can have positive and negative consequences in business environments and emphasizes the need to comprehensively understand their effects. In their research, [Dobson and McLuskie \(2020\)](#) discussed the business and entrepreneurship characteristics in extreme sports. They concluded that entrepreneurs in extreme sports, unlike those in traditional sports, navigate a highly variable market and industry. Furthermore, the identity, location, and behaviors in these sports are constantly evolving, requiring high levels of entrepreneurial intelligence to succeed. [Griggs \(2012\)](#) investigated the reasons behind the growth and popularity of extreme sports businesses in England. He concluded that extreme sports have a broad appeal, attracting a diverse audience that includes both young and elderly individuals. [Ratten and Jones \(2020\)](#) highlighted in their research that business challenges in risky and extreme sports are greater than those in traditional sports. They emphasized that creating value in these businesses is more complex and demanding. [Allan et al. \(2020\)](#) focused on the health and well-being benefits associated with extreme sports. Their findings suggest that the unique experiences and challenges offered by outdoor adventure sports can significantly enhance well-being and health. However, the authors emphasize the importance of a systematic approach to ensure safety in these activities. Finally, [Frontini et al. \(2019\)](#) compared motivations for participation in club sports versus adventure sports. Their study found distinct motivational factors. Individuals drawn to traditional or club sports tend to prioritize risk-aversion, health maintenance, reducing psychological pressure, and physical conditioning. In contrast, those engaged in adventure sports exhibit a stronger tolerance for risk. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of the appeal of extreme sports. While the inherent thrill and challenge may be universally attractive, the specific reasons for participation can vary based on age group and personal preferences ([Ivanova & Wald, 2023](#)). Further research could delve deeper into these nuances, providing valuable insights for sports management and potential future policy development. Research across the globe points to a surge in the popularity of extreme and adventure sports, particularly among younger generations ([Bennett et al., 2003](#); [Brymer et al., 2020](#); [Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017](#)). Iran is no exception to this trend, witnessing a growing interest in these activities in [Saffari and Moradi \(2021\)](#); [Majidi et](#)

al. (2020); Karimi et al. (2020), and Moharramzadeh and Imanzadeh (2019) it is mentioned about the issue of increasing the popularity of adventurous and extreme sports in Iran. However, the reasons behind this attraction and the future trajectory of extreme sports in Iran remain largely unexplored. This lack of research represents a significant gap in the country's sports management strategies. With limited existing studies (Saffari & Moradi, 2021), the field of adventure and extreme sports management in Iran remains largely uncharted territory. Further investigation into this burgeoning area is crucial for effective management and policy development.

Unlike traditional sports industries with established structures and predictable revenue streams, extreme sports present a dynamic and often volatile landscape (Cloutier, 2012). The very nature of these activities – the inherent risk, the niche audience, and the constant evolution of disciplines – demands a business approach that is both adaptable and innovative (Brymer, 2005; Brymer et al., 2020). The current research delves into a novel way of understanding business models in extreme sports. This approach centers on the intricate interplay between financial resources and various forms of capital. We move beyond the traditional focus on pure financial metrics to explore how extreme sports businesses can leverage financial capital alongside intangible assets that are often overlooked. By examining these financial and capital interactions, we aim to equip entrepreneurs with a comprehensive framework for navigating the exciting yet challenging world of extreme sports. Understanding these interactions is critical to designing a sustainable business model in extreme sports. By focusing on building a strong foundation across all forms of capital businesses can navigate the unique challenges of this industry and carve a niche for themselves in a market driven by innovation, passion, and the pursuit of excellence. This current research dives deeper into this framework, exploring specific strategies for building each type of capital. Designing a business model in extreme sports requires a comprehensive approach that considers financial interactions and capital dynamics. The integration of financial elements with the operational aspects of extreme sports businesses is crucial for sustainability and growth.

## 2. Methodology

From the philosophical point of view, the current research is in the interpretive-constructive paradigm. The current study adopts a qualitative research approach to delve into the intricacies of business model design within the burgeoning domain of extreme sports, with a primary emphasis on understanding financial and capital interactions. Data collection in this research was done between August 2023 and February 2024. Employing a purposive sampling strategy characterized by maximum variation, 16 participants were meticulously selected to ensure a comprehensive representation of diverse perspectives prevalent within the extreme sports industry. This deliberate selection encompassed individuals from various backgrounds and roles within the industry, fostering a rich tapestry of insights and experiences. The number of research samples was obtained after reaching data saturation, and this was the point when no relevant and new data was obtained regarding the main research problem. The demographic characteristics of the research participants are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of research participants.

|    | Gender | Position   | Major                  | Education | Activity   |          |           |
|----|--------|--|------------------------|-----------|------------|----------|-----------|
|    |        |  |                        |           | Experience | Academic | Executive |
| 1  | Male   | Member of Adventure Sports Association               | Sports science         | M.A       | 6          |          | *         |
| 2  | Male   | Director of Sports Development and Technology Center | Sports science         | Ph.D.     | 13         |          | *         |
| 3  | Female | Director of Sports Development and Technology Center | Sports science         | M.A       | 8          |          | *         |
| 4  | Male   | Sports business manager                              | Management             | M.A       | 4          |          | *         |
| 5  | Female | Director of Sports Development and Technology Center | Sports science         | Ph.D.     | 14         |          | *         |
| 6  | Female | Sports business manager                              | Industrial engineering | M.A       | 12         |          | *         |
| 7  | Female | Manager of extreme sports Complex                    | Public Administration  | Ph.D.     | 9          |          | *         |
| 8  | Male   | Sports management expert                             | Sports engineering     | M.A       | 5          |          | *         |
| 9  | Male   | Sports management expert                             | Economical science     | M.A       | 14         |          | *         |
| 10 | Male   | Sports marketing expert                              | Sports science         | M.A       | 16         |          | *         |
| 11 | Male   | Athlete and organizer of adventure tours             | Sport Management       | Ph.D.     | 9          | *        | *         |
| 12 | Female | Sports startup manager                               | Sport Management       | Ph.D.     | 9          |          | *         |
| 13 | Male   | Sports economics expert                              | Sports science         | Ph.D.     | 18         | *        | *         |
| 14 | Male   | Faculty member                                       | Sports science         | Ph.D.     | 11         | *        |           |
| 15 | Female | Faculty member                                       | Sports science         | Ph.D.     | 9          | *        | *         |
| 16 | Male   | Faculty member                                       | Sports science         | Ph.D.     | 17         | *        |           |

The cornerstone of data collection in this study involved semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant. This methodological choice was instrumental in affording flexibility, allowing for the exploration of predetermined themes while also providing space for participants to articulate their unique perspectives and experiences. In the present research, a total of 16 interviews were conducted individually in the participants' offices to facilitate a comfortable and familiar environment conducive to open discussion. Each interview session, lasting between 45 to 75 minutes on average, was scheduled at mutually convenient times. Before commencing each interview, explicit permission was obtained from each participant for audio recording, ensuring accuracy in capturing their responses. Throughout the interviews, the researcher actively engaged with participants, taking comprehensive analytical and field notes to document key insights and contextual observations in real-time. These notes played a crucial role in understanding the nuances of participants' perspectives and experiences. Immediately following each interview, the recordings were transcribed verbatim by trained personnel to maintain fidelity to participants' responses and facilitate subsequent analysis.

Subsequently, thematic analysis was employed to sift through the voluminous interview data and identify recurrent patterns. Following the methodological framework outlined by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#), this analytical approach facilitated a systematic and rigorous examination of emergent themes, thereby ensuring the robustness of the findings. The initial phase of our data analysis involved immersing ourselves in the collected interview data to gain a thorough understanding of its content, context, and nuances. We conducted repeated readings of the transcripts to familiarize ourselves with the richness of the dataset, ensuring a comprehensive grasp of the participants' perspectives and experiences. Following data familiarization, we proceeded to systematically identify and label significant features or patterns observed in the data. This process began with coding specific segments of the interviews that pertained to particular concepts or ideas, aiming to capture the essence of each participant's narrative. Each code was meticulously developed to encapsulate key aspects of the data, ensuring accuracy and relevance to the research objectives. Subsequently, we undertook a process of organizing the initial codes into potential themes by grouping together similar codes that shared commonalities or addressed related aspects of the research questions. This iterative process involved reviewing and refining the codes to uncover broader patterns and connections across the dataset. Through rigorous discussion and iterative refinement, we identified and articulated overarching themes that encapsulated the central ideas and findings emerging from the data.

Each potential theme underwent a critical evaluation to assess its coherence and relevance to the research questions. This involved examining the themes of the coded data to ensure they accurately represented the dataset and captured meaningful insights. Following the review process, we clearly defined and named each theme to succinctly capture its essence and meaning. This step involved crafting descriptive labels that accurately reflected the key ideas or concepts represented by each theme. The identified themes were integrated into a coherent narrative within the research report. This involved synthesizing the findings into a written manuscript supported by illustrative quotes or examples from the data, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the research phenomenon. Throughout the analysis process, we ensured rigor and trustworthiness by adhering to established criteria for qualitative research. This included transparently documenting and reporting the analytical process, including decisions made at each stage, to facilitate evaluation and replication by others ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)).

To ensure the trustworthiness of our research outcomes, we employed a multi-faceted validation strategy. Initially, the research topic underwent rigorous scrutiny by three independent experts to validate the alignment of research questions and interview guidelines with the study's objectives. This step ensured that our approach effectively addressed the intended focus and research goals. Additionally, we implemented a member-checking process, where key findings and interpretations were presented back to participants. This step allowed participants to validate and provide feedback on our interpretations, thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of our findings. Their insights were crucial in refining our interpretations to accurately reflect their perspectives. Furthermore, to ensure internal consistency and reliability in data analysis, an additional layer of validation was introduced. Another researcher independently coded a subset of

interviews using the same thematic framework. This process of inter-coder reliability testing aimed to identify any potential biases or inconsistencies in our analytical approach and ensure robustness in our findings. Throughout the research process, we adhered to rigorous documentation of methodology and ethical standards. This commitment ensured transparency, rigor, and integrity in our study's findings and conclusions, enhancing the overall reliability and validity of our research outcomes.

### 3. Results

Table 2 presents the key findings from interviews regarding the design of the extreme sports business model. Annotations on interview transcripts were used to identify key points, which were then assigned initial codes. These initial codes were further analyzed, explored, and refined in parallel with selected documents to identify the primary codes influencing extreme sports businesses. This process resulted in the identification of 143 codes. After all data was coded, a sorting and categorization process began. Here, similar codes were grouped based on content, forming sub-themes. To ensure comprehensive and relevant category names, the interview text and documents were referenced throughout this process. Ultimately, 31 sub-themes were identified and organized into 6 main themes. Table 2 displays the codes, sub-themes, and themes.

Table 2. Codes, Sub-themes, and themes.

| Codes   | Sub-themes                    | Themes            |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Interaction, Content Consumption, Community Building, Advocacy, Feedback & Participation  | Fan engagement                | Intangible Assets |
| Customer Acquisition, Customer Segmentation, Customer Engagement, Customer Analysis, Customer Retention   | CRM                           |                   |
| Value Proposition, Market Attractiveness, Customer Lifetime Value   | Market Target Value           |                   |
| Community Formation, Membership & Participation, Content & Communication, Moderation & Governance, Benefits & Value   | Brand Community               |                   |
| Sponsorship Objectives, Sponsorship Activation, Sponsorship Assets & Benefits, Target Audience, Measurement & Evaluation, Sponsorship Relationship Management | Sponsorship                   |                   |
| Program Type, Delivery Method, Content & Curriculum, Pricing & Revenue, Outcomes & Evaluation   | Training Programs             | Tangible Assets   |
| Content Type, Distribution Channels, Rights Licensing, Metrics & Measurement, Production & Operations   | Broadcasting and Media Rights |                   |
| Product Category, Distribution Channels, Branding & Design, Pricing & Profitability, Inventory Management   | Merchandising                 |                   |
| Partner Type, Partnership Objectives, Activation Strategy, Partnership Benefits, Partnership Management   | Brand Partnerships            |                   |
| Event Type, Registration Process, Pricing & Tiers, Marketing & Promotion  | Event Registration            |                   |
| Youth, Teens, Adults, Seniors, Older Adults   | Participants                  | Extreme Sports    |
| Climbing, Surfing, Boarding, Biking, Diving, Jumping  | Style                         |                   |
| Low, Moderate, Heavy  | Activity Level                |                   |

| Codes  | Sub-themes                                 | Themes                 |
|--|--|------------------------|
| Athlete Type, Athlete Relationship, athlete Development & Support, Athlete Revenue Streams, Athlete Wellbeing & Safety                                       | Athletes                                   | Stakeholders           |
| Client Management, Services Provided, Revenue Generation, Technology & Tools, Ethical Conduct  | Sports Agents                              |                        |
| Roles & Responsibilities, Revenue Generation, Governing Body Type, Stakeholder Engagement, Governance & Transparency   | Governing bodies                           |                        |
| Official & Referee Roles, Qualification & Training, Compensation & Reimbursement, Development & Professionalization  | Officials and Referees                     |                        |
| Fan Demographics, Engagement Strategies, Content Consumption, Monetization Strategies, Fan Impact & Influence  | Fans and Supporters                        |                        |
| Media Channels, Measurement & ROI, Brand Awareness & Perception, Emotional Storytelling  | Advertisers                                |                        |
| Regulatory Focus, Competition Rules, Safety Standards, Revenue Generation, Accountability & Transparency   | Regulatory authorities                     |                        |
| Live Event Broadcasts, News & Social Media Coverage, Distribution & Reach, Subscription Fees, Licensing Fees   | Media partners                             |                        |
| Sport-specific skills & Techniques, Coaching & Training Services, Individualized Training Programs, Client Acquisition & Management, Performance Improvement | Coach and Trainers                         |                        |
| Facility Type, User Base, Location & Accessibility, Event Hosting, Operational Considerations, Providing Training Grounds                                    | Facility owners                            |                        |
| Local Communities, Online Communities, Networking, Collaboration, Mentorship Programs  | Community Building & Networks              | Social Capital         |
| Passion for the extreme Sport, Risk-Taking & Pushing Limits, Creativity & Individual Expression, Respect & Support   | Shared Values & Culture                    |                        |
| Social Media & Online Content, Word-of-Mouth Communication, Clinics & Workshops, Collaboration & Mentorship,   | Information Sharing & Knowledge Transfer   |                        |
| Athlete Endorsements, Community Engagement & Brand Advocacy, Grassroots Sponsorships, Authenticity & Storytelling  | Brand Building & Sponsorship Opportunities |                        |
| Promoting Environmental Awareness, Social Causes & Fundraising, Inclusivity & Diversity Initiatives, Role Models & Community Leaders                         | Social Impact & Advocacy                   |                        |
| Investment, Licensing, Media Rights  | Partnership Types                          | Financial Partnerships |
| Benefits for Sponsors, Benefits for Athletes & Teams, Benefits for Event Organizers, Benefits for Media Outlets  | Partnership Value Proposition              |                        |
| The Rise of Influencer Marketing, Focus on Authenticity, Data-Driven Partnerships, The Growth of Athlete-Owned Ventures                                      | Emerging Trends                            |                        |

Description and interpretation of the identified Sub-themes and Themes related to Financial and Capital Transactions:

### 3.1. Intangible assets

Extreme sports businesses may appear to thrive on adrenaline and remarkable feats, but a concealed driver underpins their financial prosperity: intangible assets. These intangibles



encompass imperceptible qualities that nurture a fervent fan base and cultivate customer allegiance. Central to this success is fan engagement. A robust brand reputation, an active social media presence, and affiliations with star athletes serve as instrumental tools for converting casual observers into fervent supporters. This fosters a symbiotic relationship between the enterprise and its audience, transcending mere spectating to establish a profound connection. Effective customer relationship management (CRM) constitutes another pivotal facet. Here, intangible assets such as social capital and brand loyalty assume significance. A robust social network facilitates personalized communication, targeted marketing, and favorable brand interactions, thereby nurturing customer allegiance, fostering repeat patronage, and generating positive word-of-mouth endorsements. By harnessing these intangible assets through a robust CRM strategy, extreme sports enterprises can ensure sustained success. Moreover, comprehending the specific value proposition for their target demographic is imperative. Intangible assets such as athlete prowess and brand prestige influence how offerings are perceived by fans. Outstanding athletes and top-tier events substantially enhance the perceived value of experiences like attending a competition or viewing a live stream. Furthermore, a potent brand association with excitement, innovation, or a particular athlete can augment this value proposition. Lastly, fostering a robust brand community constitutes a potent tool. Picture a vibrant hub where fans, athletes, and all stakeholders share an ardent devotion to the sport – this epitomizes a flourishing brand community. Social capital and shared values serve as the bedrock of such communities, with social media platforms serving as the nexus where fans converge, fostering a sense of belonging and collective enthusiasm. This profound bond within the brand community fortifies loyalty and propels business success. To support the identified code on "Intangible Assets" with quotes from interviewees, here are four examples of quotes that illustrate the findings:

*"Our social media engagement is crucial; it's not just about posting content but fostering real connections. Fans feel part of our journey, which builds lasting loyalty." (Participant 4)*

*"Having top athletes endorsing our brand adds credibility. Fans trust us more, and that translates into higher attendance and viewership." (Participant 8)*

*"Our community is like a family. We share values and experiences through social media, creating a bond that keeps fans coming back for more." (Participant 1)*

*"The excitement around our events isn't just about the sport; it's about the atmosphere we create. People feel they belong to something bigger." (Participant 7)*

These quotes exemplify how extreme sports enterprises leverage intangible assets such as fan engagement, athlete endorsements, brand community building, and shared values through social media to foster customer loyalty and enhance their perceived value proposition.

### **3.2. Tangible assets**

Tangible Assets encompass physical resources directly influencing the financial well-being and operational capacities of such enterprises. The subsequent sub-themes delineate these assets based on their roles in revenue generation and investment attraction.



Sponsorship emerges as a prominent sub-theme, accentuating revenue streams from partnerships with brands seeking access to the fervent audience of extreme sports. The athletic prowess of athletes and the exposure provided by events serve as attractive assets for sponsors. Physical elements like facilities, equipment, athlete attire, and event signage serve as platforms for showcasing sponsor brands. Training Programs constitute another sub-theme, emphasizing the monetization potential of physical facilities and expertise through training initiatives. Spaces like skateparks, climbing gyms, and training centers serve as venues, while sports-specific equipment and the knowledge/skills of coaches add value to these programs. Broadcasting and Media Rights represent a sub-theme exploring the commercialization of media rights and broadcasting capabilities. This entails skills necessary for producing engaging content surrounding events or athletes, alongside the legal ownership of broadcasting rights for specific events, enabling businesses to charge for access. Merchandising emerges as a significant sub-theme, highlighting the revenue-generating potential of physical products like apparel and equipment accessories. The inventory of merchandise held by the business constitutes a tangible asset in this regard. Brand Partnerships, while overlapping with Sponsorship, also encompass a broader array of partnerships where brands leverage tangible assets of extreme sports businesses. This could involve co-branded merchandise lines or utilizing facilities and equipment provided by partner brands.

Event Registration, though not inherently a tangible asset, falls within this theme due to its direct financial implications tied to physical events. The infrastructure, facilities, and personnel required for event hosting are all tangible assets contributing to revenue generation. The theme of Tangible Assets, along with its sub-themes, furnishes a structured framework for evaluating how physical resources underpin the financial viability of extreme sports businesses. Through strategic utilization and management of these assets, enterprises can bolster revenue streams, attract investment, and foster sustainable growth. To support the identified code on "Tangible Assets" with quotes from interviewees, here are five examples of quotes that illustrate the findings:

*"Our sponsorship deals are crucial; they allow us to upgrade our facilities and provide top-notch equipment that attracts both athletes and spectators." (Participant 6)*

*"Training programs are a significant revenue stream for us. Our skatepark and climbing gym not only serve enthusiasts but also generate income through memberships and specialized coaching." (Participant 8)*

*"Broadcasting rights have been a game-changer. We've invested in production capabilities to offer high-quality streams of our events, attracting viewership from around the globe." (Participant 11)*

*"Merchandising is a big part of our business. Our branded apparel and gear fly off the shelves during events, creating a steady income stream throughout the year." (Participant D)*

*"Partnering with other brands has expanded our reach. Collaborative events and co-branded merchandise have boosted our visibility and revenue." (Participant 16)*

These quotes demonstrate how extreme sports enterprises leverage tangible assets such as sponsorship deals, training programs, broadcasting rights, merchandising

opportunities, and brand partnerships to enhance revenue generation, attract investment, and ensure financial viability.

### 3.3. Stakeholders

The research identifies stakeholders as a crucial theme within the extreme sports business model. These stakeholders encompass various individuals and organizations that can both influence and be influenced by the financial performance of extreme sports businesses. While some stakeholders directly contribute financially, the concept of intangible assets emerges as a key player. Athletes are a prime example. They generate revenue through sponsorships, competition wins, and merchandise sales. However, their true value lies beyond mere financial contributions. Athletes are a powerful intangible asset, attracting fans, sponsors, and media attention. Their talent and achievements fuel the entire ecosystem.

Fans and Supporters play a similar role. Their passionate loyalty translates into revenue through ticket purchases, merchandise sales, and potentially pay-per-view broadcasts. But more importantly, a passionate fanbase is another intangible asset. It drives demand for events, athletes, and merchandise, creating a self-sustaining cycle of success. The research highlights other stakeholders who contribute indirectly. Media partners pay for broadcast rights and collaborate to produce content, sharing advertising revenue. This media coverage increases visibility for athletes, events, and brands, creating a valuable interaction for everyone involved. Similarly, coaches play a crucial role in athlete development, which can lead to increased sponsorship opportunities and competition success, benefiting the entire business ecosystem. In conclusion, the Stakeholder theme goes beyond just financial interactions. It reveals the intricate web of relationships where intangible assets like athlete talent, passionate fanbases, and media partnerships play a critical role in the financial health of extreme sports businesses. By carefully considering and nurturing these relationships, businesses can create a model that benefits everyone involved and ensures long-term success for the sport itself. To support the identified code on "Stakeholders" with quotes from interviewees, here are six examples of quotes that illustrate the findings:

*"Athletes are not just performers; they're brand ambassadors. Their achievements draw sponsors and fans alike, creating a ripple effect that boosts our entire industry." (Participant 2)*

*"Our fans are everything. Their enthusiasm fills stadiums and drives online engagement, making our events a commercial success year after year." (Participant 13)*

*"Media partnerships are crucial. They amplify our reach and help us secure advertising revenue, which supports our athletes and grows our sport's profile globally." (Participant 3)*

*"Coaches are the backbone of our success. Their guidance turns promising athletes into champions, attracting sponsorships and enhancing our competitive edge." (Participant 5)*

*"Sponsors see value beyond financial returns. They want to be associated with our athletes' stories and the excitement our events generate among fans." (Participant 7)*

*"Collaborating with stakeholders like broadcasters and brands enriches our sport. It's about creating meaningful partnerships that elevate the entire industry." (Participant 8)*

These quotes highlight how stakeholders such as athletes, fans, media partners, coaches, and sponsors contribute to the financial and intangible success of extreme sports businesses. They illustrate how these relationships foster a symbiotic ecosystem where passion, talent, and strategic partnerships drive sustained growth and commercial viability.

Drawing on the identified themes, we can develop a framework for "Designing a Business Model in Extreme Sports: An Approach Based on Financial and Capital Interactions." This framework visually represents the relationships between tangible Assets, Intangible Assets, Stakeholders, and Extreme Sports. By depicting these interconnections, the framework allows for a deeper understanding of how financial and capital interactions shape the success of extreme sports businesses. Through the relationships between these themes, two main themes are obtained, which are social capital and financial partnerships. These themes have a two-way relationship with extreme sports. Designing a Business Model in Extreme Sports: An Approach Based on Financial and Capital Interactions is shown in [Figure 1](#).

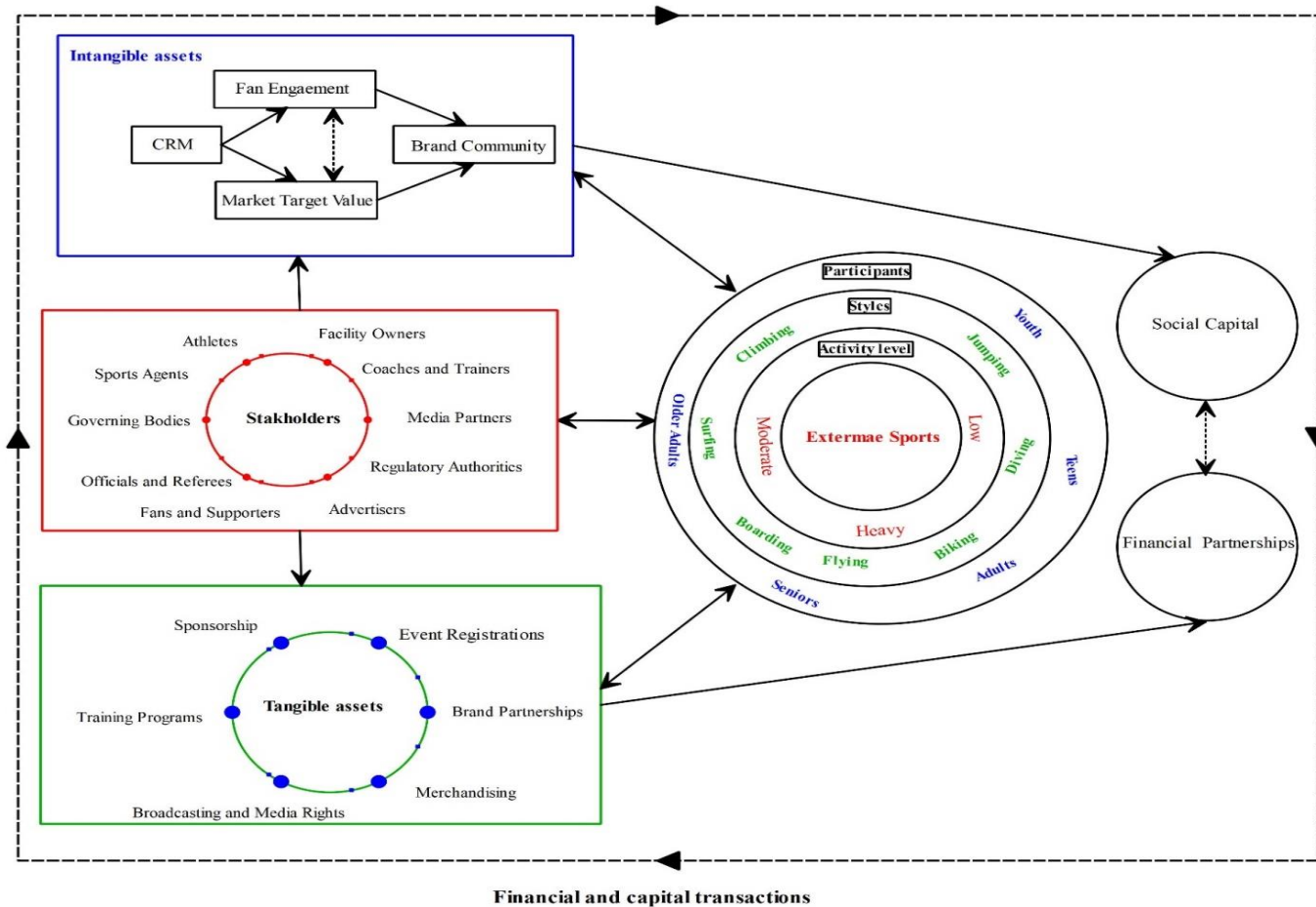


Figure 1. A Business Model in Extreme Sports: An Approach Based on Financial and Capital Interactions.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

The extreme sports industry thrives on a complex interplay between tangible and intangible assets, orchestrated within a dynamic stakeholder ecosystem (Bartoletti et al., 2018). Beyond the captivating stunts and athletic feats lies a carefully constructed business model that fosters financial success (Kurnia & Hasyim, 2023). This discussion delves into this intricate dance, exploring how these elements work in concert to create a sustainable competitive advantage for extreme sports businesses. The lifeblood of any successful extreme sports business is a fervent and loyal fanbase. Achieving this loyalty goes beyond simply showcasing impressive athleticism; it requires forging an emotional connection with the audience (Moradi et al., 2022). Here, the power of intangible assets takes center stage. A robust brand reputation, meticulously built through consistent excellence and an engaging social media presence, becomes the bridge between the business and its audience (Saliha & Sakrya, 2014). Proactive engagement with fans on social media platforms, strategic partnerships with star athletes, and fostering a sense of community are all crucial aspects of fan engagement. Effective customer relationship management (CRM) empowers businesses to further strengthen this connection. By leveraging intangible assets like social capital and brand loyalty, businesses can personalize communication with fans, tailor marketing campaigns to their interests, and deliver exceptional brand experiences (Klaus & Maklan, 2011). This fosters loyalty, encourages repeat business, and ignites the power of positive word-of-mouth promotion. A fan who feels valued and connected to the brand is more likely to become a vocal advocate, attracting others to the fold. Extreme sports businesses don't simply sell products or services; they offer curated experiences with a distinct value proposition. The perceived value of these experiences significantly impacts a business's financial success (Salome et al., 2013). Here again, intangible assets play a crucial role. Athlete talent and brand reputation significantly influence how fans perceive the value proposition (Amini et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2013; Sanaei et al., 2013). Exceptional athletes and high-quality events elevate the appeal of attending a competition or watching a live stream. Furthermore, a brand association with excitement, innovation, or a specific athlete can further amplify this value. Imagine the difference between watching a generic skateboarding competition and witnessing a legendary athlete attempt a groundbreaking trick. The intangible asset of brand association with such an athlete significantly enhances the perceived value of the experience.

Extreme sports businesses flourish with the presence of a vibrant brand community. This digital and physical space fosters a fervent passion for the sport, bringing together fans, athletes, and all stakeholders. As Brown et al. (2013) stated the foundation of this community is built upon the bedrock of intangible assets – social capital and shared values. Social media platforms become the gathering grounds where fans connect and athletes, fostering a sense of belonging and shared enthusiasm. This powerful bond within the brand community fuels loyalty and drives business success (Hossini et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2022). Imagine a passionate community buzzing with excitement around an upcoming event. This collective energy translates into increased ticket sales, merchandise purchases, and ultimately, a thriving business ecosystem.

While intangible assets create the allure and foster connections, tangible assets provide the essential foundation for financial viability. Sponsorship serves as a prime example. The athletic prowess of athletes and the reach of events become assets that attract brands seeking access to this passionate audience. Facilities, equipment, athlete uniforms, and event signage all serve as platforms to showcase sponsors' brands, generating revenue streams for the business (Moradi et al., 2022; Sanaei et al., 2013). Training programs provide another lucrative avenue. Skateparks, climbing gyms, and training centers leverage their physical facilities and the expertise of coaches to offer valuable training programs, attracting aspiring athletes and generating revenue. Broadcasting and media rights also hold significant financial potential. The ability to produce engaging content around events or athletes, coupled with the legal ownership of broadcasting rights, allows businesses to charge for access and generate revenue streams. Merchandise sales further contribute to the financial health of the business (Salome et al., 2013). The physical stock of branded apparel and equipment accessories becomes a tangible asset, offering fans a way to express their passion and contribute to the business's bottom line. Brand partnerships, while sometimes overlapping with sponsorships, encompass a broader range of collaborations. Co-branded merchandise lines or utilizing facilities and equipment provided by partner brands are just a few examples of how businesses can leverage tangible assets to create mutually beneficial partnerships (Saliha & Sakrya, 2014). Event registration fees, although not strictly a tangible asset, fall under this category. The event infrastructure, facilities, and personnel required to host events all represent tangible assets that contribute to revenue generation through registration fees.

The theme of stakeholders highlights the intricate web of relationships that underpin the extreme sports business model. Athletes are a prime example. While they generate revenue through sponsorships and merchandise sales, their true value lies in their ability to attract fans, sponsors, and media attention (Bartoletti et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2022). Their talent and achievements fuel the entire ecosystem. Fans and supporters play a dual role in the extreme sports business model. Their passionate loyalty undoubtedly translates into revenue through ticket purchases, merchandise sales, and potentially pay-per-view broadcasts. However, their true value extends far beyond mere financial contributions. Fans and supporters are the lifeblood of the community, fostering a vibrant ecosystem that fuels the success of all stakeholders. Their enthusiastic support creates a buzz around events and athletes, attracting media attention and potential sponsors. This positive word-of-mouth marketing fuels the industry's growth and attracts new participants, further solidifying the fanbase. As Rusu and Rusu (2022) stated social media platforms empower fans to connect and athletes, fostering a sense of belonging and shared passion. This camaraderie strengthens the brand community and creates a powerful force that drives business success. Media partners play a crucial role in amplifying the reach and value proposition of extreme sports businesses. They pay for broadcast rights or collaborate on content production, sharing advertising revenue. This media coverage increases visibility for athletes, events, and brands, creating valuable interaction for everyone involved (Kurnia & Hasyim, 2023). Compelling media narratives showcase the athletic feats, the drama of competition, and the passionate community, captivating a broader audience and attracting potential sponsors and fans.

Governing bodies play a vital role in establishing rules and regulations that ensure fair play and safety in extreme sports. They may charge sanctioning fees for events, collect licensing fees, or have revenue-sharing agreements with businesses. While these fees can contribute financially, the true value of governing bodies lies in maintaining the legitimacy and integrity of the sport (Amini et al., 2020). Clear and consistent regulations minimize risk and create a level playing field for athletes, fostering trust among participants, fans, and sponsors. Coaches are the unsung heroes of the extreme sports industry. They dedicate themselves to developing the skills and talent of athletes, helping them reach their full potential. While some coaches may generate revenue through training programs or private lessons, their true impact lies in the athletes they help cultivate. Outstanding coaches elevate the sport by producing exceptional athletes who push boundaries and achieve remarkable feats. This, in turn, attracts fans, media attention, and sponsorships, benefiting the entire business ecosystem. The extreme sports business model thrives on a delicate ecosystem where tangible and intangible assets work in concert with a diverse group of stakeholders. Intangible assets like brand reputation, passionate fanbases, and athlete talent cultivate excitement and loyalty, driving revenue generation. Tangible assets like facilities, equipment, and broadcasting rights provide the foundation for financial viability. Stakeholders, from athletes and fans to media partners and coaches, all play a critical role in this intricate dance. By carefully considering and nurturing these relationships, extreme sports businesses can create a model that fosters sustainable growth for the sport and its participants. A focus on building a strong brand identity, fostering a vibrant community, and strategically leveraging both tangible and intangible assets is key to achieving long-term success in this dynamic and exciting industry.

The extreme sports business model stands out distinctly from traditional sports models due to its unique reliance on intangible assets and dynamic stakeholder interactions. Unlike conventional sports, which primarily focus on tangible assets like stadiums, ticket sales, and broadcasting rights, the extreme sports model emphasizes brand reputation, community engagement, and athlete talent as critical drivers of success. A significant distinction lies in the role of intangible assets. In extreme sports, brand reputation and passionate fan communities are pivotal. These businesses thrive by creating an emotional connection with their audience, achieved through consistent excellence, engaging social media strategies, and fostering a sense of community (Saliha & Sakrya, 2014). This contrasts with traditional sports, where fan loyalty is often built around established teams and historical legacy rather than the dynamic engagement seen in extreme sports.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is another area where extreme sports diverge. By leveraging social capital and brand loyalty, extreme sports businesses personalize communication, tailor marketing campaigns, and deliver unique brand experiences that resonate deeply with fans (Klaus & Maklan, 2011). This personalized approach fosters loyalty and encourages repeat business, which is less emphasized in traditional sports models that rely more on broad, less personalized fan interactions. The financial success of extreme sports also hinges on a balanced interplay of tangible and intangible assets. While intangible assets create allure and foster connections, tangible assets like facilities, equipment, and merchandise are essential for financial viability. Sponsorships, training programs, and media rights generate significant revenue,



highlighting a more diversified approach to income streams compared to the traditional reliance on ticket sales and broadcasting deals. Furthermore, the stakeholder ecosystem in extreme sports is uniquely dynamic. Athletes, fans, media partners, and governing bodies each play a vital role, contributing to the sport's vibrancy and financial health. Unlike traditional sports, where governing bodies and media partners often dominate, extreme sports rely on a more collaborative network of stakeholders, including dedicated coaches and engaged fans who drive the sport's growth through grassroots support and social media engagement (Bartoletti et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2022). In summary, the extreme sports business model is distinguished by its strategic emphasis on intangible assets, personalized fan engagement, diversified revenue streams, and a collaborative stakeholder ecosystem. This model's success demonstrates the potential for financial viability through passion-driven, community-oriented approaches, setting it apart from more conventional sports business strategies.

Unlike traditional sports models, extreme sports businesses rely heavily on intangible assets like brand reputation, passionate communities, and athlete talent. These assets cultivate excitement and loyalty, fostering a unique value proposition that translates into revenue generation. However, this doesn't diminish the importance of tangible resources. Facilities, equipment, broadcasting rights, and merchandise all provide the essential foundation for financial viability.

The true magic unfolds in the intricate dance between these elements. Imagine a loyal fanbase, fostered through social media engagement and a vibrant brand community, cheering on athletes whose talent attracts sponsorships and media attention. These sponsorships, then, finance the construction of facilities and the production of captivating content, further amplifying the value proposition for fans. This cyclical interaction exemplifies the dynamic nature of the extreme sports business model. This model's success hinges on the careful consideration and nurturing of relationships within the stakeholder ecosystem. Athletes, fans, media partners, governing bodies, and coaches all play a vital role. By fostering collaboration and mutual benefit among these stakeholders, extreme sports businesses can ensure long-term growth for the sport and its participants. In conclusion, the extreme sports industry demonstrates that financial success can be achieved by cultivating a passionate community and leveraging a unique blend of tangible and intangible assets. It's a model where passion meets profit, creating a sustainable ecosystem that fuels the growth of the sport and the dreams of its athletes.

## 5. Research and practical implications

The extreme sports sector operates within a dynamic framework where the interaction between tangible and intangible assets, alongside a diverse stakeholder ecosystem, dictates its financial success. Intangible assets such as brand reputation and fan engagement are pivotal drivers of success in extreme sports enterprises. Our research highlights the critical role of cultivating strong brand identities through consistent excellence and engaging social media strategies. Establishing deep connections with fans not only enhances loyalty but also stimulates positive word-of-mouth promotion, essential for maintaining a competitive edge. Practically, businesses can prioritize personalized

customer relationship management (CRM) strategies to foster lasting fan relationships. Tangible assets play a crucial role in supporting the financial viability of extreme sports businesses. Sponsorship opportunities driven by athlete skill and event visibility illustrate how physical resources contribute to revenue generation. From specialized training programs using dedicated facilities to sales of branded merchandise, these assets diversify revenue streams and enhance business sustainability. Practical implications include optimizing facility usage and expanding merchandise offerings to capitalize on revenue opportunities.

The stakeholder landscape in extreme sports encompasses athletes, fans, media partners, and governing bodies, each contributing uniquely to business success. Athletes and their accomplishments attract sponsorships and media attention, boosting brand visibility and increasing fan engagement. Media collaborations broaden audience reach, while regulatory bodies uphold compliance and sports integrity, crucial for building trust and sustainability. Coaches play a pivotal role in athlete development, enhancing the sport's competitiveness and appeal. Practitioners can leverage these findings by aligning business strategies with identified themes. Prioritizing athlete development, enhancing fan engagement through digital platforms, and diversifying revenue streams via strategic partnerships are essential growth strategies. Furthermore, fostering a robust brand community through social media and live events can deepen fan loyalty and drive sustainable business expansion.

## **Disclosure statement and funding**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest. The present study received no financial support from any organization or institution.

## **Acknowledgment**

We would like to give special thanks to all the participants in this study.

## **References**

- Amini, M., Atghia, N., & Norouzi Seyed Hosseini, R. (2020). Identifying Components and Levels of Knowledge-Based Economy in Sport (A Qualitative approach). *Sport Management Studies*, 12(60), 41-60. <https://doi.org/10.22089/smrj.2019.6764.2403>
- Apollo, M., Mostowska, J., Legut, A., Maciuk, K., & Timothy, D. J. (2023). Gender differences in competitive adventure sports tourism. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 42, 100604. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2022.100604>
- Bartoletti, C., Magro, T., & Sarriés, G. A. (2018). Stakeholders' perceptions towards factors of influence on the choice of places for Adventure Races. Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Monitoring and Management of Visitors in Recreational and Protected Areas, Bordeaux, France.
- Bennett, G., Henson, R. K., & Zhang, J. (2003). Generation Y's perceptions of the action sports industry segment. *Journal of Sport Management*, 17(2), 95-115. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jism.17.2.95>

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Breivik, G. (2010). Trends in adventure sports in a post-modern society. *Sport in Society*, 13(2), 260-273. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430430903522970>
- Brown, N. A., Devlin, M. B., & Billings, A. C. (2013, 01 Mar. 2013). Fan Identification Gone Extreme: Sports Communication Variables Between Fans and Sport in the Ultimate Fighting Championship. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 6(1), 19-32. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.6.1.19>
- Brymer, E. (2005). *Extreme dude: a phenomenological exploration into the extreme sport experience*. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wollongong]. Wollongong, Wales. <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/379/>
- Brymer, E., Feletti, F., Monasterio, E., & Schweitzer, R. (2020). Understanding extreme sports: A psychological perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 3029. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.03029>
- Brymer, E., & Schweitzer, R. (2017). *Phenomenology and the extreme sport experience*. Routledge. <https://books.google.com/books?id=LMaEDgAAQBAJ>
- Buckley, R. C. (2018a). Analysing adventure: a leisure lifepsychle? *Annals of Leisure Research*, 21(5), 533-538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2017.1361333>
- Buckley, R. C. (2018b). To analyze thrill, define extreme sports. *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, 1216. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01216>
- Celsi, R. L., Rose, R. L., & Leigh, T. W. (1993). An exploration of high-risk leisure consumption through skydiving. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(1), 1-23. [https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=mark\\_facpub](https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=mark_facpub)
- Cloutier, R. (2012). The business of adventure tourism. In *Sport and adventure tourism* (pp. 266-297). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203048375-15/business-adventure-tourism-ross-cloutier>
- Cohen, R., Baluch, B., & Duffy, L. J. (2018). Defining extreme sport: Conceptions and misconceptions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1974. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01974>
- DaSilva, C. M., & Trkman, P. (2014). Business model: What it is and what it is not. *Long Range Planning*, 47(6), 379-389. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2013.08.004>
- Dobson, S., & McLuskie, P. (2020). Performative entrepreneurship: identity, behaviour and place in adventure sports Enterprise. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 16(3), 879-895. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-020-00661-2>
- Donnelly, M. (2006). Studying extreme sports: Beyond the core participants. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 30(2), 219-224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723506287187>
- Dunning, E. (1997). Sport in the quest for excitement: Norbert Elias's contributions to the sociology of sport. *Group Analysis*, 30(4), 477-487. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0533316497304005>
- Efstathios, C. (2012). *Changes In Physical Activity And Sporting Habits Via Generations In Cyprus*. [PhD Thesis, Doctoral School of Sport Sciences, Semmelweis University]. Budapest, Hungary. [https://repo.lib.semmelweis.hu/bitstream/handle/123456789/201/efstathioschristodoulides\\_ertekezes\\_DOIs.pdf?sequence=1](https://repo.lib.semmelweis.hu/bitstream/handle/123456789/201/efstathioschristodoulides_ertekezes_DOIs.pdf?sequence=1)
- Elias, N., & Dunning, E. (1986). *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*. B. Blackwell. <https://books.google.com/books?id=WHyiQgAACAAJ>
- Frontini, R., Brandão, A., Monteiro, M., Salvador, R., Lima, R., Fernandes, D., & Clemente, F. M. (2019, June 17-19 ). *Comparison of motivational factors for the practice of exercise at gyms and nature and adventure sports*. JHSE Supplementary Issue: International Seminar

- of Physical Education, Leisure and Health, Castelo Branco, Portugal. [https://knowledge.society.usal.es/system/files/JHSE-SIEFLAS\\_Papers\\_Proceedings.pdf#page=21](https://knowledge.society.usal.es/system/files/JHSE-SIEFLAS_Papers_Proceedings.pdf#page=21)
- Geissdoerfer, M., Pieroni, M. P., Pigosso, D. C., & Soufani, K. (2020). Circular business models: A review. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 277, 123741. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.123741>
- Griggs, G. (2012). Why have alternative sports grown in popularity in the UK? *Annals of Leisure Research*, 15(2), 180-187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2012.659718>
- Hajkowicz, S., Cook, H., Wilhelmseder, L., & Boughen, N. (2013). *The future of Australian sport: Megatrends shaping the sports sector over coming decades*. Australian Sports Commission Bruce, Australia. <https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv:78444>
- Hedman, J., & Kalling, T. (2003). The business model concept: theoretical underpinnings and empirical illustrations. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 12(1), 49-59. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.ejis.3000446>
- Hossini, R. N. S., Ehsani, M., & Kozechian, H. (2014). Review of the concept of human capital in sports with an emphasis on capability approach. *American Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(6), 145-151. <https://ideas.repec.org/a/rom/marath/v6y2014i2p222-234.html>
- Ivanova, I., & Wald, M. (2023). Recommender Systems for Outdoor Adventure Tourism Sports: Hiking, Running and Climbing. *Human-Centric Intelligent Systems*, 3(3), 344-365. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44230-023-00033-3>
- Karimi, J., Soltanian, L., & Bejani, A. (2020). Designing the Model of the Development of Adventure Sports Tourism: Grounded Theory. *Sport Management Studies*, 12(60), 61-82. <https://doi.org/10.22089/smrj.2019.6327.2288>
- Kim, A., Kim, M., Salaga, S., & Zhang, J. J. (2022, 01 Mar. 2022). Impact of Social Media on Intention to Purchase Pay-Per-View and Event Attendance: The Case of the Ultimate Fighting Championship. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 15(1), 10-22. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2021-0068>
- Klaus, P., & Maklan, S. (2011). Bridging the gap for destination extreme sports: A model of sports tourism customer experience. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(13-14), 1341-1365. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2011.624534>
- Kurnia, M. A. D., & Hasyim, I. (2023). The influence of consumer perceptions on product attributes towards brand preferences of Alpina Outdoor Sport and Eiger Adventure. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship, Business and Creative Economy*, 3(1), 61-73. <https://doi.org/10.31098/ijebce.v3i1.1299>
- Lv, C., Wang, Y., & Jin, C. (2022). The possibility of sports industry business model innovation based on blockchain technology: Evaluation of the innovation efficiency of listed sports companies. *Plos one*, 17(1), e0262035. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0262035>
- Majidi, C., Saffari, M., & Khabiri, M. (2020). Adventure Sports Development Paradigm. *Research in Sport Management and Motor Behavior*, 10(19), 31-56. <https://doi.org/10.29252/jrsm.10.19.31>
- Moharramzadeh, M., & Imanzadeh, M. (2019). Presentation of a qualitative model for developing strategies for adventurous sports tourism. *Sport Management and Development*, 8(4), 2-17. <https://doi.org/10.22124/jsmd.2019.3795>
- Moradi, E., Ehsani, M., Saffari, M., & Hosseini, R. N. S. (2022). Developing an integrated model for the competitiveness of sports tourism destinations. *Journal of destination marketing & management*, 26, 100743. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2022.100743>
- Ratten, V., & Jones, P. (2020). New challenges in sport entrepreneurship for value creation. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 16(3), 961-980. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-020-00664-z>

- Rinehart, R. E., & Sydnor, S. (2003). *To the extreme: Alternative sports, inside and out*. State University of New York Press. <https://books.google.com/books?id=IoM-7uwE9zcC>
- Rusu, O., & Rusu, D. (2022). The Impact of Extreme Sports on the Individual and Society: A Short Introduction. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov. Series IX: Sciences of Human Kinetics*, 14(2), 93-102. <https://doi.org/10.31926/but.shk.2021.14.63.2.11>
- Saffari, M., & Moradi, E. (2021). Examining the moderator role of gender in the relationships between motivations and enduring involvement of tourists in adventure sports activities. *Sport Management Studies*, 13(65), 37-62. <https://doi.org/10.22089/smrj.2018.5021.1979>
- Saliha, A., & Sakrya, M. (2014). Evaluation of outdoor sports clothing brand personality by users. *International Journal of Sport Culture and Science*, 2(2), 99-113. <https://doi.org/10.14486/IJSCS67>
- Salome, L. R., van Bottenburg, M., & van den Heuvel, M. (2013). 'We are as green as possible': environmental responsibility in commercial artificial settings for lifestyle sports. *Leisure Studies*, 32(2), 173-190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2011.645247>
- Sanaei, M., Zardoshtian, S., & Norouzi Seyed Hossini, R. (2013). The effect of physical activities on quality of life and hope life in older adults of Mazandaran province. *Sport Management Review*, 5(17), 137-157. <https://www.sid.ir/paper/234476/en>
- Tomlinson, A., Ravenscroft, N., Wheaton, B., & Gilchrist, P. (2005). *Lifestyle sports and national sport policy: An agenda for research*. [https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/files/169304/lifestyle\\_sports\\_and\\_national\\_sports\\_policy.pdf](https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/files/169304/lifestyle_sports_and_national_sports_policy.pdf)
- Varley, P., & Semple, T. (2015). Nordic slow adventure: Explorations in time and nature. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 15(1-2), 73-90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2015.1028142>
- Zuckerman, M. (2007). *Sensation Seeking and Risk*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/11555-000>



## توسعه یک مدل کسب و کار برای باشگاه‌های ورزشی: مطالعه آمیز: رویکردی مبتنی بر تعامل مالی و سرمایه

مریم امینی<sup>۱</sup>، سید حسین مرعشیان<sup>۲\*</sup>، امین خطیبی<sup>۳</sup>، اسماعیل ویسیا<sup>۴</sup>

<sup>۱</sup> دانشجوی دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، دانشگاه شهید چمران اهواز، اهواز، ایران.

<sup>۲</sup> استادیار مدیریت ورزشی، دانشگاه شهید چمران اهواز، اهواز، ایران.

<sup>۳</sup> دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی، دانشگاه شهید چمران اهواز، اهواز، ایران.

### کلیدواژه

دارایی‌های ملموس  
ذینفعان  
کسب و کار  
مصرف‌کننده  
ورزش‌های افراطی

### نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

### چکیده

**هدف:** با ظهور ورزش‌های جدید و مخاطره‌آمیز بررسی جوانب مختلف آن‌ها از اهمیت بالایی برخوردار است. این پژوهش به طراحی مدل کسب و کار در باشگاه‌های ورزشی مخاطره‌آمیز با رویکرد تعاملات سرمایه‌ای و مالی می‌پردازد.

**روش:** این پژوهش کیفی از رویکرد تحلیل مضمونی برای بررسی اجزاء، ارتباطات و طراحی مدل کسب و کار در باشگاه‌های ورزشی مخاطره‌آمیز استفاده کرده است. از طریق انجام مصاحبه‌های نیمه ساختاریافته با متخصصان و کارشناسان حوزه ورزش‌های مخاطره‌آمیز داده‌ها جمع‌آوری شدند. رویکرد تحلیل مضمونی براون و کلارک (۲۰۰۶) برای تحلیل داده‌ها استفاده شد.

**یافته‌ها:** یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهد که مدل کسب و کار در باشگاه‌های ورزشی مخاطره‌آمیز دارای سه عنصر اساسی دارایی‌های ملموس، دارایی‌های ناملموس، و ذینفعان است. از طریق روابط دوطرفه این عناصر با ورزش‌های مخاطره‌آمیز ظرفیت‌ها و پویایی‌هایی برای کسب و کار ایجاد می‌شود. با توجه نوع مشارکت‌کنندگان، سبک‌ها و سطوح ورزش‌های مخاطره‌آمیز می‌توان شاهد تعاملات مالی و شکل‌گیری سرمایه‌های اجتماعی بود. این مدل ماهیتی چرخه‌ای دارد که تابع تعاملات بین اجزای آن است.

**اصالت و ابتکار مقاله:** این تحقیق یک مدل کسب و کار مهم را ارائه می‌دهد که به‌طور خاص برای باشگاه‌های ورزشی مخاطره‌آمیز طراحی شده است. تحقیقات قبلی در مورد مدل‌های کسب و کار ورزشی به ویژگی‌های منحصربه‌فرد ورزش‌های افراطی و وضعیت خاص این صنعت نپرداخته است. این اولین مطالعه‌ای است که تعامل بین دارایی‌های مشهود و نامشهود، ذینفعان و ویژگی‌های مشارکت ورزشی پرخطر (انواع، سبک‌ها و سطوح) را برای درک تعاملات مالی و تشکیل سرمایه اجتماعی در این حوزه بررسی می‌کند. این تحقیق با برجسته کردن ماهیت چرخه‌ای این مدل، بینش‌های ارزشمندی را در مورد اکوسیستم منحصربه‌فردی که کسب و کار در باشگاه‌های ورزشی افراطی را هدایت می‌کند، ارائه می‌کند.

تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۳/۰۱/۲۰

تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۳/۰۶/۲۳







## Influences on the Endorsed Brand in Celebrity Athlete Social Media Interactions: The Moderating Role of Trustworthiness

Morteza Mohammadi<sup>1</sup>, Syrous Jafari<sup>2\*</sup>, Zahra Hedayatnia<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education, Amin University of Police Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Sports Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Payam Noor University, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>3</sup> MSC in Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran.

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study aimed to investigate the factors affecting the interaction with the endorsed brand of the celebrity athlete on social media (the moderating role of the Trustworthy celebrity athlete).

**Methodology:** In terms of purpose, this study is practical, and in terms of data collection method, it is descriptive-correlative. The population included all sports product consumers on Instagram. A total of 370 individuals participated in the study. The study's measurement instrument was a questionnaire belonging to (Wei & Lu, 2013); (Hussain et al., 2020) and (Arai et al., 2013). Sports management professors reviewed the questionnaire to verify its face validity. The external model evaluation, including composite reliability, convergent validity, and divergent validity, proved the instrument's validity.

**Findings:** The internal model evaluation indicated that the celebrity's athletic performance, attractiveness, and market lifestyle significantly affect consumers' interactions with celebrity athletes on social media. The "Trustworthy celebrity athlete" also held a positive moderating function associated with customer interactions with a celebrity athlete owning an endorsed brand on social media. In general, trusting a trustworthy celebrity athlete, as well as his recommendations and statements of truthfulness, can impact the audience's interaction with his brand to a great extent.

**Originality:** The current study emphasizes the value of the off-field lifestyle as a valued asset and has significant implications for celebrity athletes and brand management.

### Keywords

Brand-athlete Interaction  
Endorsement  
Social Media  
Instagram

### Article Type

Original Article

Received: 2024/01/31

Accepted: 2024/07/08

### How to Cite this Article:

Mohammadi, M., Jafari, S., & Hedayatnia, Z. (2024). Influences on the Endorsed Brand in Celebrity Athlete Social Media Interactions: The Moderating Role of Trustworthiness. *Sports Business Journal*, 4(3), 99-114. <https://www.doi.org/10.22051/SBJ.2024.46355.1139>



## 1. Introduction

Today, in the social media era, athlete celebrities leverage Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media platforms to interact directly with their fans and followers, strengthening a close relationship with consumers (Kim & Kim, 2020). According to (Geurin, 2017), such a relationship presents new prospects for developing personal brands and marketing value in terms of practical endorsement (Chung & Cho, 2017) and brand love (Zhou et al., 2020). However, to boost consumer response and publicize their products and services, companies seek increasingly to leverage famous figures, particularly those in the sports industry (Carrillat & Ilicic, 2019). Due to market globalization, online shops, and e-commerce platforms, a wide range of sports and non-sports items are now easily accessible in any market worldwide. This has boosted competitiveness and led to the launch of new products (Muda et al., 2012). Promoting sports and non-sport items might benefit from the captivating personas of athletes, coaches, and other athlete celebrities, representing a set of values associated with sports (Koernig & Boyd, 2009). Furthermore, brands may utilize celebrities' images to promote their products (Anthony Carrillat & d'Astous, 2014). According to (Von Felbert & Breuer, 2021), celebrity athletes are the most successful endorsers and garner the most excellent attention from customers. Additionally, corporations find this popularity particularly appealing due to the widespread media coverage of sports events (Rouzfarakh et al., 2022).

According to Kunkel et al. (2019), athlete branding is now a hot issue in academic studies. For instance, studies on athlete celebrities' prowess have investigated the effects of sponsor interest (Kunkel et al., 2019), fan loyalty (Koo et al., 2012), source credibility, and sponsor stock price (Mori et al., 2020). However, according to (Geurin, 2017), there is not enough research on how athlete celebrities utilize social media or how athletes build their brands on them. There is a dearth of studies on how social media interactions between sports celebrities and consumers affect the effectiveness of endorsements (Chung & Cho, 2017). Furthermore, additional study is required to comprehend the essential traits of celebrities that strengthen the bonds between fans and celebrities, considering the growth of social media platforms. Therefore, a deeper comprehension of the motivations behind consumer interactions with athlete celebrities on social media and the implications for brand endorsement is required.

Arai et al. (2013) created the Model of Athlete Brand Image (MABI) based on (Keller, 1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity model, which divides brand associations into related and unrelated attributes. The MABI combines athlete performance (related or on-field attribute) and marketable lifestyle (unrelated or off-field attribute) to present a basic theoretical understanding of the strategies for evaluating and developing athletes' image. Furthermore, according to the source credibility theory, celebrities' attractiveness, reliability, and expertise can impact people's interactions (Mansouri et al., 2020). Hence, based on the previously described theories, this study provides a conceptual model (Figure 1) and predicts the factors influencing consumers' interactions with athlete celebrities on social media.

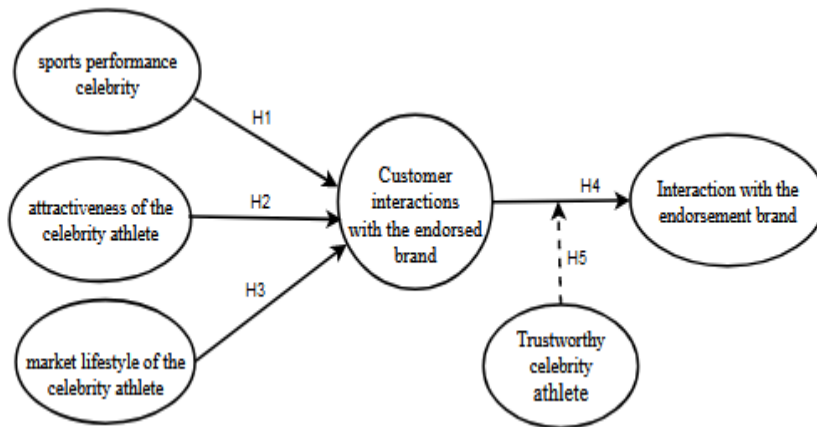


Figure 1. The conceptual framework of the model.

## 2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

### 2.1. Social media interaction with celebrity athletes

When advertising sports products on Instagram, it works well to pique consumers' interest and convince them to purchase by showcasing the advantages, added value, and potential benefits of buying the product. Illustrating how celebrities, such as the champions and artists, consume the goods is also effective. Additionally, creativity could enhance the effectiveness of this interaction (Mansouri et al., 2020). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is a set of functional Internet-based applications that support user-generated content production and sharing founded on web technology and ideological principles. Individuals often use social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to discover helpful information, support their decision-making and shopping activities, connect with others, exchange material, and have entertainment (Zafar et al., 2021). Using one or more of these social media platforms, many celebrity athletes interact with their fans and followers regularly. "Interaction" in social media, according to Voorveld et al. (2018), means the emotional and intuitive experiences or perceptions that individuals feel while employing a specific medium for doing or sharing work with others, meeting needs for pertinent information, and spending free time. Hence, the experiences individuals have while accessing celebrity athletes' social media platforms are reflected in their interactions with them.

### 2.2. Celebrity's sports performance

Arai et al. (2013) developed the conceptual model of athlete brand image, which incorporates sports performance as a product-related component. Sports performance comprises competition style, which includes certain performance traits of the athlete's expertise, which relates to the athlete's achievement and capabilities. Sports ethics portray the proper conduct of the athlete, such as honesty, fair play, and respect for the sports game; competitiveness that conveys the player's competition with other athletes (Arai et

al., 2013). Research has indicated that athletes' on-field performance boosts their reputation and fans' devotion (Koo et al., 2012). Athletes with exceptional performance will thus probably elicit more interest and interaction from fans on social media.

The following hypotheses are put out considering these presumptions:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Celebrity athletes' superior performance positively impacts their interactions with fans on social media.

### 2.3. *Celebrity attractiveness*

According to McCroskey and McCain (1974) attractiveness is linked to a person's perceptions and social values. Regarding the efficacy of advertising, a person's attractiveness is greatly determined by how well-liked, familiar, and similar to their fans and followers (Ohanian, 1991). The concept of similarity is the presumed similarity between the recipient (social media followers) and the person. At the same time, familiarity is the perceived knowledge of the person based on exposure to him, and likability is the person's liking due to facial appearance and celebrity behavior (McGuire, 1985). According to McGuire (1985), likeability is the perception of the person based on their appearance and celebrity's behavior; familiarity is an understanding of the person based on exposure to them; and similarity is the assumed similarity between the audience (social media followers) and the celebrity.

In addition to celebrity endorsements, research has shown that customers' purchase intentions are more likely to be swayed by endorsers who are perceived to be attractive (Ranjbarian et al., 2010). Hence, it makes sense that a famous person's physical attractiveness may be harnessed to increase social media interaction with customers. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- **Hypothesis 2:** A celebrity athlete's attractiveness positively impacts his interaction with consumers on social media.

### 2.4. *Market lifestyle of celebrities*

Athletes' marketable lifestyles emerge from their life stories, and consumers might interpret athletes' lifestyles as reflections of their personas and values (Arai et al., 2013). Although the athlete's life narrative represents their values, these principles also reflect their moral behavior, which the public considers worthy of emulating. Values further demonstrate the athlete's positive attitude regarding interaction with his supporters (Arai et al., 2013). Celebrity athletes' lifestyles can boost their supporters' loyalty and appeal to those who identify with the athletes. Thus, they are highly unique and genuine (Erdogan et al., 2001). People communicate with celebrity athletes, inspirationally dreaming of becoming similar to their heroes (Dumitriu, 2015). Fans and viewers value it when celebrity athletes behave ethically following societal norms; this creates a favorable impression that may encourage them to communicate with celebrities on social media. Drawing on the previous arguments, the following hypothesis is put forth:

- **Hypothesis 3:** Celebrities' marketable lifestyle positively affects their social media interactions with their fans.

### ***2.5. Interaction with endorsed brand***

Hollebeek et al. (2014) define the brand-consumer relationship as a brand-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity associated with primary consumer/brand interactions necessary for brand interaction to develop (Brodie et al., 2011). Through encouraging stronger links, social media's technological attributes—such as intimacy, immediacy, and interactivity—have transformed how celebrities interact with their fans. Additionally, social media strengthens parasocial relationships with celebrities and increases customers' perceived intimacy with them (Chung & Cho, 2017). Escalas and Bettman (2017), define parasocial relationships as one-way, recurring, and close connections that foster sentiments of friendship or intimacy with celebrities. Since they contribute to expanding source trust, they thus have significant marketing value for influential endorsements (Chung & Cho, 2017). Celebrities' recommendations seem more convincing when a parasocial relationship is formed, and they may boost brand love in consumers (Zhou et al. (2020). As a result, users' intuitive and dynamic interactions with celebrity athletes on social media ought to foster more engagement with the endorsed brand and boost fans' faith and confidence in the celebrity. Thus, we presume that:

- **Hypothesis 4:** Consumers' interaction with a celebrity on social media positively affects their interaction with the brand.

### ***2.6. The moderating role of trustworthy celebrity athlete***

According to Ohanian (1990) trustworthiness is characterized by a sincere desire to provide accurate information about a subject, phenomenon, product, etc., and to make lawful claims in front of others. Trust is the individual's reliability in articulating significant concepts that impact and alter a customer's desires. The many qualities of the celebrity endorser cannot persuade a buyer to change their mind if no trust is there (Miller & Baseheart, 1969). Chao et al. (2005) claim that source reliability influences the customers' purchase intentions and reinforces their constructive outcome about the endorsement's longevity. Additionally, logical trust in the endorser might affect customers' value perceptions and purchasing decisions. Accordingly, the influencers selected must be someone consumers can relate to and whom they believe to be sincere, impartial, and legitimate (Temperley & Tangen, 2006). This indicates that the celebrity's perceived reliability can moderate the link between a consumer's social media interaction with a celebrity athlete and their interaction with the endorsed brand. As a result, the following hypothesis is put forth:

- **Hypothesis 5:** Customer interactions with the endorsed brand and the celebrity on social media are favorably moderated by the Trustworthy celebrity athlete.

### 3. Methodology

The present work is a descriptive-correlative study with a practical purpose. The primary data was collected via an online survey hosted on Google Forum. The population included every sports fan utilizing Instagram. The way people entered the research to complete the questionnaire was that if you follow the social page of at least five famous sports people (followers), answer the questionnaire. Therefore, we considered those who answered the questionnaire to be consumers of sports products. Using the Sample Power version 3 program, the sample size was computed. Considering the 0.05 effect size, 0.05 alpha, and 0.9 statistical power, the optimal sample size for this study was found to be 274 samples. After considering the potential of discarding samples, the researcher gathered 382 samples. Upon first reviewing the data, 12 improper samples were identified, and 370 questionnaires were analyzed. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale for measuring (from completely disagree with option one and agree with option 5).

The questionnaire was developed using 37 questions extracted and analyzed from previous research. In pursuit of this objective, the attractiveness of the famous individual was assessed using the four-item questionnaire developed by [Wei and Lu \(2013\)](#). The Trustworthy Celebrity Athlete questionnaire, as outlined by [Hussain et al. \(2020\)](#), underwent adaptations implemented by the researcher and encompassed eight items. The conclusive questionnaire of the study integrated four inquiries derived from the sports performance questionnaire, nine inquiries from the market lifestyle of celebrity questionnaire, six items from the endorsed brand interaction questionnaire, and an additional six items from the consumer interaction questionnaire, focusing specifically on the athlete's presence in social media, as developed by [Arai et al. \(2013\)](#).

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) was employed in assessing divergent validity, while convergent validity was evaluated through the mean-variance method. Composite reliability was computed to ascertain the reliability of the items. Subsequently, the hypotheses were tested utilizing the Partial Least Squares technique (PLS), implemented with the PLS-SEM4 software.

### 4. Results

To scrutinize the research data, an initial step involved delineating the demographic characteristics of the research sample. The findings indicated that the predominant educational attainment was a bachelor's degree, constituting the highest frequency at 120 individuals, representing 28% of the sample. Regarding gender distribution, the majority were men, comprising 256 individuals, accounting for 52% of the total sample. In terms of age, individuals falling within the 21 to 30 years bracket demonstrated the highest frequency, with 145 respondents constituting 39% of the sample. The most prevalent category concerning marital status was single individuals, accounting for 66% of the total sample, totaling 238 respondents. [Table 1](#) shows the remaining results.

**Table 1.** Describing the personal traits of the respondents.

|            | Gender |      | Marital Status |         | Age                |                 |                 |                        | Level of Education                               |                     |                      |                 |              |
|------------|--------|------|----------------|---------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|--|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
|            | Female | Male | Single         | Married | Under 20 years old | 21-30 years old | 31-40 years old | More than 40 years old | High school Degree/ less than High school Degree | Associate' s Degree | Undergraduate Degree | Graduate Degree | Ph.D. Degree |
| N          | 114    | 256  | 238            | 132     | 75                 | 145             | 115             | 35                     | 75   | 40                  | 120                  | 97              | 38           |
| Percentage | 31%    | 69%  | 66%            | 34%     | 20%                | 39%             | 32%             | 9%                     | 20%  | 11%                 | 33%                  | 26%             | 10%          |

#### 4.1. External and internal model evaluation

Composite reliability serves as a metric for assessing the external fit of a model and is determined by evaluating the compatibility of items associated with the measurement of each construct. Its customary threshold is 0.7. Convergent validity, indicative of the internal correlation and coherence among measurement items within a construct, is considered consistent when surpassing the conventional threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019). In the present study, as evidenced in Table 2, the model exhibited acceptable reliability and concurrent validity levels. The HTMT validity index quantifies the extent of divergent or discriminant validity among the individual items comprising each model construct. This approach has supplanted the Fornell-Larcker method, as evident in Table 2, where the correlations across all categories were below the threshold established by 0.9 (Henseler et al., 2015).

**Table 2.** Construct reliability, validity, and discriminant validity.

| Latent Variable  | AVE  | CR   | $\alpha$ | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6 |
|--|------|------|----------|------|------|------|------|------|---|
|  |      |      |          | HTMT |      |      |      |      |   |
| Sports performance celebrity                                   | 0.69 | 0.90 | 0.84     |      |      |      |      |      |   |
| Attractiveness of the celebrity athlete                        | 0.73 | 0.92 | 0.88     | 0.65 |      |      |      |      |   |
| The market lifestyle of the celebrity athlete                  | 0.52 | 0.91 | 0.88     | 0.80 | 0.73 |      |      |      |   |
| Consumers' interaction with celebrity athletes on social media | 0.59 | 0.90 | 0.86     | 0.82 | 0.73 | 0.83 |      |      |   |
| Trustworthy celebrity athlete                                  | 0.61 | 0.93 | 0.91     | 0.74 | 0.90 | 0.88 | 0.86 |      |   |
| Interaction with the endorsement brand                         | 0.63 | 0.91 | 0.88     | 0.85 | 0.65 | 0.72 | 0.89 | 0.74 |   |

Table 3 presents the coefficients of determination for all endogenous variables within the research model. The outcomes of this criterion, by Hair et al. (2019) investigation, indicate a robust and optimal fit of the structural model. Additionally, to assess the model's predictive efficacy, Stone-Geisser's Q2 criterion was employed, following the methodology outlined in the research (Henseler et al., 2009). A comparison of these



criteria in Table 3 suggests that the independent variables demonstrate a substantial predictive capacity.

**Table 3.** Coefficient of determination and power of model prediction.

| Latent Variable  | R2   | Q2   |
|--|------|------|
| Consumer interaction with sports celebrities on social media | 0.64 | 0.37 |
| interaction with an endorsed brand                           | 0.64 | 0.39 |

The f2 effect size serves as a measure to quantify the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable. Researchers classified effect sizes as 0.02 (weak), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.35 (vigorous). As delineated in Table 4, all path effect sizes within the model are positive. These effect sizes range from weak (e.g., Trustworthy \* interaction of consumers with a celebrity \* interaction with an endorsed brand) to strong (e.g., interaction of consumers with a celebrity athlete in social media \* interaction with the endorsed brand), exhibiting fluctuations across the spectrum.

**Table 4.** F2 Cohen's.

| Latent Variable   | consumers' interaction with celebrity athletes on social media | Interaction with the endorsement brand |
|---|--|--|
| sports performance celebrity  | 0.18   |  |
| attractiveness of the celebrity athlete   | 0.08   |  |
| the market lifestyle of the celebrity athlete   | 0.13   |  |
| consumers' interaction with the celebrity athlete on social media                                 |  | 0.49                                   |
| Trustworthy celebrity athlete   |  | 0.05                                   |
| Trustworthy celebrity athlete* consumers' interaction with the →celebrity athlete on social media |  | 0.02                                   |

The positive and statistically significant impact of the sports performance of the celebrity (H1), the attractiveness of the celebrity athlete (H2), and the market lifestyle of the celebrity athlete (H3) on consumers' interaction with the celebrity athlete on social media ( $p < 0.05$ ) affirm hypotheses 1 to 4. Moreover, the confirmed moderating association between reliability and consumers' interaction with the celebrity in conjunction with the endorsed brand was positive and statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Derived from these findings, hypothesis 5 also garnered support. Ultimately, the SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Residual) index is employed to evaluate the model fit in partial least squares methodology following the obsolescence of the goodness-of-fit (GOF) criterion. A value below 0.1 or 0.08 is deemed appropriate, according to (Hair et al., 2019).

**Table 5.** Evaluation of research hypotheses.

| Path model   | $\beta$ | t    | sig   | SRMR |
|--|---------|------|-------|------|
| H1 sports performance celebrity (F1) → consumers' interaction with celebrity athletes on social media (F4)                   | 0.36    | 7.40 | 0.001 |      |
| H2 attractiveness of the celebrity athlete (F2) → consumers' interaction with the celebrity athlete on social media (F4)     | 0.23    | 4.29 | 0.001 | 0.07 |
| H3 a market lifestyle of the celebrity athlete (F3) → consumers' interaction with the celebrity athlete on social media (F4) | 0.33    | 5.92 | 0.001 |      |

| Path model  | $\beta$ | t     | sig   | SRMR |
|---|---------|-------|-------|------|
| H4 consumers' interaction with the celebrity athlete on social media (F4) $\rightarrow$ Interaction with the endorsement brand (F6)       | 0.65    | 12.28 | 0.001 |      |
| H5 Trustworthy celebrity athlete* consumers' interaction with celebrity (F5*F4) $\rightarrow$ Interaction with the endorsement brand (F6) | 0.07    | 2.28  | 0.046 |      |

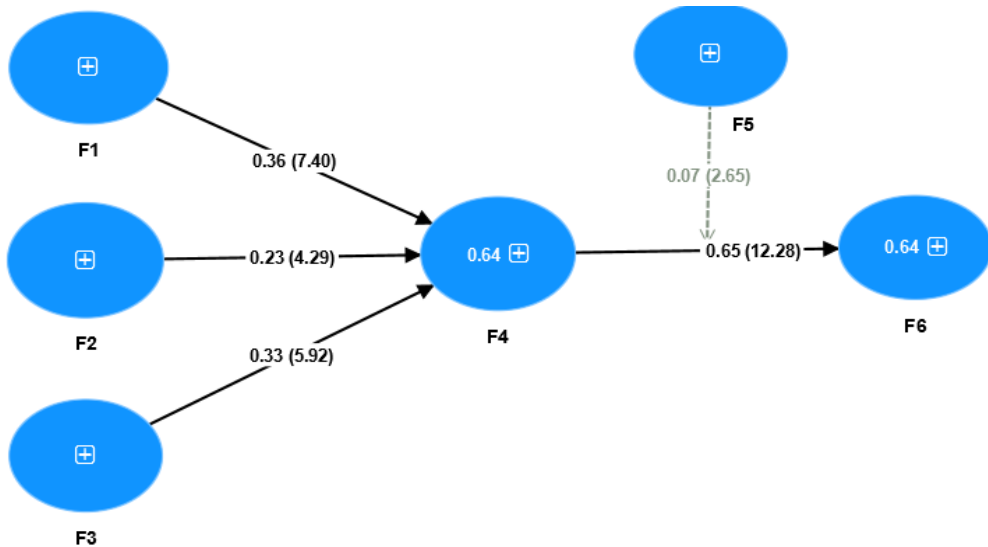


Figure 2. Output PLS-SEM (H1 to H5).

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

Using the athlete brand image model proposed by [Arai et al. \(2013\)](#), the present study examines the impact of sports performance and the off-field marketable lifestyle of celebrity athletes on consumers' interaction with them on social media and their endorsements. Additionally, following the theory of source credibility articulated by [Hovland and Weiss \(1951\)](#), the research explores the influence of attractiveness and the moderating role played by the reliability of the prominent individual.

According to the research findings, the highest level of education in the sample was a bachelor's degree, constituting 28% of the total sample. On average, these higher-educated individuals are more interested in online activities and following sports celebrities. They also have the potential to have more information on various topics, including better knowledge of famous people and sports products. In this regard, [Chen \(2018\)](#) pointed out in a study that young university consumers are interested in using Instagram for marketing purposes. People aged 21 to 30 years had the highest frequency, making up 39% of the total sample. Research shows that Instagram is highly popular among young people, and motivations for using it include self-expression, curiosity, entertainment, and communication ([Huang & Su, 2018](#)). This age range can play an essential role in recognizing different patterns and behaviors of individuals. Therefore, for sports brand managers, understanding this target community can help them improve their sales by

planning brand advertisements with famous people. According to the research findings, most participants in the study were single, accounting for 66% of the total sample. Being single essentially means not having the responsibilities of family life, thus granting these individuals more opportunities to engage in the virtual space than married people. Furthermore, the majority of the participants in the study were men, constituting 52% of the total sample. Based on gender, individuals may possess different characteristics, attitudes, or experiences, which can aid sports brand managers in better understanding their target group for advertising in the online realm and increasing product sales.

The first three hypotheses of the current research examined sports performance, attractiveness, and the market lifestyle of sports celebrities concerning consumers' interaction with them on social media. Predictions were that these three variables would augment consumer interaction with them on social media. This conjecture is supported by earlier research, which has asserted that sports performance not only enhances credibility but also garners attention from sponsors, as exemplified in the work of [Koo et al. \(2012\)](#) and [Kunkel et al. \(2019\)](#). The outcomes of the current investigation systematically scrutinized this hypothesis, confirming all three postulations. Consequently, this study reveals that pertinent or on-field attributes (sports performance) and unrelated or off-field characteristics (attractiveness and market lifestyle) exert nearly equivalent influences on consumers' interaction with celebrity athletes on social media. This finding aligns with the research conducted by [\(Bardia et al., 2011; Koo et al., 2012; Ranjbarian et al., 2010; Seimiene & Jankovič, 2014\)](#). In addition to their sports prowess on the field, celebrity athletes can enhance consumers' engagement on social media platforms through their appealing social lifestyles off the field. This presents a novel opportunity to effectively manage the athlete's brand image and sustain their appeal to consumers, particularly after their professional sports careers. Leveraging attractive individuals is a pervasive strategy in print and television advertising, owing to their heightened capacity to influence audience attitudes and beliefs. This persuasive impact is attributed to the "halo" effect, wherein proficiency in one aspect, such as attractiveness, is extrapolated to suggest competence in other dimensions.

The fourth hypothesis substantiates that consumer interaction with celebrity athletes on social media positively correlates with increased engagement with the endorsed brand. This finding underscores the significance of parasocial relationships established between celebrities and consumers on social media platforms in enhancing the efficacy of endorsements. The fifth hypothesis delved into the moderating influence of celebrity reliability. Findings revealed that the reliability of a celebrity moderates the relationship between consumer interaction with the celebrity athlete on social media and subsequent engagement with the endorsed brand. This outcome aligns with prior research [\(Chekima & Chekima, 2019\)](#). Recent studies underscore the pivotal role of trust in celebrities across various dimensions, including advertisement attractiveness, social media advertisements, brand credibility, brand owner rights, brand loyalty, attitude towards the company, future purchase intentions, company image, and company reputation [\(Samat et al., 2015\)](#). Notably, trust in both the brand and the individual celebrity is essential, with the latter making the most outstanding contribution to enhancing consumer trust in the brand and the business. This aligns with the assertion by [Mckenzie et al. \(2016\)](#), that reliability is the

foremost factor influencing the purchase intentions of gym members. Consequently, it can be inferred that athletes who trust sports product consumers are more likely to engage with an endorsed brand.

The present study offers valuable insights into sports celebrities and brand management, shedding light on crucial concepts for effective brand and celebrity management within the sports industry. Concerning the brand management of celebrity athletes, the current research underscores the significance of off-field lifestyle as an asset capable of augmenting consumers' engagement with these celebrities on social media platforms. Beyond their on-field performance, in the age of social media, celebrities can cultivate fame off the field, leveraging their digital presence to attract and connect with fans, thereby establishing enduring parasocial relationships. This strategic approach enables celebrity athletes to enhance their renown, influence, and, consequently, the value of their image. Notably, the marketable lifestyle of sports celebrities stands as an alternative income source with the potential for sustained longevity if effectively managed.

Consequently, the strategic management of this asset is imperative to establish and fortify a positive lifestyle image. As human brands, celebrities must set themselves apart from competitors, and the narratives woven into their public lives serve as compelling stories to achieve this differentiation. Moreover, the attractiveness of celebrity athletes tends to diminish over time, necessitating proactive management to avert a decline in their image capital. Managers, therefore, play a pivotal role in supporting and guiding athletes and sports figures, aiding them in expanding their audience reach.

The current research contributes novel recommendations for brand managers and advertising agencies, extending beyond the evaluation and selection of suitable celebrity athlete endorsers. Emphasis is placed on maximizing returns from brand endorsements. Strategic attention should be devoted to the off-field attributes of celebrities, offering insights into their values and personalities that resonate with consumers and foster social media engagement. Recognizing the significance of consumer segments such as different age groups and genders, brand managers should ensure thoughtful interaction with sports celebrities to enhance brand engagement. Notably, the reliability of the celebrity remains paramount, amplifying the positive impact of their interaction with celebrity athletes on brand engagement.

## **6. Research limitations and further suggestions**

Despite the rich and productive outcomes of the present study, it seems additional study is needed in this field. It is suggested that comparable research be conducted using distinct variables, such as attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. The population of this study included all sports consumers who utilized Instagram social media. Disparities among social media platforms, however, were not examined. Future research can identify the social networks with the highest impact on the subject. Applying the proposed model to men and women, team and individual sports, and active and retired prominent figures might also be intriguing.

## Disclosure statement and funding

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest. The present study received no financial support from any organization or institution.

## Acknowledgment

We would like to give special thanks to all the participants in this study.

## References

- Anthony Carrillat, F., & d'Astous, A. (2014). Power imbalance issues in athlete sponsorship versus endorsement in the context of a scandal. *European Journal of Marketing*, 48(5/6), 1070-1091. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-11-2011-0688>
- Arai, A., Ko, Y. J., & Kaplanidou, K. (2013). Athlete brand image: Scale development and model test. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 13(4), 383-403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2013.811609>
- Bardia, Y. H., Abed, A., & Majid, N. (2011). Investigate the impact of celebrity endorsement on brand image. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 58(1), 116-132. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285721869\\_Investigate\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_celebrity\\_endorsement\\_on\\_brand\\_image](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285721869_Investigate_the_impact_of_celebrity_endorsement_on_brand_image)
- Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Jurić, B., & Ilić, A. (2011). Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 252-271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670511411703>
- Carrillat, F. A., & Ilicic, J. (2019). The celebrity capital life cycle: A framework for future research directions on celebrity endorsement. *Journal of Advertising*, 48(1), 61-71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2019.1579689>
- Chao, P., Wührer, G., & Werani, T. (2005). Celebrity and foreign brand name as moderators of country-of-origin effects. *International Journal of Advertising*, 24(2), 173-192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2005.11072913>
- Chekima, B., & Chekima, K. (2019). The impact of human values and knowledge on green products purchase intention. In *Exploring the dynamics of consumerism in developing nations* (pp. 266-283). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-7906-9.ch012>
- Chen, H. (2018). College-aged young consumers' perceptions of social media marketing: The story of Instagram. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 39(1), 22-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2017.1372321>
- Chung, S., & Cho, H. (2017). Fostering parasocial relationships with celebrities on social media: Implications for celebrity endorsement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 34(4), 481-495. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21001>
- Dumitriu, D.-L. (2015). The face management challenges of sport celebrity. *Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy*, 3(1), 79-97. <https://www.managementdynamics.ro/index.php/journal/article/view/123>
- Erdogan, B. Z., Baker, M. J., & Tagg, S. (2001). Selecting celebrity endorsers: The practitioner's perspective. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 41(3), 39-48. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-41-3-39-48>
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2017). Connecting with celebrities: How consumers appropriate celebrity meanings for a sense of belonging. *Journal of Advertising*, 46(2), 297-308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2016.1274925>

- Geurin, A. N. (2017). Elite female athletes' perceptions of new media use relating to their careers: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Sport Management*, 31(4), 345-359. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2016-0157>
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2-24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43, 115-135.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sinkovics, R. R. (2009). The use of partial least squares path modeling in international marketing. In R. R. Sinkovics & P. N. Ghauri (Eds.), *New challenges to international marketing* (pp. 277-319). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1474-7979\(2009\)0000020014](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1474-7979(2009)0000020014)
- Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149-165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002>
- Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15(4), 635-650. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2745952>
- Huang, Y.-T., & Su, S.-F. (2018). Motives for Instagram use and topics of interest among young adults. *Future internet*, 10(8), 77-88. <https://doi.org/10.3390/fi10080077>
- Hussain, S., Melewar, T., Priporas, C.-V., Foroudi, P., & Dennis, C. (2020). Examining the effects of celebrity trust on advertising credibility, brand credibility and corporate credibility. *Journal of Business Research*, 109, 472-488. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.11.079>
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299305700101>
- Kim, M., & Kim, J. (2020). How does a celebrity make fans happy? Interaction between celebrities and fans in the social media context. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 111, 106419. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106419>
- Koernig, S. K., & Boyd, T. C. (2009). To Catch a Tiger or Let Him Go: The Match-Up Effect and Athlete Endorsers for Sport and Non-Sport Brands. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 18(1), 25-37. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/a75e5c3f524c0d9e23ce4f86cdd815d9/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=28711>
- Koo, G.-Y., Ruihley, B. J., & Dittmore, S. W. (2012). Impact of perceived on-field performance on sport celebrity source credibility. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 21(3), 147-158. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/f8bf1fdd7ba9af9818c9b731741f670f/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=28711>
- Kunkel, T., Biscaia, R., Arai, A., & Agyemang, K. (2019). The role of self-brand connection on the relationship between athlete brand image and fan outcomes. *Journal of Sport Management*, 34(3), 201-216. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2019-0222>
- Mansouri, H., Gholami, M., Sadeghi Boroujerdi, S., & Sadeghi, M. (2020). The Effect of Instagram Advertising Indices on the Immediate and Hidden Behavioral Response of Sporting Goods Consumers. *Communication Management in Sport Media*, 7(4), 65-78. <https://doi.org/10.30473/jsm.2020.51829.1393>



- McCroskey, J. C., & McCain, T. A. (1974). The measurement of interpersonal attraction. *Speech Monographs*, 41(3), 261-266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637757409375845>
- McGuire, W. J. (1985). *Toward social psychology's second century* (S. Koch & D. E. Leary, Eds.). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10117-040>
- Mckenzie, M., Chiliya, N., & Chikandiwa, C. T. (2016). The impact of celebrity endorsement on attracting customers in the health and fitness industry. *African Journal for Physical Activity and Health Sciences (AJPHES)*, 22(2.2), 635-650. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajpherd/article/view/146709>
- Miller, G. R., & Baseheart, J. (1969). Source trustworthiness, opinionated statements, and response to persuasive communication. *Speech Monographs*, 36(1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637756909375602>
- Mori, K., Morino, T., & Takeda, F. (2020). Does Athletes' Performance Influence A Sponsor's Stock-Market Value?: Assessing the Effects of Sponsored Athletes Who Represent Japan in International Tournaments. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 60(4), 439-451. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2020-001>
- Muda, M., Musa, R., & Putit, L. (2012). Breaking through the clutter in media environment: how do celebrities help? *Procedia-social and Behavioral Sciences*, 42, 374-382. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.04.201>
- Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191>
- Ohanian, R. (1991). The impact of celebrity spokespersons' perceived image on consumers' intention to purchase. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 31(1), 46-54. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1991-26094-001>
- Ranjbarian, B., Shekarchizade, Z., & Momeni, Z. (2010). Celebrity endorser influence on attitude toward advertisements and brands. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 13(3), 399-407. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289662496\\_Celebrity\\_endorser\\_influence\\_on\\_attitude\\_toward\\_advertisements\\_and\\_brands](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289662496_Celebrity_endorser_influence_on_attitude_toward_advertisements_and_brands)
- Rouzfarakh, A., Mansouri, H., Mohammadi, M., & Sadaghi, M. (2022). The Role of Social Media Marketing Factors on Image & Brand Awareness Mediated by Engagement of Sports Brand Social Page Users (Case Study: Instagram Social Network). *Communication Management in Sport Media*, 9(4), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.30473/jsm.2021.56080.1479>
- Samat, M. F., Hashim, H., & Yusoff, R. N. R. (2015). Endorser credibility and its influence on the attitude toward social media advertisement in Malaysia. *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, 4(1), 144. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287197056\\_Endorser\\_Credibility\\_and\\_Its\\_Influence\\_on\\_the\\_Attitude\\_Toward\\_Social\\_Media\\_Advertisement\\_in\\_Malaysia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287197056_Endorser_Credibility_and_Its_Influence_on_the_Attitude_Toward_Social_Media_Advertisement_in_Malaysia)
- Seimiene, E., & Jankovič, T. (2014). Impact of congruence between sports celebrity and brand personality on purchase intention: the case of mineral water category in Lithuania. *Organizations and Markets in Emerging Economies*, 5(1), 90-104. <https://doi.org/10.15388/omee.2014.5.1.14243>
- Temperley, J., & Tangen, D. (2006). The Pinocchio factor in consumer attitudes towards celebrity endorsement: Celebrity endorsement, the Reebok brand, and an examination of a recent campaign. *Innovative Marketing*, 2(3), 97-111. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/643475ffcb736889807662fc545de65b/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=5240902>



- Von Felbert, A., & Breuer, C. (2021). How the type of sports-related endorser influences consumers' purchase intentions. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 22(3), 588-607. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-01-2020-0009>
- Voorveld, H. A., Van Noort, G., Muntinga, D. G., & Bronner, F. (2018). Engagement with social media and social media advertising: The differentiating role of platform type. *Journal of Advertising*, 47(1), 38-54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2017.1405754>
- Wei, P.-S., & Lu, H.-P. (2013). An examination of the celebrity endorsements and online customer reviews influence female consumers' shopping behavior. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(1), 193-201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.08.005>
- Zafar, A. U., Qiu, J., Li, Y., , Wang, J., & Shahzad, M. (2021). The impact of social media celebrities' posts and contextual interactions on impulse buying in social commerce. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 115, 106178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.106178>
- Zhou, F., Mou, J., Su, Q.,, & Wu, Y. C. J. (2020). How does consumers' Perception of Sports Stars' Personal Brand Promote Consumers' brand love? A mediation model of global brand equity. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 54, 102012. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.102012>



SBJ

# نشریه کسب و کار در ورزش


آدرس نشریه: <https://sbj.alzahra.ac.ir/>

تابستان ۱۴۰۳، دوره ۴، شماره ۳، ص ۹۹-۱۱۴

شناسه: 10.22051/SBJ.2024.46355.1139



## تأثیرات بر نام تجاری تأییدشده در تعاملات رسانه‌های اجتماعی ورزشکاران مشهور: نقش تعدیل کننده اعتماد

مرتضی محمدی<sup>۱</sup>، سیروس جعفری<sup>۲\*</sup>، زهرا هدایت‌نیا<sup>۳</sup> 

<sup>۱</sup> استادیار، گروه تربیت بدنی، دانشگاه علوم انتظامی امین، تهران، ایران.

<sup>۲</sup> استادیار، گروه علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه پیام نور، تهران، ایران.

<sup>۳</sup> کارشناس ارشد مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه شهید چمران اهواز، اهواز، ایران.

### کلیدواژه

اینستاگرام  
تعامل برند-ورزشکار  
رسانه‌های اجتماعی  
صحة‌گذاری

### نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

### چکیده

**هدف:** این مطالعه با هدف بررسی عوامل مؤثر بر تعامل با برند صحت‌گذاری شده فرد مشهور ورزشی در رسانه‌های اجتماعی (نقش تعدیل‌گر قابل اعتماد بودن فرد مشهور ورزشی) بود.

**روش:** از نظر هدف کاربردی، از لحاظ شیوه گردآوری توصیفی-همبستگی بود. جامعه آماری را کلیه مصرف‌کنندگان ورزشی در رسانه اجتماعی اینستاگرام تشکیل دادند. در این راستا در مجموع ۳۷۰ نفر در تحقیق مشارکت داشتند. ابزار اندازه‌گیری پرسشنامه **وی و لو (۲۰۱۳)**، **حسین و همکاران (۲۰۲۰)** و **آرای و همکاران (۲۰۱۳)** بود. جهت بررسی روایی صوری پرسشنامه توسط اساتید مدیریت ورزشی مورد بررسی قرار گرفت. ارزیابی مدل بیرونی (پایایی ترکیبی، روایی همگرا و روایی واگرا) حاکی از برقرار بودن پایایی ابزار داشت.

**یافته‌ها:** ارزیابی مدل درونی حاکی از این بود که عملکرد ورزشی، جذابیت فرد مشهور و سبک زندگی بازاری فرد مشهور ورزشی تأثیر معنی‌داری در تعامل مصرف‌کنندگان با فرد مشهور ورزشی در رسانه‌های اجتماعی دارند. همچنین قابل اعتماد بودن نقش تعدیل‌گری مثبتی در رابطه بین تعامل مصرف‌کنندگان با فرد مشهور ورزشی در رسانه‌های اجتماعی با تعامل با برند صحت‌گذاری شده داشت.

**اصالت و ابتکار مقاله:** مطالعه حاضر مفاهیم مهمی را برای مدیریت افراد مشهور ورزشی و مدیریت برند ارائه می‌دهد. با توجه به مدیریت برند افراد مشهور ورزشی، یافته‌های تحقیق حاضر اهمیت سبک زندگی خارج از میدان را به عنوان یک دارایی ارزشمند برجسته می‌کند.

**تاریخ دریافت:** ۱۴۰۲/۱۱/۱۱

**تاریخ پذیرش:** ۱۴۰۳/۰۴/۱۸



## Identifying the Consequences of Strategic Innovation in the Football Industry

Seyedeh Roya Kalati<sup>1</sup>, Asadollah Kordnaeij<sup>2</sup>, Ali Saberi<sup>3\*</sup>, Yong-Jin Yoon<sup>4</sup>, Hamid Reza Yazdani<sup>5</sup>, Ghodrattollah Bagheri<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PhD Student of Sports Management, Faculty of Management and Accounting, University of Tehran, Farabi Campus, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Business Management Department, Faculty of Management and Economics, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>3</sup> Assistant Professor, Sports Management Department, Faculty of Management and Accounting, University of Tehran, Farabi Campus, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>4</sup> Professor, Sports Industry Studies Department, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea.

<sup>5</sup> Associate Professor, Business Management Department, Faculty of Management and Accounting, University of Tehran, Farabi Campus, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>6</sup> Associate Professor, Sports Management Department, Faculty of Management and Accounting, University of Tehran, Farabi Campus, Tehran, Iran.

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Strategic innovation is a type of innovation that can bring significant consequences and impacts and create considerable changes in markets and industries. However, there is little research on the consequences of strategic innovation, and the purpose of this research is to identify and conceptualize the consequences of strategic innovation in the football industry.

**Methodology:** This research is a mixed method (qualitative-quantitative), and in terms of purpose, it is applied to developmental research. At first, the meta-synthesis method was used in the qualitative stage, then the case study, and in the quantitative stage, the DEMATEL method was used. A systematic literature review published from 1998 to 2022 was used to collect the data in the meta-synthesis stage. The primary data for the case study was obtained by analyzing the content. Also, in the case study stage, interviews were conducted with 21 experts active in the executive and academic departments of the football industry. Content analysis was used to analyze it, and finally, in the survey phase, using a questionnaire, the DEMATEL technique was used for the final model.

**Findings:** The research results show that the consequences of strategic innovation are categorized into five categories: value creation and customer satisfaction, becoming competitive and improving competitiveness, increasing productivity, new markets and growing market share, wealth creation, and profitability.

**Originality:** The present research helps managers and activists of the football industry have a comprehensive view of the effects and consequences of strategic innovation in the football industry and achieve these results by applying it in football clubs.

### Keywords

Consequences of Strategic Innovation  
Football Industry  
Strategy  
Strategic Innovation

### Article type

Original Article

**Received:** 2024/01/20

**Accepted:** 2024/02/11

### How to cite this article:

Kalati, S. R., Kordnaeij, A., Saberi, A., Yoon, Y., Yazdani, H. R., & Bagheri Ragheb, G. (2024). Identifying the Consequences of Strategic Innovation in the Football Industry. *Sports Business Journal*, 4(3), 115-139. <https://www.doi.org/10.22051/SBJ.2024.46182.1137>

CONTACT Ali Saberi [ali\\_saberi1365@ut.ac.ir](mailto:ali_saberi1365@ut.ac.ir)

Print ISSN: [2783-543X](https://www.doi.org/10.22051/SBJ.2024.46182.1137)  
Online ISSN: [2783-4174](https://www.doi.org/10.22051/SBJ.2024.46182.1137)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

## 1. Introduction

Today, we are facing a competitive and complex environment in the world. D'Aveni et al. (2001) describes it as "hyper-competition". He believes that to succeed in this competitive environment. In addition to introducing new products, services and processes to customers, companies must create better quality and performance. Sustainable competitive advantage alone is ineffective in this hyper-competitive market, and companies must adopt new paths for Survival (Enayati et al., 2014).

The concept of innovation is new structural ideas and behaviours for management, new programs or designs, policies, new production procedures, new services and products of a company, which must be continuously applied to survive and maintain its competitive position (Kalay & Gary, 2015; Yang, 2014). Strategy is a plan that provides the organization's desired course of action and serves as a guide in facing situations. A strategy is creating a position that generates enough revenue for the organization to outperform its competitors. A good strategy creates a competitive advantage that differentiates the organization from its competitors and gives it a sustainable advantage that is valuable, rare, and not easily imitated. The strategy must be unique to create a competitive advantage (Kariuki, 2014).

Strategies should have strategic goals and practical plans. In addition to having a strategy, monitoring the environment and identifying opportunities and threats are essential for entrepreneurial companies because this is how they can create value with their entrepreneurial initiatives (Enayati et al., 2014). The link between innovation and strategy is essential for effective management, and without strategy, performance improvement and other organizational successes will be impossible. Innovation usually means sector innovation and refers to changes in a specific sector or area. It cannot have a strategic approach.

Also, due to the time frame, it can have changes in the short term, and from the point of view of the consequences, it cannot cause profound changes and be superficial. When discussing strategic innovation, we may imagine product or service innovation concepts. Because most research has been centered around these issues. In contrast, strategic innovation differs from innovation from different perspectives, including time, place, and function. Strategic innovation is a type of innovation that can have a significant impact and create considerable changes in markets and industries, such as the emergence of a new sector, the joining of two or more industries, making substantial changes in how to satisfy a specific need or a set of Mutual needs and demands of consumers and significant changes in production, promotion, distribution, pricing and consumption/use of a product (AIQershi, 2021).

Faghih et al. (2018) state that innovation should not be seen only in the product innovation sector, but strategic marketing and executive managers should consider innovation as a strategic trend and apply it continuously in the entire business (Faghih et al., 2018). While innovation research has developed significantly and rapidly over the past decades, data analysis is insufficient to gain a competitive advantage today. It should also lead to unique products, services, and business models. Unfortunately, the strategy literature has lagged behind this rapid and dramatic change and usually lacks the concept

of innovation (Demir, 2018). Strategy plays a fundamental role in all organizational life; however, minor and scattered empirical research on strategic innovation has been found in recent years. At the same time, the share of revenues of the professional football organization FIFA, which represents the most popular sport and has more countries than the United Nations, reached a maximum of 4.641 billion dollars in 2018. Iranian football clubs have a lot of potential to achieve multilateral advantages gained with strategic innovation. Still, unfortunately, due to the lack of sufficient information about the consequences of strategic innovation and especially its consequences at the level of the clubs of the Premier League of Iranian football, it is considered a football. It has become consumerist and inefficient. Therefore, this research tries first to identify the consequences of strategic innovation and then express the consequences of strategic innovation specific to the football industry.

## 2. Theoretical background

Studies on strategic innovation were conducted during the 1980s and early 1990s. The first definition of strategic innovation. Others focused on the firm's capabilities to redefine the customer and firm value chain. In contrast, some researchers examined environmental pressures, and others believed that strategic innovations affect firms' inputs and outputs (Li et al., 2020). Cassia et al. (2012) believe that business in the world is changing rapidly, one of the reasons for which can be technological changes. These changes have increased the dynamics in different industries, so organizations should focus more on their markets and strategic innovation. Therefore, managers and academics express the concept of strategic innovation as a vital concept for these environmental conditions (Cassia et al., 2012).

Strategic innovation will be successful when the correct adaptation is made between structural requirements and environmental changes such as techniques, services, ideas, and new processes. Such companies make opportunities out of them and increase their market share because changing their view of limitations will change the current market when competition changes (Gebauer et al., 2012). Markides (2001) believes strategic innovation breaks the rules of the game in the industry and competes in the market in a completely different way. He thinks we can use strategic innovation to redefine our business and appear in the industry differently (Ozkan-Canbolat et al., 2016). Also, from a modern perspective, strategic innovators must identify unbeatable market positions to create value (Gebauer et al., 2012). Canbolat et al. (2016) believe that the results of innovation can appear in three ways: New business model (new value chain design), new markets (creating or changing the current market), creating added value for the company and customers (Ozkan-Canbolat et al., 2016).

According to some well-known authors (Hamel, 1998; Robinson, 2012), strategic innovation means revising and changing the current business model and strategically changing the business in a way that, in addition to confusing competitors, creates new value and wealth for customers. According to Hammel, companies can increase their market share differently with this method. Also, managers should clearly understand the business concept and adopt an innovative business model to succeed in the prevailing

competitive conditions. In addition, the environment significantly impacts the business's success, and by monitoring the environment, one can get information (Chesbrough & Rosenbloom, 2002). Strategic innovation is used to create strategy and produce exclusive products and services and new processes to improve growth and generate new values for companies. In other words, it refers to trends that change the nature of competition and gain competitive advantage by applying different strategies (Yang, 2014). It is worth mentioning that innovation in products and services strengthens business based on the information available within a company. Still, strategic innovation focuses on existing competition and surpassing superior performance. Abraham and Knight (2001) state that strategic innovation appears in product innovation to link resources and services to achieve the overall business strategy. It also defines strategic innovation as the formation of knowledge and creative and innovative activities as ways of life, research for creating and expanding markets instead of just searching for what customers demand, and reevaluating resource allocation in different sectors for greater profitability in business. Despite the limited number of managers aware of strategic innovation, even fewer benefit from this advantage practically (Abraham & Knight, 2001). Also, Cassia et al. (2012) believe that attention to dynamic strategic innovation can help organizations in their competitiveness, as the central concept of strategic innovation works in this direction. Innovation as an entrepreneurial activity does not happen in ordinary companies when discovering new ideas and designs (Cassia et al., 2012).

Schlegelmilch et al. (2003) define strategic innovation as "fundamental reconceptualization of business models and reshaping of existing markets to achieve improved value for customers and high growth for companies" (Schlegelmilch et al., 2003, p.118). Markides (1997) believes that all companies in an industry have to decide three basic issues at the strategic level: Who is going to be our customer? What products or services should we offer the chosen customer? How should we offer these products or services cost efficiently?' The answers to the who-what- how questions form the strategy of any company. Some will argue that the answers to these questions are the strategy of a company (Markides, 1997, p.11).

In strategic innovation, one or all three of these areas of the business model face transformation. It can be said that strategic innovation is a framework for future-based business development that discovers successful growth and development areas, accelerates business decisions, and creates short-term and measurable effects within the framework of long-term visions for a sustainable competitive advantage. Strategic innovation discovers new paths, puts the organization in pristine conditions to look beyond its defined business boundaries, and engages in an innovative search within its limitations and capabilities.

### ***2.1. Strategic innovation and innovative performance***

A review and analysis of 42 studies in 21,270 companies worldwide showed that organizational innovation leads to better performance and better use of the organization's scarce resources (Rosenbusch et al., 2011). According to Porter, strategy is a set of activities that differentiates the organization from other competitors and

maintains its competitive position. Studies show that companies that use innovation strategies have been more successful than others. The innovation strategy serves as a guide for the company because there must be an initial thought before implementing the innovation. Also, innovation has financial goals and facilitates the growth of a new product or commodity.

Moreover, it is considered a general criterion for a set of strategic filter rules when creating a new product or service. It also provides objectives, methods, and ways to increase and promote creative potential. It enables senior management to pursue competitive activities to obtain customer information, use organizational resources, and invest in research and development. Such activities can have positive effects on a company's innovative performance. On the other hand, companies operate continuously based on internal and external contingencies. Regarding possibilities, managing uncertainty in environments where organizations have effective strategies to improve their performance is necessary. For example, managers should allocate appropriate resources to develop the company's innovative performance in an environment with increasing competition and customer needs. In other words, applying the company's creative strategy ensures that successful innovations are used to reduce probabilities and uncertainties (Kalay & Gary, 2015). Hence, it can be argued that innovation strategy deployment can affect innovative performance. In other words, companies with more innovative strategies are more creative and successful. Kariuki (2014) states that strategic innovation, sustainable competitive advantage, and financial performance are essential for the organization. Strategy innovation is considered capable of creating organizational direction by charting the direction of the company's effort, focusing effort by promoting coordination, providing an easy way to understand the organization, and providing stability and reducing ambiguity to individuals. It has been suggested that in service industries, where competition can move very quickly and new players enter easily, there is a constant need to think strategically about what is happening (Kariuki, 2014). Company performance refers to generating new resources from daily operations over a period. In the company's performance, the focus has always been on the financial side. Hence, it is traditionally defined in economic terms. Profitability is the leading financial measure used to determine the organization's performance because it indicates the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization's operations.

This study was guided by three theories explaining the relationship between the innovative strategies adopted by companies and the relationship between the organization's overall goals and the company's performance. These theories are stakeholder theory, agency theory and organizational control theory. Innovation is using better solutions that meet new or existing market needs. Innovation is achieved by making more effective products, processes, services, technologies, or ideas available to markets, governments, and society. Other researchers have argued that the relationship can be U-shaped, with high and low levels of innovation likely to lead to the highest performance (Kariuki, 2014). Wallace and Kilika (2021), in research entitled "Strategic Innovations and Competitiveness of SACCO in Southern Security Sub-group, Meru County, Kenya", concluded that all the studied variables (product innovation, technological innovation, process innovation and market innovation) have a positive and significant relationship on



the competitiveness of Sakus in South Imanti County, Mero County. Consequently, innovation is an essential tool for SACOs because it protects them from the imitability of crucial competitive elements in the market by identifying results that seem difficult for competitors in the same market to recreate. This study recommends that innovation involve all stakeholders of SACOs, including managers, members, senior management, and all other staff members, as the primary tool to enhance competitiveness and should not be considered a managerial function. It should be adopted as a bridge to effective communication and a vital key for the organization to stay ahead of the rest (Wallace & Kilika, 2021).

Govindarajan and Trimble (2004) studied the New York Times Digital, stating that the online unit of the New York Times Corporation became profitable while thousands of dotcoms from The New York Times Digital has survived and thrived, proving that a highly uncertain new business model can succeed in an industry rich in tradition (Govindarajan & Trimble, 2004). Milutinović et al. (2015), in another study titled "The Concepts and Importance of Strategic Innovation in Small and Medium Enterprises: Evidence from Serbia", state that this article defines the concept of strategic innovation concerning its impact on competition, creating growth strategies, new product categories and business models, as well as game-changing in the market. In this sense, companies must strategically redefine their business and define new ways to compete to provide unique value to consumers, shareholders, and the companies themselves. If companies want to be successful, they must discover and exploit new strategic opportunities that emerge occasionally as the industry evolves (Milutinović et al., 2015). The findings of Mohamadi et al. (2019) in their research titled "Effect of Strategic Innovation on the Customer's Willingness to Buy: The Moderating Role of Innovative Capabilities" showed that value innovation and creating a new market have a significant impact on the customer's willingness to buy according to the moderating role of innovation capabilities (Mohamadi et al., 2019). Enayati et al. (2014), in research entitled "Strategic Innovation: formation and its Impact on the Organization", concluded that the movement that emerges according to environmental changes and organizational conditions is called strategic innovation. This phenomenon affects the flexibility and acceleration of organizations in the global market (Enayati et al., 2014). Kariuki (2014) in research entitled "Strategic Innovation Effect on the performance of mobile telecommunication companies in Kenya", states that strategic innovation is considered a vital need for the growth and profitability of organizations. Strategic innovation significantly impacts firm performance by creating an improved market position that conveys competitive advantage and superior performance (Kariuki, 2014). Faghih et al. (2018), in research, entitled "A Framework for a Business Model with Strategic Innovation in ICT Companies of the Importance of Information", concluded that an emerging market is a market in which trade exchanges of a specific industry between countries are relatively new. Still, it is attractive to investors and has a high potential for growth (like Iran). The government is an emerging market (Faghih et al., 2018).

### 3. Methodology

The current research is applied-developmental in terms of its purpose and qualitative-quantitative in terms of its approach. In the qualitative part, a meta synthesis approach has been used, and then a case study strategy has been used. Considering that the main goal of the current research is to identify the consequences of strategic innovation in the football industry, first, a systematic literature review was conducted and related factors were identified and these consequences were selected and presented using the method. Then, in order to present these results in line with the football industry and considering that there has been no experience of failure and success in strategic innovation in the past of the football industry, a case study method was used. In the quantitative part, in order to measure the relationships and their direction and the interaction values of the categories, DEMATEL modeling has been used. Based on the layers of the research process (Saunders et al., 2009), the philosophical foundations of the research are interpretive-positivist and the orientation of the research is applied-developmental. The type of research is of a mixed type and for this reason its approach is inductive-deductive. The type and environment of the research is library and field research and the method of data collection was descriptive review, interview and questionnaire.

Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) have designed a seven-step model for meta synthesis, which is shown in the figure below (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007).

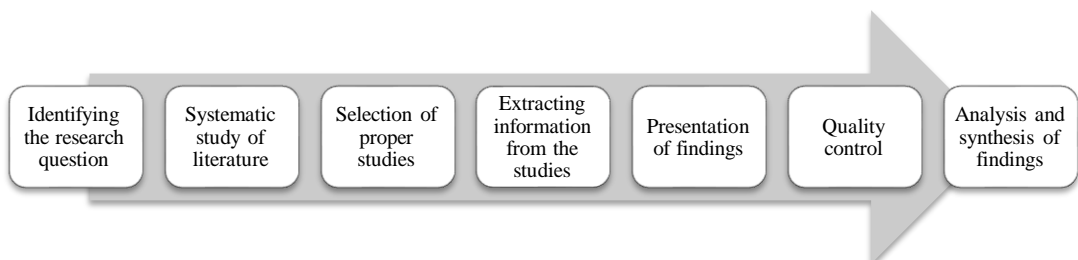


Figure 1. Sandelowski and Barso's (2007) seven-stage meta synthesis model.

#### 3.1. Step 1: Identifying the Research Question

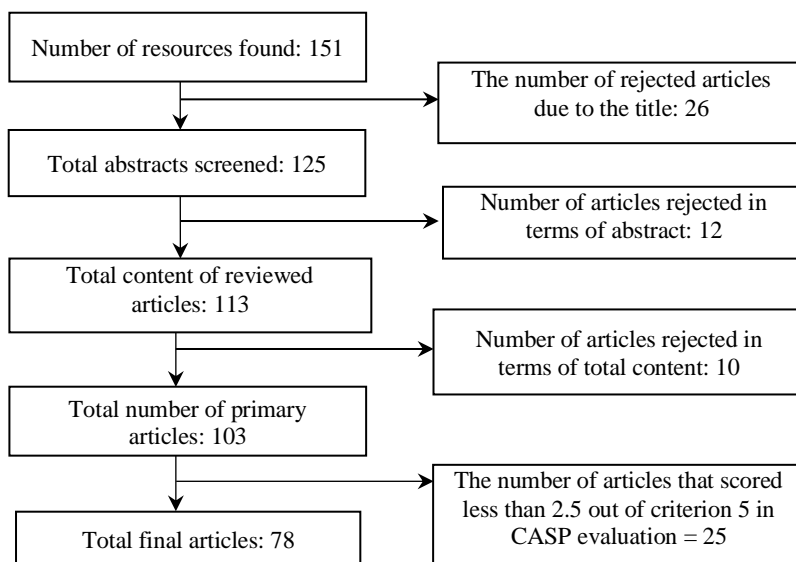
The first step is to set the research questions, which stated four main questions, which are: Who (In this research, Scopus, Web of Science, journals, conferences and search engine databases are examined); when (in this research, articles from 1998 to 2022 have been examined); How (in this research, meta synthesis is used).

#### 3.2. Step 2: Systematic Study of Literature

The second step is a systematic review of previous researches. The main databases for selecting articles in this research are the Web of Science and Scopus databases, of course, Persian databases such as SID, Noormagz and Irandoc are also used. At this step, the researcher searched the researches in the period from 1998 to 2022, which is based on the combination of "Innovation" with the following keywords: Designing, Create, Changing, Development, Competitive, Performance.

### 3.3. Step 3: Selection of proper and relevant studies

Selecting of the proper and relevant studies is the third step. In this research, Searches were performed with the keywords mentioned in the categories based on article title, article abstract and keywords which number of articles were 423 in total. Among the selected filters in this section is the subject area and limited to management, business and accounting, and therefore after reviewing the abstract of the articles based on the mentioned criteria, and so, reading all the abstracts, the articles that did not agree with the intended research were rejected. Finally, 151 articles were downloaded from the main databases. Also, the "Critical Assessment Skills Program" (CASP) method and its ten criteria were used to determine that the remaining articles have the highest degree of coordination with the research topic. According to the use of this method, the researcher first reads the text of all the articles completely and according to the ten criteria of this method, he gives points from one to five to each criterion. According to the calculation of the total points, the articles with a score of 31 and above were selected and other articles were excluded. A summary of the results of searching and refining the obtained documents is shown in the figure below:



**Figure 2.** Summary of search results and document refinement.

After adding four Persian articles, finally 82 final articles were selected for data analysis.

### 3.4. Step 4: Extracting information from the researches

In the fourth step, which is to explain and extract the key information of the selected researches, all the factors of the consequences of strategic innovation extracted. The results obtained from this step were the foundation of the research work and the formation of concepts and categories that enter the final modeling step.

### 3.5. Step 5: Analyzing and Synthesizing Findings

Analyzing and synthesizing findings is the fifth step. Therefore, the researcher sought to create a unified and new interpretation of the findings of past researches to achieve a deep understanding of the desired phenomenon. The researcher has considered the findings extracted from the studied articles as an open coding. Then, according to the concept and definition of each open coding, the codes with the same concept were placed in a similar class and a concept was selected for that class. This concept introduces the best possible open coding within each class. In this way, in this step, the researcher codes all the key components extracted from the selected researches and puts them in similar categories considering the meaning and concept. After coding and classifying the components, according to the extracted components and according to their frequency, as well as receiving advice from the experts, the components that were repeated twice or more entered the next category. Therefore, the components with the most repetitions were grouped to be combined and transformed into main and sub-components.

**Table 1.** Concepts and percentage of frequencies identified.

| Concepts                                   | Frequencies | Concepts  | Frequencies |
|--|-------------|---|-------------|
| improvement in performance                 | 5.68%       | Increase in customer satisfaction                 | 3.40%       |
| Increasing the agility of the organization | 2.27%       | Increasing the effectiveness in the organization  | 2.27%       |
| Value creation                             | 9.09%       | Organization survival and sustainability          | 2.27%       |
| Increasing competitiveness                 | 5.68%       | Business opportunities                            | 2.27%       |
| Creating a competitive advantage           | 5.68%       | Entering a new market                             | 4.54%       |
| Stable competitive advantage               | 3.40%       | increase in market share                          | 3.40%       |
| Improving competitiveness                  | 3.40%       | Creating a new market                             | 2.27%       |
| Competitive Edge                           | 2.27%       | Wealth Creation                                   | 3.40%       |
| Globalization                              | 4.54%       | Maintaining, growing and increasing profitability | 3.40%       |
| Global competitiveness                     | 2.27%       | Cost reduction                                    | 2.27%       |
| Increased efficiency in the organization   | 2.27%       |   |             |

### 3.6. Step 6: Quality control

The sixth step is Quality control. The quality control of the performed steps was carried out using the Kappa coefficient. The kappa coefficient is a number between 1 and -1 and the closer this number is to 1, it indicates that the agreement between the two coders was direct and appropriate. If this number is closer to -1, it indicates an inverse agreement between the two transitions, and finally, whatever number tends to zero, it shows that there is a disagreement between the two coders, and according to Cohen, the value of Cohen's kappa coefficient above 0.6 is desirable. and shows a good level of agreement (Warrens, 2015). In this study, this number was calculated to be 0.7660, and considering that the value of Cohen's kappa coefficient in this study is above 0.7, it means that there is a high agreement in extracting the research codes between coder one and coder two.

### 3.7. Step 7: Analysis and synthesis of findings

The final step is analysis, synthesis and presenting the final findings. This section includes the categories, concepts and codes of the relevant articles is stated in the result section of the article.

After extracting the concepts based on the past researches, the second stage of the research (case study) was put on the agenda in order to modify and complete the concepts obtained in the previous section and finalize the framework. Since the purpose of this research is to identify the consequences of strategic innovation in the football industry, after an overview of several cases and considering the importance of the possibility of obtaining information and the availability of the case, the clubs of Iran's premier football league, which have started efforts in this direction in recent years, were selected for study. In order to complete the research stages and extract the final model, 8 experts in the football federation, 6 people from the country's premier football league clubs and finally 7 university experts were interviewed, totaling 21 experts from the football industry. In this research, in order to carry out a case study, Yin (2014)'s approach, which consists of five steps of planning, preparation, gathering, analysis and reporting, has been used (Yin, 2014).

In order to measure the validity and reliability of the research, various methods have been used in all stages. The reliability of qualitative research requires the use of structured processes to collect data; organizing structured processes for recording, writing and interpreting data; There are at least two people to conduct interviews separately, but parallel to each other and compare the findings of two or more researchers and use a steering committee for evaluation and implementation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the qualitative part of the current research and in the credibility of the research, while using the analyst's colleague, all the outputs from the interviews with the experts were used after obtaining confirmation from them about the correctness of the perception and interpretation made. For the transferability, it was also tried to explain and expand the relationship of the results with the background and comparative comparison. In terms of verifiability, all articles have been analyzed, as well as all protocols of interviews with academic and operational experts, coding and analysis of their content, various interpretations and approvals obtained; It is archived historically and systematically.

Regarding reliability in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that reliability in qualitative research corresponds to reliability in quantitative research. Also, they have considered the accurate evaluation of research as one of the important scales in increasing the dependability. This can be used to examine the research process for sustainability. In qualitative research, the following methods can be used to achieve reliability: (1) using structured processes to collect data; (2) organizing structured processes for recording and interpreting data; (3) the existence of at least two people to conduct interviews separately, but parallel to each other and compare the findings of two or more researchers; (4) Use of steering committee for evaluation and implementation. For the reliability of this research, due to the existence of a structured process for collecting data in both qualitative sections, as well as a structured process for recording

and interpreting data, the first two cases have been used, and parallel and comparative interviews have also been used for reliability.

Although the supervisors and advisors were also present with the researcher as a guiding committee in the entire research process for evaluation and implementation, in order to ensure the reliability of the collected data, the Kappa coefficient was also used in the current research, that its value was equal to 0.766, and in addition, a multi-composite approach to review the background was adopted; The results of the background review phase were confirmed implicitly through interviews with prominent experts, which is a proof of the reliability of the results of the qualitative phase. Validity and reliability of the research in the quantitative stages, as mentioned, the questionnaire was extracted based on the results of the qualitative phase, which was carried out through a systematic process and using the strategy of thematic analysis, which is a proof of the validity of the research in this phase. Of course, in order to ensure more certainty in this field, the design of the questionnaire has gone through a back-and-forth confirmation process. Cronbach's alpha statistical test was used to measure the reliability of the results obtained from this stage, and this value was equal to 0.971.

#### 4. Results

The final results of the strategic innovation in the meta synthesis section are shown in the table below:

**Table 2.** The final results of strategic innovation consequences.

| Category   | Concept                                | Synonymous variables                                 | Cod of papers   |
|--|--|--|-----------------|
| Value creation and customer satisfaction           | Value creation; Improve performance    | Improve performance                                  | 98,96,38,19,3   |
|  |  | Increasing organizational agility                    | 83,39           |
|  |  | Creating value                                       | 75,53,44,38,5,1 |
|  |  | Increasing the willingness of customers to buy       | 53,36,3         |
|  |  | Increasing reputation in the perception of customers | 36,28,3         |
|  |  | Increasing competitiveness                           | 69,43,35,11,3   |
| Becoming competitive and improving competitiveness | Competitive Advantage; Competitiveness | Creating a competitive advantage                     | 61,43,30,11,6   |
|  |  | Sustainable competitive advantage                    | 88,44,38        |
|  |  | Improving competitiveness                            | 96,36,1         |
|  |  | Competitive edge                                     | 79,29           |
|  |  | Globalization  | 83,32,27,11     |
|  |  | Global competitiveness                               | 90,45           |
| Efficiency   | Performance; Effectiveness             | Increasing efficiency in the organization            | 48,39           |
|  |  | Increase customer satisfaction                       | 26,20,8         |
|  |  | Increasing effectiveness in the organization         | 28,26           |
|  |  | Survival and sustainability of the organization      | 29,9            |
|  |  | Business opportunities                               | 73,19           |

| Category                                | Concept   | Synonymous variables                              | Cod of papers |
|---|---|---|---------------|
| New markets and increasing market share | Creating new markets;<br>Development of new markets | Entering a new market                             | 107,105,53,14 |
|   |   | Increase market share                             | 103,48,2      |
|   |   | Creating a new market                             | 98,83         |
| Wealth creation and profitability       | Profitability;<br>Increase income                   | wealth creation                                   | 35,18,1       |
|   |   | Increase income                                   | 38,19,3       |
|   |   | Maintaining, growing and increasing profitability | 36,6,1        |
|   |   | Cost reduction                                    | 21,2          |

After deriving a framework based on past researches and using the meta synthesis method, the second phase, i.e. the implementation of a case study in order to modify and complete the framework, was put on the agenda of this research. After an overview of several cases and considering the importance of the possibility of obtaining information and the availability of the case, football clubs of the Premier League of Iran were selected for study. The research plan was carried out in a period of six months, and based on this plan, relevant data has been collected according to documents, reports, observations, contributions and interviews. Through previous acquaintances with some of the industry-related institutions, the researcher has been able to repeatedly participate in organizations, football federations, clubs and football teams of provinces and universities and had close observations or participate in discussions. Most of the information obtained from this type is used in describing and understanding the industry or interpreting the codes obtained from the interviews. Finally, an attempt has been made to extract another framework from the case study to be compared with the results of the literature review in the next section. When referring to each of the actors, the researcher has always identified the next sources as part of the information gathering agenda, and in this way, the information sources have been identified sequentially until saturation. The main method of collection was through conducting interviews with the main people working in the institutions involved in the ecosystem, and at the same time, the researcher did not ignore other data such as documents, reports, contributions and observations. The interviews were managed with the help of an explained protocol, and each interview was recorded in full in the form of an audio file. After conducting each interview, the audio file was downloaded and at the same time work on the text started in parallel with the execution of the next interviews. Finally, interviews were conducted with 21 managers of the football industry, whose names and positions were coded as abbreviations due to ethical principles.

After completing the process of extracting key sentences from the interviews and comparing similar or complementary cases, the researcher tried to group them into categories and code them. These categories and the extraction of their underlying concepts have finally provided a framework for the consequences of strategic innovation. The framework obtained from the literature review was not without influence in the development of the framework obtained from the case study; The results obtained from the case study introduce a dynamic and variable framework in the football industry. Many of the statements obtained from the managers of the football industry indicate that some problems related to strategic innovation have been recognized, but no action has been taken regarding it, or the actions taken have not been sufficient and



effective. However, there are also issues that are basically not understood by the members of the clubs. The researcher tried to reflect this issue in the classification of propositions and codes. Finally, after coding and carefully examining the interviews in the case study section, the following table shows the categories and final concepts of the consequences of strategic innovation:

**Table 3.** Consequences of strategic innovation in the final model.

| Category   | Concepts  |
|--|---|
| Value creation and customer satisfaction           | "Creating value for fans and stakeholders", "Improving performance at the club level", "Increasing fan satisfaction", "Increasing the willingness of fans and spectators to buy" and "Increasing reputation in the perception of customers (fans and spectators, financial sponsors, etc.)" |
| Becoming competitive and improving competitiveness | "Increasing and improving competitiveness at the club level", "creating and improving technical and club competitive advantage" and "creating a competitive edge"   |
| Increase Productivity                              | "Increasing efficiency in the club", "Increasing the effectiveness of the club" and "Organizational survival and sustainability of the club"  |
| New markets and increasing market share            | "New business opportunities for the club", "Entering a new market", "Increasing the club's market share compared to competitors" and "Creating a new market"  |
| Wealth creation and profitability                  | "Wealth creation at the level of the club and other stakeholders", "Increasing income and attracting club sponsors", "Maintaining, growing and increasing profitability" and "Reducing club costs"  |

As shown in the table above, the final findings of the research included 5 categories and 19 concepts. The first category is value creation and customer satisfaction, which includes five concepts of creating value for fans and beneficiaries, improving performance at the club level, increasing fan satisfaction, increasing the willingness of fans and spectators to buy, and increasing reputation in the perception of customers (fans and spectators, financial sponsors, etc.). The second category is becoming more competitive and improving competitiveness. Increasing and improving competitiveness at the club level, creating and improving technical and club competitive advantage, and creating a competitive edge are the four concepts of this category. Increasing productivity is the third final category of the consequences of strategic innovation in the final model, whose three concepts include increasing efficiency in the club, increasing the effectiveness of the club, and survival and organizational sustainability of the club. The fourth category is new markets and increasing market share, and the four concepts of this category are: new business opportunities for the club, entering a new market, increasing the club's market share compared to competitors, and creating a new market. The fifth and last category is the consequences of strategic innovation of wealth creation and profitability, which consists of the four concepts of wealth creation at the level of the club and other stakeholders, increasing income and attracting club sponsors, maintaining, growing and increasing profitability and reducing club costs.

As stated, finally, the results obtained in the consequences of strategic innovation in the football industry identified five categories, which are shown in the figure below, the final model of the research including the consequences of strategic innovation and related categories and concepts:

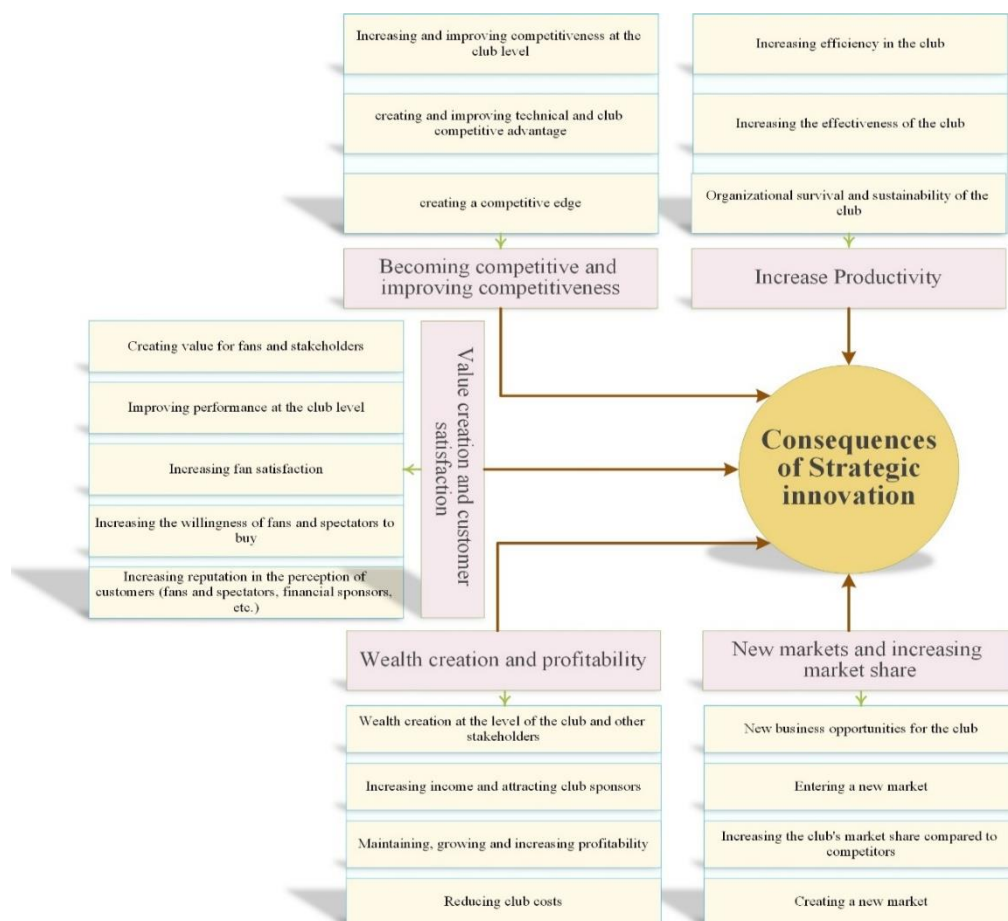


Figure 3. Final research model.

After obtaining the final model of the research based on the above table, in order to implement the survey strategy, DEMATEL method was used and for this purpose, in the first step, a questionnaire was prepared to form the direct relationship matrix (M). In this questionnaire, the relationships were examined in a binary way, and in each cell of this questionnaire, the relationship and the effect of the row on the column were examined in such a way that the relationship between the factors with five levels of no influence, very little influence, little influence, high influence and very high influence determined.

In order to complete the questionnaire after sending the questionnaires, due to the difficulty and time-consuming nature of completing the questionnaire, which was a 5x5 matrix, with a lot of follow-ups, the researcher managed to collect 15 questionnaires. After collecting the questionnaires, the effectiveness of the expressions with no impact, very little impact, low impact, high impact and very high impact, based on the standard of DEMATEL's method, were placed as zero, 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. In the first step, the normal direct correlation matrix was obtained by calculating the average of the collected questionnaires, and these communication results are called the direct

correlation matrix, and after normalization, the normal direct correlation matrix was obtained, which is shown in the following table:

**Table 4.** Normal direct correlation matrix of strategic innovation consequences.

| Category   | Value creation and customer satisfaction | Becoming competitive and improving competitiveness | Increase Productivity | New markets and increasing market share | Wealth creation and profitability |
|--|--|--|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Value creation and customer satisfaction           | 0.000                                    | 0.630  | 0.630                 | 0.696                                   | 1.000                             |
| Becoming competitive and improving competitiveness | 0.587                                    | 0.000  | 0.370                 | 0.696                                   | 0.391                             |
| Increase Productivity                              | 0.348                                    | 0.370  | 0.000                 | 0.065                                   | 0.435                             |
| New markets and increasing market share            | 0.348                                    | 0.326  | 0.217                 | 0.000                                   | 0.391                             |
| Wealth creation and profitability                  | 0.478                                    | 0.609  | 0.478                 | 0.478                                   | 0.000                             |

In the next step, a single matrix will be formed (the members of the main diagonal of this matrix are one and the rest are zero) and after subtracting the normal matrix from the single matrix, the inverse of the obtained matrix will be calculated, which is shown in the table below. has been:

**Table 5.** Inverse matrix (I-M)

| Category   | Value creation and customer satisfaction | Becoming competitive and improving competitiveness | Increase productivity | New markets and increasing market share | Wealth creation and profitability |
|--|--|--|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Value creation and customer satisfaction           | 0.138                                    | -0.525   | -0.440                | -0.518                                  | -0.461                            |
| Becoming competitive and improving competitiveness | -0.310                                   | 0.270  | -0.391                | -0.278                                  | -0.487                            |
| Increase Productivity                              | -0.235                                   | -0.250   | 0.540                 | -0.428                                  | -0.265                            |
| New markets and increasing market share            | -0.241                                   | -0.282   | -0.292                | 0.477                                   | -0.292                            |
| Wealth creation and profitability                  | -0.350                                   | -0.341   | -0.330                | -0.399                                  | 0.217                             |

Then, the initial normal matrix (direct normal correlation matrix) is multiplied by the expressed inverse matrix, which is called the total correlation matrix, as shown below:

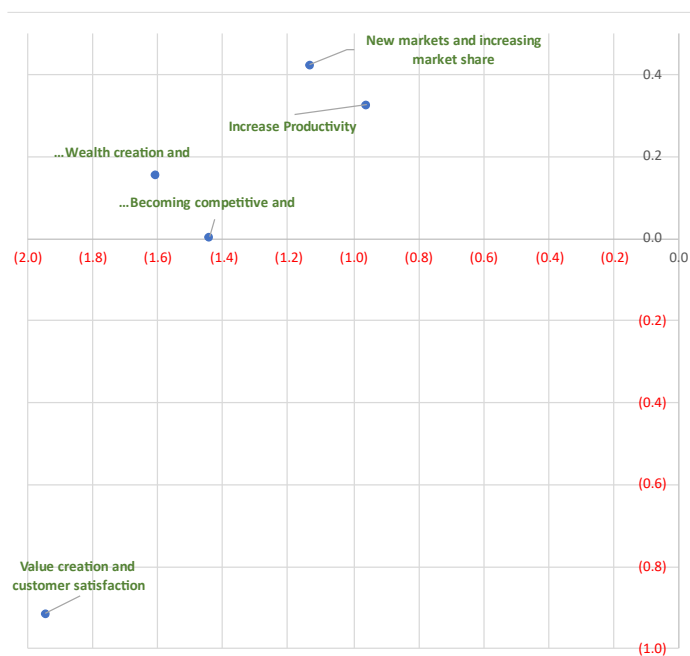
**Table 6.** Total correlation matrix of strategic innovation outcomes.

| Category   | Value creation and customer satisfaction | Becoming competitive and improving competitiveness | Increase productivity | New markets and increasing market share | Wealth creation and profitability |
|--|--|--|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Value creation and customer satisfaction           | 0.000                                    | -0.331   | -0.277                | -0.360                                  | -0.461                            |
| Becoming competitive and improving competitiveness | -0.182                                   | 0.000  | -0.145                | -0.199                                  | -0.191                            |
| Increase Productivity                              | -0.082                                   | -0.092   | 0.000                 | -0.028                                  | -0.115                            |
| New markets and increasing market share            | -0.084                                   | -0.092   | -0.064                | 0.000                                   | -0.114                            |
| Wealth creation and profitability                  | -0.168                                   | -0.208   | -0.158                | -0.191                                  | 0.000                             |

In the last step, the values of D and R were calculated, so that D is the sum of the rows of the total correlation matrix and R is the sum of the columns of the total correlation matrix. Finally, D-R and D-R express the interaction and effectiveness of the variable, respectively. In the table below, these values are shown for all the research variables, and then the "interaction-effectiveness" diagram of the results of the strategic innovation of the research is shown:

**Table 7.** Interaction values, effectiveness of strategic innovation outcomes.

| Categories   | D       | R       | D+R     | D-R    |
|--|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Value creation and customer satisfaction           | -1.4295 | -0.5152 | -1.9497 | 0.9143 |
| Becoming competitive and improving competitiveness | -7168   | -0.7228 | -1.4396 | 0.0061 |
| Increase Productivity                              | -0.3171 | -0.6433 | -0.9604 | 0.3262 |
| New markets and increasing market share            | -0.3538 | -0.7786 | -1.1324 | 0.4247 |
| Wealth creation and profitability                  | -0.7239 | -0.8812 | -1.6051 | 0.1572 |



**Figure 4.** Interaction diagram, impact / effectiveness of strategic innovation outcomes.

As shown in the figure and table above, the highest amount of interaction among all the categories of strategic innovation consequences, with a value of -0.9604, is related to increasing productivity, and new markets and increasing market share with a value of -1.1324 are in the second place of interaction. Becoming and improving competitiveness, wealth creation and profitability are also ranked third and fourth with values of -1.4396 and 1.6051, and finally, the category of value creation and customer satisfaction is ranked last with a value of -1.9497. It should be noted that the term interaction means that, for example, increasing productivity has the most relationship

with other categories of strategic innovation consequences, and on the other hand, value creation and customer satisfaction has the least relationship and interaction with other categories of strategic innovation.

Of course, communication in interaction means any communication, both independent and dependent variable. In the effectiveness section, in general, four categories of competitiveness and improving competitiveness, increasing productivity, new markets and increasing market share, and wealth creation and profitability are effective, and this means that these categories have more consequences on other categories. Strategic innovation is effective and less effective, and value creation and customer satisfaction are effective. The greatest amount of impact is related to new markets and increasing market share, and this means that new markets and increasing market share in the categories of strategic innovation outcomes have the greatest impact on the other four categories and increasing productivity, wealth creation, profitability and competitiveness. and improving competitiveness are in the next ranks of influence.

## **5. Discussion and conclusion**

As shown in the previous section, after combining the concepts and findings of meta synthesis strategies and a case study in order to extract and conceptualize the consequences of strategic innovation, finally five categories of consequences of strategic innovation include value creation and customer satisfaction, becoming competitive and improving competitiveness, increasing productivity, new markets and increase in market share and wealth creation and profitability were identified, which are described in the following of each of these categories and their concepts and their relationship with previous researches are discussed.

Value creation and customer satisfaction were obtained as the first category of consequences and in this category it was determined that in order to benefit from the consequences of strategic innovation, clubs need to create value for fans and stakeholders and for this purpose it is necessary that first the various stakeholders of each football club that including players, technical staff, league committee, football federation, spectators, sponsors, etc. should be identified and examples of value creation for each of these beneficiaries should be identified and the club should determine, implement and control its short, medium and long-term plan in order to create the determined values. In the category of value creation and customer satisfaction, performance improvement at the club level was also obtained from other concepts in this field, and in this matter, clubs should specify their performance measurement models by using experts in this field, and in different time frames, measure all specified performance dimensions and announce their improvement plans.

Increasing the desire of fans and spectators to buy, increasing the satisfaction of fans and increasing the reputation in the perception of customers (fans and spectators, financial sponsors, etc.) were also other concepts of this section, which seems to lead to the creation of value for the beneficiaries if planning is implemented. It will increase satisfaction, the desire to buy and reputation. To induce buying desire and increase the reputation, it is necessary to mention this suggestion that increasing the reputation and sales of sponsors

will be possible by increasing their reputation among the fans, and this requires prerequisites such as creating a sense of cooperation between the sponsor and the club and their important role in the success of the club. For the fans, changing the business model of sponsors and clubs and creating strategic alliances between the club and the sponsor and the value chain of the sponsor are among the suggestions of researchers in this field. With the investigations carried out in previous researches, it was found that the alignment of the research findings in this section is based on several synonymous variables that improve performance (Abraham & Knight, 2001; Enayati et al., 2014; Faghih et al., 2018; Kariuki, 2014; Kazinguvu, 2017; Schlegelmilch et al., 2003; Talke et al., 2011), Increasing organizational agility (Abraham & Knight, 2001; Enayati et al., 2014), Creating value (Hadjinicolaou et al., 2021; Kazinguvu, 2017; Lehmann-Ortega & Schoettl, 2005; Milutinović et al., 2015; Varadarajan, 2018; Ventresca & Seidel, 2020), Increasing the willingness of customers to buy (Berghman et al., 2013; Faghih et al., 2018; Ventresca & Seidel, 2020), and increasing reputation in the perception of customers (AIQershi, 2021; Berghman et al., 2013; Faghih et al., 2018) has been one of these synonymous variables.

After determining the concepts of this category, it was determined that the results obtained in this section are in line with the results of the research of (AIQershi, 2021; Berghman et al., 2013; Enayati et al., 2014; Faghih et al., 2018; Lehmann-Ortega & Schoettl, 2005; Milutinović et al., 2015; Ventresca & Seidel, 2020).

The second category of the final research model was competitiveness and improvement of competitiveness, which according to the concepts obtained, it was determined that in order to become competitive and improve competitiveness, it is necessary to create the issue of increasing and improving competition within the club and team at the beginning of the club's affairs. And this depends on the club's efforts to promote the culture of competition along with friendship among all the club's human resources, including players, technical staff, administrative staff and senior managers. After creating a culture of competition in the club's internal environment, it is necessary for this culture to penetrate the club's external environment and the club's industrial environment. Considering the prevailing football culture of the country, it is suggested that the responsibility of the culture of competition and friendship in the country's football be entrusted to the clubs, and the league organization and the federation should play a supporting role.

Creating a sense of competition between clubs in order to improve the individual capabilities of players and technical staff and finally the success of the country's football in international events is one of the most important actions of clubs and the federation in this sector. Another suggestion of the researcher in this category is to compile and approve regulations and laws related to creating a competitive edge and a culture of competitiveness in the football federation and to notify the clubs and create a requirement in order to develop a document to promote the culture of competitiveness and create a competitive edge in the country's football by clubs and a supporting role of federation.

The findings of this part of the research were also in line with the findings of the past researchers, which included: (Abraham & Knight, 2001; Berghman et al., 2013; Demir,

2018; Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2020; Faghih et al., 2018; Hadjinicolaou et al., 2021; Ildikó-Csilla, 2018; Kazinguvu, 2017; Keeton et al., 2017; Kodama & Shibata, 2014; Mirza et al., 2022; Pellegrini et al., 2020; Qing-Rui et al., 2020; Schlegelmilch et al., 2003; Szekely & Strebel, 2013).

The third category of this section was the increase in productivity. Considering the definitions of productivity, effectiveness and efficiency and referring to all three concepts in the concepts of this category, it is suggested that at the beginning of the matter, the long-term and strategic goals of the clubs and the mid-term and short-term goals in order to achieve the strategic goals should also be determined and the effectiveness can be measured by measuring the achievement of these goals. In order for the clubs to operate efficiently, it is necessary to implement the operational budgeting system in the football clubs of the country. Since many clubs may achieve success with exorbitant expenses, it is necessary to calculate the optimal level of expenses and income in all clubs. In order to get closer to the football industry of developed countries, modeling and benchmarking in this field is another suggestion of the research.

The criteria for measuring the sustainability of a sports club need to be determined in research and in two-year periods by the football federation, the clubs with the most stability are determined. Since many Iranian clubs are dissolved after a while, it is necessary to carefully examine the issue of this because there are successful clubs all over the world that have survived for a long time and continuous activity in the football world of the country and abroad that did not achieve success only with exorbitant expenses. In productivity, only three variables with the same meaning were observed in past researches, which include increasing efficiency in the organization (Enayati et al., 2014; Gündüz & Semercişz, 2012), increasing customer satisfaction (Chen et al., 2018; Kanario, 2017; Winand et al., 2013), increasing effectiveness in the organization (AlQershi, 2021; Kanario, 2017), and the survival and sustainability of the organization (Černe et al., 2015; Sitthiwarongchai et al., 2018).

Finally, the results of this category are in line with the studies of researchers such as (AlQershi, 2021; Černe et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2018; Enayati et al., 2014; Gündüz & Semercişz, 2012; Kanario, 2017; Sitthiwarongchai et al., 2018; Winand et al., 2016).

New markets and increasing the market share was the fourth category of the results section, according to the concepts of this category, it can be stated that in order to identify new business opportunities for the club and enter the new market, it is necessary to recreate the business model of the clubs at the beginning. And in the context of the clubs' business, all the developments considered should be studied and planned. Considering the different definitions of the market and market share in the football industry, it is suggested to investigate the examples of market share and market development in the country's football industry in research, so that by identifying the indicators of this sector, more precise planning can be done in this area. Considering that one of the examples of the market in the football industry is football transfers, it is suggested that based on the development of a valid and reliable model, the success of the transfer should be measured compared to the competitors and after analyzing the gap compared to the desired situation



and market leaders, reform plans should be formulated and approved by the clubs' board of directors.

In the category of new markets and increasing market share, the synonymous variables identified in previous researches are: business opportunities (Kariuki, 2014; Moenaert et al., 2010), entering a new market (Mohamadi et al., 2019; Palmer & Kaplan, 2007; Ventresca & Seidel, 2020), increase in market share (Gebauer et al., 2012; Govidarajan & Gupta, 2001; Gündüz & Semercişz, 2012), and the creation of a new market (Abraham & Knight, 2001; Talke et al., 2011).

The findings of this section are also consistent with the research of (Abraham & Knight, 2001; Gebauer et al., 2012; Kariuki, 2014; Moenaert et al., 2010; Mohamadi et al., 2019; Palmer & Kaplan, 2007; Talke et al., 2011; Ventresca & Seidel, 2020).

The last and fifth category was obtained in the field of the consequences of strategic innovation in football clubs of the country, wealth creation and profitability. According to the researchers, this category is one of the main problems of the football industry, and it is the lack of wealth creation and being cost-oriented of the country's clubs. Considering that the football industry in our country is viewed as a costly industry, unlike football in the world, it is necessary to make a long-term plan for this change of situation. Using senior managers of the private sector as business consultants for football clubs is one of the suggestions of the researchers in this field. Another suggestion is to create organized activities in the grassroots football and academy clubs.

Although the majority of the country's clubs have academies, very few of these academies produce players, and in most of the clubs in the world, one of the examples of income generation for clubs is training elite football players in the clubs' academies and generating income through the sale of these players. One of the reasons for the lack of success of the country's football in the field of basic football is the lack of job security of the senior managers of the country's clubs, and considering that activity and investment in grassroots football is a long-term strategy, it has very little priority in the short-term strategy of the country's football managers. For this purpose, it is suggested that at the time of appointing the senior managers of the clubs, 5-year and 10-year plans should be obtained from the managers, and these plans should be reviewed by specialists and the achievement of the goals of the presented programs should be measured in specific periods, and if a significant part of the goals are achieved, the time of club managers should be extended, and based on the findings of this section, it seems that the short time of club managers to work in basic football is one of the most important reasons for clubs not generating income.

In order to check the alignment of the findings of this research in the category of wealth creation and profitability in previous researches, wealth creation (Ireland et al., 2003; Keeton et al., 2017; Lehmann-Ortega & Schoettl, 2005), increase income (Faghih et al., 2018; Kariuki, 2014; Kazinguvu, 2017), maintaining, growing and increasing profitability (Berghman et al., 2013; Demir, 2018; Lehmann-Ortega & Schoettl, 2005), and reducing costs (Gebauer et al., 2012; Kotlarsky et al., 2015) was found.

Another suggestion of the researcher in this field is to rewrite the laws of intellectual and material property in the football industry, such as the right to broadcast television, selling club products to fans, selling tickets for matches, environmental advertising, and

so on. The findings of this category are also in line with the research of (Berghman et al., 2013; Demir, 2018; Faghih et al., 2018; Gebauer et al., 2012; Ireland et al., 2003; Kariuki, 2014; Kazinguvu, 2017; Keeton et al., 2017; Kotlarsky et al., 2015; Lehmann-Ortega & Schoettl, 2005).

### **Disclosure statement and funding**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest. The present study received no financial support from any organization or institution.

### **Acknowledgment**

We would like to give special thanks to all the participants in this study.

### **References**

- Abraham, J. L., & Knight, D. J. (2001). Strategic innovation. *Strategy & Leadership*, 29(1), 21-27. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10878570110694625>
- AlQershi, N. (2021). Strategic thinking, strategic planning, strategic innovation and the performance of SMEs: The mediating role of human capital. *Management Science Letters*, 11(3), 1003-1012. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2020.9.042>
- Berghman, L., Matthyssens, P., Streukens, S., & Vandenbempt, K. (2013). Deliberate Learning Mechanisms for Stimulating Strategic Innovation Capacity. *Long Range Planning*, 46(1), 39-71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2012.11.003>
- Cassia, L., De Massis, A., & Pizzurno, E. (2012). Strategic innovation and new product development in family firms: An empirically grounded theoretical framework. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 18(2), 198-232. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13552551211204229>
- Černe, M., Jaklič, M., Škerlavaj, M., Aydinlik, A. Ü., & Polat, D. D. (2015). Organizational learning culture and innovativeness in Turkish firms. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 18(2), 193-219. <https://doi.org/10.5172/jmo.2012.18.2.193>
- Chen, M.-H., Wang, H.-Y., & Wang, M.-C. (2018). Knowledge sharing, social capital, and financial performance: The perspectives of innovation strategy in technological clusters. *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 16(1), 89-104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14778238.2017.1415119>
- Chesbrough, H., & Rosenbloom, R. (2002). The Role of the Business Model in Capturing Value from Innovation: Evidence from Xerox Corporation's Technology Spin-Off Companies. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 11(3), 529-555. <https://doi.org/10.1093/icc/11.3.529>
- D'Aveni, R. A., Gunther, R. E., & Cole, J. (2001). *Strategic Supremacy: How Industry Leaders Create Growth, Wealth, and Power Through Spheres of Influence*. Free Press. <https://books.google.com/books?id=4I-Q-YZ3YKEC>
- Demir, F. (2018). A Strategic Management Maturity Model for Innovation. *Technology Innovation Management Review*, 8(11), 13-21. <https://doi.org/10.22215/timreview/1196>
- Enayati, G., Titkanloo, A. S., & Mahmoudie, A. M. (2014). Strategic Innovation: The Formation And Its Effect on Organization. *Indian Journal of Fundamental and Applied Life Sciences*, 4(1), 2231-6345.

- Escamilla-Fajardo, P., Núñez-Pomar, J. M., Ratten, V., & Hervàs, J. (2020). Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Soccer: Web of Science Bibliometric Analysis. *Sustainability*, 12(11), 4499. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114499>
- Faghih, N., Dastourian, B., Sajadi, S. M., Henten, A., & Foroudi, P. (2018). A framework for business model with strategic innovation in ICT firms. *The Bottom Line*, 31(1), 16-41. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BL-01-2018-0002>
- Gebauer, H., Worch, H., & Truffer, B. (2012). Absorptive capacity, learning processes and combinative capabilities as determinants of strategic innovation. *European Management Journal*, 30(1), 57-73. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2011.10.004>
- Govindarajan, V., & Gupta, A. K. (2001). Strategic innovation: A conceptual road map. *Business Horizons*, 44(4), 3-3. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0007-6813\(01\)80041-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0007-6813(01)80041-0)
- Govindarajan, V., & Trimble, C. (2004). Strategic-Innovation and the Science of Learning. *Engineering Management Review, IEEE*, 32(2), 57-57. <https://doi.org/10.1109/EMR.2004.25051>
- Gündüz, E., & Semercişz, F. (2012). The relation between competitive tension and strategic innovation. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 58, 29-39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.09.975>
- Hadjinicolaou, N., Kader, M., & Abdallah, I. (2021). Strategic innovation, foresight and the deployment of project portfolio management under mid-range planning conditions in medium-sized firms. *Sustainability*, 14(1), 80. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14010080>
- Ildikó-Csilla, T. (2018). Strategic innovation management through organizational change. *Journal of Innovation & Business Best Practice*, 2018, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.5171/2018.863719>
- Ireland, R. D., Hitt, M. A., & Sirmon, D. G. (2003). A Model of Strategic Entrepreneurship: The Construct and its Dimensions. *Journal of Management*, 29(6), 963-989. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0149-2063\(03\)00086-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0149-2063(03)00086-2)
- Kalay, F., & Gary, S. L. (2015). The impact of strategic innovation management practices on firm innovation performance. *Pressacademia*, 2(2), 412-429. <https://doi.org/10.17261/Pressacademia.2015312989>
- Kanario, M. C. (2017). *Influence of sports innovation on organizational performance: A case of football kenya federation*. [PhD Thesis, United States International University-Africa]. <http://erepo.usiu.ac.ke/11732/3584>
- Kariuki, J. N. (2014). *The effect of strategic innovation on performance of mobile telecommunication firms in Kenya*. [PhD Dissertation, University of Nairobi]. <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/75608>
- Kazinguvu, N. (2017). Strategic Innovation Management of Small and Medium-Sized Manufacturing Companies in Rwanda. In L. Achtenhagen & E. Brundin (Eds.), *Management Challenges in Different Types of African Firms: Processes, Practices and Performance* (pp. 149-162). Springer Singapore. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4536-3\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4536-3_9)
- Keeton, K. E., Richard, E. E., & Davis, J. R. (2017). Strategic innovation at NASA: the solution mechanism guide. *The Journal of Business Inquiry*, 16(1 Spec), 50-59. <https://journals.uvu.edu/index.php/jbi/article/view/76>
- Kodama, M., & Shibata, T. (2014). Strategy transformation through strategic innovation capability – a case study of Fanuc. *R&D Management*, 44(1), 75-103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/radm.12041>
- Kotlarsky, J., Oshri, I., Lee, J.-N., & Jarvenpaa, S. (2015). Understanding strategic innovation in IT and business process outsourcing. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 24(4), 251-254. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2015.10.002>

- Lehmann-Ortega, L., & Schoettl, J.-M. (2005). From buzzword to managerial tool: The role of business model in strategic innovation. *CLADEA, Santiago de Chile, Santiago*, 1-14. <https://v-assets.cdnsw.com/fs/Root/8jvaa-Businessmodelsantiago.pdf>
- Li, J., Ren, H., Zhang, C., Li, Q., & Duan, K. (2020). Substantive innovation or strategic innovation? Research on multiplayer stochastic evolutionary game model and simulation. *Complexity*, 2020, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/9640412>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. SAGE Publications. <https://books.google.com/books?id=2oA9aWlNeooC>
- Markides, C. C. (1997). To diversify or not to diversify. *Harvard Business Review*, 75(6), 93-99. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10174800/>
- Milutinović, R., Stosic, B., & Mihic, M. (2015). Concepts And Importance of Strategic Innovation in SMEs: Evidence from Serbia. *Management - Journal for Theory and Practice of Management*, 20(77), 35-42. <https://doi.org/10.7595/management.fon.2015.0030>
- Mirza, S., Mahmood, A., & Waqar, H. (2022). The interplay of open innovation and strategic innovation: Unpacking the role of organizational learning ability and absorptive capacity. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management*, 14, 18479790211069745. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18479790211069745>
- Moenaert, R., Robben, H., Antioco, M., Schampelaere, V., & Roks, E. (2010). Strategic Innovation Decisions: What You Foresee Is Not What You Get\*. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 27(6), 840-855. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5885.2010.00755.x>
- Mohamadi, E., Sharafi, V., & Vaisi, S. (2019). The Effect of Strategic Innovation on Customer's Willingness to Buying: The Moderator role of Innovation Capabilities. *Journal of Innovation and Value Creation*, 12(6), 81-98. <https://rimag.ricest.ac.ir/en/Article/689>
- Ozkan-Canbolat, E., Beraha, A., & Bas, A. (2016). Application of evolutionary game theory to strategic innovation. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 235, 685-693. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.11.069>
- Palmer, D., & Kaplan, S. (2007). A Framework for Strategic Innovation: Blending strategy and creative exploration to discover future business opportunities. Retrieved May, 15, 2009.
- Pellegrini, M. M., Rialti, R., Marzi, G., & Caputo, A. (2020). Sport entrepreneurship: A synthesis of existing literature and future perspectives. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 16(3), 795-826. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-020-00650-5>
- Qing-Rui, X., Zheng-Rong, C., & Hua-Bin, W. (2020). *Dynamic Analysis of Strategic Innovation in Traditional Manufacturing Enterprises—A Case Study Based on Haier Group* 5th International Conference on Social Science and Management (ICSSM 2020), <https://click.endnote.com/viewer?doi=10.12783%2Fdtsssehs&token=WzQyODkyODcsIjEwLjE5NzgzL2R0c3NlaHMiXQ.0qtgmR06R84ISBdOCADV2gIUF1g>
- Rosenbusch, N., Brinckmann, J., & Bausch, A. (2011). Is innovation always beneficial? A meta-analysis of the relationship between innovation and performance in SMEs. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26(4), 441-457. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2009.12.002>
- Sandelowski, M., & Barroso, J. (2007). *Handbook for Synthesizing Qualitative Research*. Springer Publishing Company. <https://books.google.com/books?id=0I6KBQAAQBAJ>
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students*. Prentice Hall. <https://books.google.com/books?id=u-txtfaCFiEC>
- Schlegelmilch, B. B., Diamantopoulos, A., & Kreuz, P. (2003). Strategic innovation: the construct, its drivers and its strategic outcomes. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 11(2), 117-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254032000102948>

- Sitthiwarongchai, C., Jadesadalug, V., & Kongklai, C. (2018). Development of strategic innovation management components. *The EURASEANs: Journal on Global Socio-Economic Dynamics*(1 (8)), 64-72. [https://doi.org/10.35678/2539-5645.1\(8\).2018.64-72](https://doi.org/10.35678/2539-5645.1(8).2018.64-72)
- Szekely, F., & Strebel, H. (2013). Incremental, radical and game-changing: strategic innovation for sustainability. *Corporate Governance*, 13(5), 467-481. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CG-06-2013-0084>
- Talke, K., Salomo, S., & Kock, A. (2011). Top management team diversity and strategic innovation orientation: The relationship and consequences for innovativeness and performance. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 28(6), 819-832. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5885.2011.00851.x>
- Varadarajan, R. (2018). Innovation, Innovation Strategy, and Strategic Innovation. In *Innovation and Strategy* (Vol. 15, pp. 143-166). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1548-643520180000015007>
- Ventresca, M., & Seidel, V. (2020). *The TMO Framework: Strategic innovation across technology, markets, and organization*. <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:5635e8b7-994f-458e-b453-4666b46c1910/files/sq811kj73m>
- Wallace, C., & Kilika, J. (2021). Strategic innovations and competitiveness of saccos in South Imenti Sub-county, Meru County. *International Academic Journal of Innovation, Leadership and Entrepreneurship*, 2(2), 93-117. [http://iajournals.org/articles/iajile\\_v2\\_i2\\_93\\_117.pdf](http://iajournals.org/articles/iajile_v2_i2_93_117.pdf)
- Warrens, M. J. (2015). Five ways to look at Cohen's kappa. *Journal of Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2161-0487.1000197>
- Winand, M., Scheerder, J., Vos, S., & Zintz, T. (2016). Do non-profit sport organisations innovate? Types and preferences of service innovation within regional sport federations. *Innovation*, 18(3), 289-308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14479338.2016.1235985>
- Winand, M., Vos, S., Zintz, T., & Scheerder, J. (2013). Determinants of service innovation: A typology of sports federations. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 13(1-2), 55-73. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSMM.2013.055194>
- Yang, X. (2014). Different choice of strategic innovation among companies in China market. *Journal of Science and Technology Policy Management*, 5(2), 106-121. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTPM-02-2014-0006>



## شناسایی پیامدهای نوآوری استراتژیک در صنعت فوتبال

سیده رویا کلاتی<sup>۱</sup>، اسداله کردنائیج<sup>۲</sup>، علی صابری<sup>۳\*</sup>، یونگ-جین یون<sup>۴</sup>، حمیدرضا یزدانی<sup>۵</sup>، قدرت‌اله باقری<sup>۶</sup>

<sup>۱</sup> دانشجوی دکتری مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده مدیریت و حسابداری، دانشگاه تهران، دانشکده‌گان فارابی، تهران، ایران.  
<sup>۲</sup> استاد گروه مدیریت بازرگانی، دانشکده مدیریت و اقتصاد، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس، تهران، ایران.  
<sup>۳</sup> استادیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده مدیریت و حسابداری، دانشگاه تهران، دانشکده‌گان فارابی، تهران، ایران.  
<sup>۴</sup> استاد گروه مطالعات صنعت ورزش، دانشگاه یانسه، سئول، کره جنوبی.  
<sup>۵</sup> دانشیار گروه مدیریت بازرگانی، دانشکده مدیریت و حسابداری، دانشگاه تهران، دانشکده‌گان فارابی، تهران، ایران.  
<sup>۶</sup> دانشیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده مدیریت و حسابداری، دانشگاه تهران، دانشکده‌گان فارابی، تهران، ایران.

### کلیدواژه

استراتژی  
پیامدهای نوآوری استراتژیک  
صنعت فوتبال  
نوآوری استراتژیک

### نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

### چکیده

**هدف:** نوآوری استراتژیک نوعی از نوآوری است که می‌تواند پیامدها و تأثیرگذاری‌های عمده‌ای را به همراه داشته باشد و تحولات عظیمی در بازارها و صنایع ایجاد کند. هدف از انجام این پژوهش شناسایی و مفهوم پردازی پیامدهای نوآوری استراتژیک در صنعت فوتبال بود.

**روش:** در این پژوهش از رویکرد آمیخته استفاده شد. هدف آن توسعه‌ای-کاربردی است. در مرحله کیفی از روش فراترکیب و سپس مطالعه موردی و در مرحله کمی از روش دیمتل نرم استفاده گردید. برای گردآوری داده‌ها در مرحله فراترکیب از مرور نظام‌مند ادبیات منتشر شده در سال‌های ۱۹۹۸ تا ۲۰۲۲ استفاده شد. سپس با روش تحلیل مضمون داده‌های اولیه برای مطالعه موردی بدست آمد. در مرحله مطالعه موردی مصاحبه با ۲۱ نفر از خبرگان در بخش اجرایی و دانشگاهی فعال در صنعت فوتبال انجام گردید و با تحلیل محتوای مصاحبه‌ها با استفاده از پرسشنامه از تکنیک دیمتل برای مدل نهایی استفاده گردید.

**یافته‌ها:** نتیجه پژوهش نشان می‌دهد که پیامدهای نوآوری استراتژیک در قالب پنج مقوله ارزش آفرینی و رضایتمندی مشتریان، رقابتی شدن و بهبود رقابت‌پذیری، افزایش بهره‌وری، بازارهای جدید و افزایش سهم بازار، ثروت آفرینی و سودآوری دسته‌بندی می‌شوند.

**اصالت و ابتکار مقاله:** پژوهش حاضر به مدیران و فعالان صنعت فوتبال کمک می‌کند تا دید جامعی از تأثیرات و پیامدهای نوآوری استراتژیک در صنعت فوتبال داشته باشند و بتوانند با به کارگیری آن در باشگاه‌ها فوتبال به نتایج مورد اشاره دست یابند.

تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۲/۱۰/۳۰

تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۲/۱۱/۲۲

در حالی اولین شماره **نشریه کسبوکار در ورزش** را منتشر کردیم، که نشریه جایگاه خود را در بین محققان و داوران پیدا کرده و در سراسر جهان پذیرفته شده است. اگرچه بیشتر بازدیدکنندگان مقالات آن از کشورهای دیگر هستند، اما بازدید ماهانه آن بیش از ۴۰۰۰ نفر است که نیمی از آن از محققان خارج از کشور و از پنج قاره جهان هستند. امیدواریم با رعایت استانداردهای فرمی و محتوایی لازم بتوانیم در افزایش دید مقالات و نمایه شدن در پایگاه‌های تخصصی تری موفق‌تر باشیم. ابر واژگان مقالات نیز نشان می‌دهد که ما همچنان ملزم به رعایت محدوده مجله هستیم و توانسته‌ایم جایگاه تخصصی آن را حفظ کنیم. به یاری خداوند متعال و با همکاری مستمر همکاران و نویسندگان عزیز در نحوه برداشت خود موفق‌تر خواهیم بود.

بار دیگر از معاونت محترم پژوهشی **دانشگاه الزهراء(س)** و همکاران عزیزمان در این حوزه به خاطر همراهی و راهنمایی‌هایشان تشکر می‌کنیم. همچنین از مدیران محترم کمیسیون نشریات علمی وزارت علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری کمال تشکر و قدردانی را داریم و امیدواریم حمایت خود را از مجلات نوپای انگلیسی زبان حفظ نموده و همچنان به حمایت‌های فنی و مادی خود برای انتشار این‌گونه نشریات ادامه دهند. همچنین امیدواریم در راستای انتشار مقالات فنی و سایر فعالیت‌ها برای رشد این رشته و ارتقای سطح مقاله نویسی به زبان انگلیسی، همچنان دریافت مقالات تخصصی ارزشمند را ادامه دهیم.



- ۳۷ تب ورزش‌های الکترونیکی در ایران: بررسی رفتارهای مصرف‌کنندگان و پویایی‌های فرهنگی در مصرف ورزش‌های الکترونیکی  
رسول نوروزی سید حسینی
- ۵۹ برن‌سازی ورزشی در عصر جهانی‌شدن: تجزیه و تحلیل چندگانه جام جهانی فوتبال الکترونیک  
مریم کوه‌فلاح؛ حسین عبدالملکی؛ مهوش نوربخش؛ پریش نوربخش
- ۷۳ نقش محتوای جذاب در رسانه‌های اجتماعی بر وفاداری هواداران با نقش میانجی محبوبیت ورزشکاران  
وجیهه جوانی؛ یاسر جبار عبدالملاجی
- ۹۷ توسعه یک مدل کسب و کار برای باشگاه‌های ورزش‌های مخاطره‌آمیز: رویکردی مبتنی بر تعامل مالی و سرمایه  
مریم امینی؛ سید حسین مرعشیان؛ امین خطیبی؛ اسمعیل ویسیا
- ۱۱۴ تأثیرات بر نام تجاری تأییدشده در تعاملات رسانه‌های اجتماعی ورزشکاران مشهور: نقش تعدیل‌کننده اعتماد  
مرتضی محمدی؛ سیروس جعفری؛ زهرا هدایت‌نیا
- ۱۳۹ شناسایی پیامدهای نوآوری استراتژیک در صنعت فوتبال  
سیده رویا کلاتی؛ اسداله کردنائیچ؛ علی صابری؛ یونگ-جین یون؛ حمیدرضا یزدانی؛ قدرت‌اله باقری

نشریه

کسب و کار

نشریه فصلنامه علمی

دانشگاه الزهرا (س)

دوره چهار، شماره سه، شماره پیاپی ۱۱

تابستان ۱۴۰۳

در ورزش



صاحب امتیاز: دانشگاه الزهرا (س)

سردبیر: دکتر محمد احسانی

مدیرمسئول: دکتر ژاله معمار

مدیر اجرایی و صفحه‌آرا: مهری پوینده‌کیا

طراح جلد:

حمیدرضا عطاءاللهی

اعضای هیئت تحریریه

استاد مدیریت ورزشی، گروه تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس، تهران، ایران.

دکتر محمد احسانی

دپارتمان حرکت شناسی، کالج بروکلین، دانشگاه نیویورک، آمریکا.

دکتر محمد خبیبی

استاد گروه اقتصاد دانشگاه الزهرا (س)، تهران، ایران.

دکتر حسین رافغر

استاد گروه تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشکده علوم انسانی و اجتماعی، دانشگاه کردستان، کردستان، ایران.

دکتر سعید صلاقی بروجری

استاد استراتژی و نوآوری، دانشکده بازرگانی IPADE، دانشگاه پانامریکن مکزیکو سیتی، مکزیک.

دکتر اصغر افشار جهانشاهی

دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده تربیت بدنی و علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه تهران، تهران، ایران.

دکتر مهرزاد حمیدی

استاد مدیریت ورزشی، گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی و تندرستی، دانشگاه تهران، تهران، ایران.

دکتر فریبا عسکریان

دانشیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه الزهرا (س)، تهران، ایران.

دکتر ناهید اتقیا

استاد مدیریت منابع انسانی در مدرسه عالی کسب و کار Centrum PUCP، دانشگاه پاپی کاتولیک پرو.

دکتر محمد موسی

استاد مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه فردوسی، مشهد، ایران.

دکتر مهی طلب‌پور

استاد برنامه مدیریت ورزشی در دانشگاه ایندیانا پنسیلوانیا، آمریکا.

دکتر ریچارد هلسو

دانشیار گروه مدیریت ورزشی، دانشکده علوم ورزشی، دانشگاه الزهرا (س)، تهران، ایران.

دکتر ژاله معمار

دانشیار مدیریت فناوری اطلاعات دانشگاه الزهرا (س)، تهران، ایران.

دکتر ندا عبدالوند

استاد مدیریت و ورزشی، دانشگاه محقق اردبیلی، اردبیل، ایران.

دکتر مهرزاد محرم‌زاده

## لیست داوران

|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه کردستان استاد               | دکتر سعید صلفی بروجردی      |
| دانشگاه نیویورک آمریکا                           | دکتر محمد خبیری             |
| دانشیار مدیریت فناوری اطلاعات دانشگاه الزهرا (س) | دکتر ناهیدالوند             |
| استاد مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه تهران                 | دکتر ابراهیم علیدوست قهفرخی |
| - دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود      | دکتر رضا انام               |
| - دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه الزهرا (س)        | دکتر ناهید تقیا             |
| - دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه الزهرا (س)        | دکتر زکوه معمای             |
| - استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه سبزوار           | دکتر علی بنسیری             |
| - دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه تربیت مدرس        | دکتر رسول نوری سیدحسینی     |
| - دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه خوارزمی           | دکتر علیرضا الهی            |
| استادیار دانشگاه زنجان، زنجان                    | دکتر حسن قره خانی           |
| - استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه تبریز            | دکتر وجهه جوئی              |
| - دانشیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه الزهرا (س)        | دکتر مریم مختاری دینئی      |
| - استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه اراک             | دکتر زینب مندلی زکده        |
| - استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه خوارزمی          | دکتر محمد حسن پیمان فر      |
| استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه تربیت مدرس         | دکتر مرجان صفای             |
| - استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه ارومیه           | دکتر رقیه سرلاب             |
| - استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه تهران            | دکتر احسان محمدی ترکمانی    |
| - استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه پیام نور         | دکتر علی کپیمی              |
| استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه فردوسی مشهد        | دکتر سید مرتضی عظیم زکده    |
| - استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه الزهرا (س)       | دکتر مریم رهبر              |
| - استادیار مدیریت ورزشی دانشگاه الزهرا (س)       | دکتر لیلیامصلحی             |
| - دکترای مدیریت ورزشی                            | دکتر مریم نیازی تبار        |
| - دکترای مدیریت ورزشی                            | دکتر مریم فلاح کاظمی        |
| - دکترای مدیریت ورزشی                            | دکتر علی ناظمی              |
| - دکترای مدیریت ورزشی                            | دکتر رحیم خسرومنش           |



# نشریه کسب و کار در ورزش

نشریه فصلنامه علمی دانشگاه الزهرا (س)

دوره چهار، شماره سه، شماره پیاپی ۱۱

تابستان ۱۴۰۳

---

آدرس: ایران، تهران، میدان شیخ بهایی، خیابان ده ونک، دانشگاه الزهرا (س)

• تلفن: +۹۸۲۱۸۸۰۴۱۴۶۸

• فاکس: +۹۸۲۱۸۸۰۳۰۶۶۱

• کدپستی: ۱۹۹۳۸۹۳۹۷۳

• آدرس سایت دانشگاه: [www.alzahra.ac.ir](http://www.alzahra.ac.ir)

---

ایمیل نشریه: [Sportbj@alzahra.ac.ir](mailto:Sportbj@alzahra.ac.ir)

ایمیل پشتیبانی: [Supportsbj@alzahra.ac.ir](mailto:Supportsbj@alzahra.ac.ir)

وب سایت نشریه: <https://sbj.alzahra.ac.ir/>