

Study of the Reasons for Sponsorship of Football in Iran (A Meta-Analytical Study)

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the present study was to investigate the reasons for sponsors' support of football in Iran.

Methods: The research method was meta-analysis in nature. The statistical population included all scientific sources reported regarding effective reasons for supporting investment in football in from 2012 to 2020., 11 studies that met the criteria for entering the meta-analysis were selected from the statistical population. Data analysis was performed using CMA2 and SPSS software.

Results: A total of 73 factors were extracted and classified into seven main categories and entered the meta-analysis process. Economic, media and advertising and structural factors would have the highest effect size. The Cohen D index was designated as the effect size index. The result of Cochran test showed the heterogeneity in the size of the research effect; therefore, the size of the combined effect was based on the random effects model which was equal to 0.91 (a large effect size). The results of Rosenthal's Fail-safe N test, Funnel diagram, width of Egger origin and Begg and Masumdar rank correlation coefficient showed no diffusion bias error. Also, the effect size was calculated based on subgroups due to the existing heterogeneity and economic factors had the highest effect size.

Conclusio: Developing clear and practical rules, using experienced sports managers and removing barriers to the presence of sponsors in football will attract more sponsors and, as a result, will lead to the development of football.

Keywords: Football Clubs, Meta-Analysis, Motivation of Sponsorship, Marketing, Profitability

Introduction

Football is regarded as the most popular sport in the international arena, as evidenced by the fact that many countries on five continents consider it as their national sport. The crowded stadiums with hundreds of millions of spectators have made football the most popular sport in the world (Dobson & Goddard, 2001). Over time, however, there have been dramatic changes in professional football, transforming it from a mere sport to an industry or international trade. In most developed countries, this sport is called the football industry thanks to the increasing growth of football, especially in the economic and commercial fields (Elahi et al, 2010). The multi-million dollar deals to transfer players between clubs, sponsors with huge capital, the multi-million-dollar contracts of professional league organizations for advertising around the field and earning large revenues from the television broadcasting rights of the matches, are considered all the factors that transformed professional football from a simple game and unaffected sport into a trade with the international industry (Elahi, 2006). The industry has a very large organization with football clubs as its core. The main sources of revenue for the football industry are television rights, sponsors and match day revenue, respectively (Izadi, 2005). The managing and supporting sports costs are increasing day by day, though. Individuals, clubs and even governments find it very difficult to overcome these costs, and as a result they attempt to come up with other ways to fund these costs. One of the main ways in this regard is sponsorship (Fan, 2002). In fact, one of the most important and effective elements that links sports events and the economy is the issue of sports sponsorship as a promotional method for sponsoring companies. Various groups constantly plead to companies to support their events and activities. Companies are also looking for people to pay good money for naming sports buildings and stadiums after their company so that their name is always remembered (Kotler, 2003). Sponsors are ordinary companies interested in associating with a sports institution (league, event, team, athlete, coach, etc.) and pay a

fee for this privilege (Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004).

Over the past forty years, sponsorship has evolved from its traditional form of cooperation and short-term economic ties between sponsor and sponsor to long-term economic ties; these communications and collaborations are based on legal and multilateral agreements (Maxwell, Lough, 2009). Today, sponsorship of sports is a unique way of advertising (Weight et al, 2010). Increasing the price of media advertising, leisure activities and sporting events, proving sponsorship, extensive media coverage of sponsored events, and reducing the effectiveness of traditional media advertising are among the factors influencing the growth of sports sponsorship (Jobber, 1995). Other findings showed that businesses that sponsor sports events gain improved brand image, increased exposure to customers and increased sales. Sports event managers and individual players benefit from sponsorships (Nuseir, 2020). Also, some other studies showed that the sponsor's brand equity which is different from a non-rivalry sponsorship context is more influenced by team-sponsor fit than by team identification, (de Amorim & de Almeida, 2015). Sponsorship marketing efforts can be influenced by culture especially, when global sponsorship in sports which refers to sports events in different countries with different cultures. In such situations, sponsorship aspects can be affected by cultural obligations (keshkar et al, 2019). Melovic et al (2019) showed that the attitudes towards sponsorship, and sponsorship perceptions, have a strong positive impact on the purchasing decisions of consumers, regarding products of sponsors, which, in turn, enables the creation of a loyal base of fans as consumers. Results also reveal that sports sponsorship can be an effective way of promoting socially responsible companies and sustainable practices, giving an opportunity to create an educated and highly dedicated consumer base. De Magalhães Oliveira et al (2019) showed that that different types of exposure and level of involvement translate into different levels of awareness; and awareness takes a positive effect on attitude towards sponsor and, the latter on purchase intentions. Additionally, it was demonstrated that a brand sponsoring of two rival clubs does not affect both sets of fans in the same regard (when having

into account the set of attitudes and the awareness). Junghagen's study (2018) entitled Football clubs as mediators in sponsor-stakeholder relations showed that the most important value the club can provide for sponsors is to act as a mediator in sponsor-stakeholder relations. Exposure effects are subordinate to the relational effects sponsors achieve through their sponsorship.

The importance of sponsors in generating revenue for the world sports sector comes after the live television franchises, whose participation in the Olympics, such as McDonald's, Kodak, Visa, Adidas and Coca-Cola, was more than \$ 170 million. In Australia, \$ 49.7 million annually is donated to South Australian football by sponsors (Moharramzadeh, 2006). Strelize (2005) considers the role of television shows to be important in attracting sponsors and states that the wider the television and satellite coverage of competitions at national and international levels, the greater the level of sponsorship attraction will be. Now, most sports clubs around the world have been able to experience unprecedented economic prosperity with the help of powerful sponsors and in the shadow of their cooperation and support. Although nowadays, a sponsor is an integral part of generating revenue for clubs and sporting events, many sports organizations still face shortcomings in the performance of their duties, especially in the financial field, which makes their activities national (Azadan et al, 2012).

In Iran, although football is pursued more professionally than in other sports, its revenues come from advertising and ticket sales, and the right to television and financial support is in a precarious position, while in other countries Football owners, TV broadcasters and sponsors are the main sources of income-i.e- about 30% of the football industry's income comes from sponsors (Elahi et al, 2006). Some researchers believe that the goals of Iranian football sponsors are to expand the sales market, develop awareness, create a positive image of the company, compete with other companies and increase sales; whereas some researchers do not consider the goals of sponsors as

business goals, however "showing social commitment" is the most important goal (Khosrowmanesh, 2011). Other researchers have acknowledged that the most important goal of sponsors in Iran is to improve the company's reputation (Ramezaninejad et al, 2012), while some other researchers believe that companies that do not sponsor football in Iran; and they do not consider sports sponsorship to be an effective tool for their marketing and advertising (Soltan Hoseini et al, 2012). Given the importance of the media in covering sports events and its advertising impact for football team sponsors, factors such as active and strong media coverage at national and international levels, improving the quality and use of modern technologies in live television broadcasts of matches Football and feasibility studies and the creation of private and satellite networks for live broadcasts of matches can be very valuable in attracting sponsors (Huda, 2001). It also seems that issues related to the structural affairs of clubs, such as creating the necessary preconditions for the privatization of clubs, joining clubs on the stock exchange, establishing marketing committees in the organization of leagues and clubs, economic and financial transparency of clubs can attract Sponsors in football (Elahi et al, 2010). Similarly, despite the importance of sponsors in football, the role of sponsors in promoting the country's football has not been sufficiently exploited in Iran. An examination of the sources of income of the Iranian Professional League and its comparison with the Professional League of Japan showed that the income of the Japanese Professional League from sponsors is about 25 times than income in the Iranian Professional League. This shows a very high difference even considering the economic indicators of the two countries (such as GDP) (Elahi et al, 2006).

Therefore, we can better understand and manage these factors by recognizing the reasons for the support of football sponsors, which will lead to the comprehensive development of football. In this meta-analytical study, we would get to know these factors more and better by reviewing and analyzing several articles that have been written and reviewed

about sponsors in football. Given the importance of the sponsorship debate in football, relatively much research has been done in this area, and yet the results of research have sometimes been inconsistent. Also, the magnitude of the effect of each of the sponsors variables is not known, so the present study intends to use the systematic review and meta-analysis of the overall research situation in this field and the magnitude of the effect of each factor to examine through Combining and comparing individual studies to obtain more general and tangible results in this field. Therefore, according to the available statistics and sometimes inconsistent results in previous research and studies, and most importantly the lack of meta-analysis in the field of investigating the reasons for sponsorship of football, the importance and necessity of research in this area becomes clearer.

Materials and Methods

The research method was meta-analysis. In meta-analysis, information is first extracted from primary sources, and combined using statistical methods, and finally a new whole is obtained. In meta-analysis methods, the researcher records the characteristics and data of previous studies in a quantitative way and then combines the results of previous researches to reach a general conclusion (Akmali & Nasiri, 2022). Meta-analysis is a set of systematic techniques for resolving inconsistencies in findings from various studies. This method converts the results of various surveys into a common scale, or in other words, combines the research conducted using statistical methods (Rahimi & Nasiri, 2021). The statistical Sample of the study included all studies (dissertations, research projects and articles) conducted in Iran on sponsors and its barriers from 2012 to 2020. To determine the published research of all Iranian scientific databases, including IranDock, Jihad Daneshgahi website, Humanities portal, Magiran site, National Library, as well as through Google and Google Scholar site, a free search was performed. Keywords searched in Internet databases included the terms "football sponsors and

barriers to football sponsorship". The search result included 227 studies. In selecting the final sample size, an attempt was made to use research that has sufficient credibility. After identifying the studies, the screening stage was performed and studies that did not meet the requirements for meta-analysis were excluded. At this point, all duplicate and irrelevant research was excluded. Duplicate research included research that was mentioned under the same title by the same researchers on various sites, or that similar research was both a dissertation and an article, in which case, in order to increase the credibility of the articles, the data of this type of scientific document was placed in meta-analysis.

In selecting the sample, an attempt was made to use studies that had sufficient validity. Having the necessary conditions in terms of methodology (for example, hypothesizing, appropriate research method, sample size, sampling method, measurement tool, validity and reliability of measuring tool, statistical analysis method and accuracy of statistical calculations) were among the criteria for meta-analysis. In addition, the following three criteria were considered to include research into meta-analysis: 1. Research on sponsors in football. 2. Research and hypotheses tested by experimental or quasi-experimental, quasi-experimental and Descriptive information. 3. Information necessary to calculate the size of the work is available in any research. After removing duplicate and unrelated studies, the number of studies was reduced to 25. Finally, despite being comprehensive and related to the research topic, fourteen of these studies were excluded due to the lack of statistical indicators necessary to calculate the size of the work, and the final sample size was reduced to 11 studies. For this purpose, CMA2 and SPSS software were used to analyze the collected data separately. CMA2 software was used to calculate the effect size and probability combination and SPSS software was used to obtain the frequency and compare the means obtained from the effect size of the groups mentioned in the research hypotheses and questions.

Results

In the first section, the characteristics of the research sample, including the research conducted on sponsors in Iranian football, are presented. Due to the high profile of previous research, the required

items are shown in the form of two tables. After careful study of eleven studies for this meta-analysis, the bibliographic characteristics of the research including the research code, title and name of the researchers, type of source and year of publication of the research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Bibliographic information of the research entered in the meta-analysis

| Research code | Title & Authors | Publication Year |
|---------------|--|------------------|
| 1 | Sponsorship for Iran Football Pro-League from the Viewpoints of Sponsor Companies (Ehsani, Fallahi, Kuzechian & Khabiri) | 2017 |
| 2 | determining the interruption factors of sponsor's sponsorship from football club of premier league in iran (Hassanpour Ghadi, Kalateh Seifari, Memarmoghaddam) | 2020 |
| 3 | Barriers of Long-Term Relationship between Iran Football Pro League Clubs and Sponsor Companies and Organizations (Naseh, Akbari Yazdi, Elahi) | 2020 |
| 4 | New methods of financing football clubs in developed countries and the developing countries have a comparative study (Torabi, Ghorbani, Bagheri, Tarighi) | 2016 |
| 5 | Identifying and Analysis Affecting Factors on Professional Football Development in Iran (Tayebi Sani, Fahiminejad, Roshan Zamir) | 2021 |
| 6 | Barriers to attracting sponsors in Iranian professional football (Askarian & Azadan) | 2013 |
| 7 | Sponsoring Iran's Football Pro-League; Sponsorship or Ambush Marketing? (Fallahi, Ehsani, Khabiri & Kuzechian) | 2016 |
| 8 | A Comprehensive Model for Sponsorship Effectiveness in Iran Football Pro League (Fallahi, Ehsani, Khabiri & Kuzechian) | 2017 |
| 9 | Identification of the Most Important Stakeholders of Iranian Football Premier League Clubs (Tayebi, Bagheri, Zarei Matin & Jandaghi) | 2017 |
| 10 | Explanatory Model of the Effects of Organizational Resources and Competitive Advantage on the Profitability in Iranian Professional Football Clubs (Soltani, Kargar, Keshkar, Ghafouri) | 2017 |
| 11 | Investigating the strategies for attracting sponsors in Iranian professional football (Azadan, Askarian, Ramazaninejad) | 2013 |

As can be seen from the data in the table above, a total of 11 studies with meta-analysis criteria were present which were included in the meta-analysis process. Most of the research was extracted from research projects and dissertations that were

published in the form of scientific-research articles. As can be seen, the research period is from 2013 to 2021. Table 2 presents the methodological and statistical characteristics of the research.

Table 2: Methodological and statistical characteristics of research

| Research code | Methodology | Statistical Society | Sampling | Tool | statistical method | Sample size |
|---------------|------------------------------|---|-------------------|------------------------|--|-------------|
| 1 | Qualitative and quantitative | Managers sponsoring companies supporting the Iranian Premier League | Targeted | Researcher made | Hierarchical analysis | 16 |
| 2 | Descriptive-analytical | Senior executives and marketing experts of Premier League sponsoring companies | Targeted | Researcher made | Structural equation | 10 |
| 3 | Qualitative and quantitative | Marketing managers of private and public companies supporting the Iranian Football Premier League | Targeted | Researcher made | Hierarchical analysis | 30 |
| 4 | Descriptive-analytical | All teams in the Football Premier League in 2013-2014 | Targeted | Researcher made | ----- | 18 |
| 5 | Survey | Managing directors of Premier League and first division football clubs | Non-random | Researcher made | MADM-AHP | 25 |
| 6 | Survey | Club CEOs, Sports Management and Marketing Specialists, Sponsor Managers | Random | Researcher made | Factor Analysis | 116 |
| 7 | Descriptive survey | Football Premier League spectators | Stratified random | Researcher made | Binomial test, chi-square and independent t-test | 515 |
| 8 | Descriptive survey | Football Premier League spectators | Stratified random | Researcher made | Factor analysis and structural equations | 515 |
| 9 | Descriptive | Premier League football reporters, university faculty members, football experts | Stratified random | Standard questionnaire | TOPSIS method | 190 |
| 10 | Descriptive-correlation | Sports management professors and football experts | Targeted | Researcher made | Structural equation | 100 |
| 11 | Descriptive survey | Club CEOs, Sports Management and Marketing Specialists | Random | Researcher made | Exploratory factor analysis | 116 |

Table 3 shows the characteristics of the sample size which were selected and entered into the meta-

analysis.

Table 3: Descriptive profile of research sample size

| Number of researches | sample size mean | Standard deviation | minimum | maximum | sum |
|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|------|
| 11 | 150 | 189.17 | 10 | 515 | 1651 |

As can be seen in Table 3, a total of 1651 people participated in these ten studies as a research sample. The average sample size was 150 people. The minimum sample size was 10 people and the maximum sample size was 515 people. In the

research selected for meta-analysis, (Table 4) 73 factors were studied. These multiple factors were sometimes duplicated in research or could be grouped together. In Table 4, the following 73 separate factors were classified as:

Table 4: Classification of independent variables in different researches

| Variable code | Independent variable | Number of hypotheses | Included |
|---------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1 | Media and advertising | 8 | Media coverage, advertising and awareness |
| 2 | Sales, customer and competition | 9 | Sales, customer and competition |
| 3 | Economic | 10 | Economic-financial |
| 4 | Sociocultural | 7 | Social, cultural, political |
| 5 | Managerial | 9 | Managerial |
| 6 | Structural | 8 | Structural |
| 7 | Other factors | 22 | Environmental factors, personnel and ... |

As can be seen, economic factors (10 cases) and sales, customer and competition and management (9 cases) with the most hypotheses and socio-cultural factors (7 cases) with the least hypotheses have been considered by researchers.

Inferential findings

The effect size of initial studies

Using the meta-analysis method, the results of all studies can be turned into a standard index. Usually, the two most commonly used effect size indices are

the r index (relation) and the Cohen D index (difference) (Ghorbanizadeh & Nangir, 2015). According to the type of research, Cohen index D has been used. After converting the results of all research into an effect size index, its significance can be tested and this general question can be answered, accordingly. The table below presents the combined effect size (overall), confidence limits, and significance of the Z-values associated with them in all studies in both fixed and random models.

Table 5: Combined effect size, confidence interval and significance of research entered into meta-analysis

| Model | Number of Studies | Point Estimate | Standard error | Variance | 95% confidence interval | | Test of null | |
|--------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|
| | | | | | Lower limit | Upper limit | Z-value | p-value |
| Fixed | 73 | 0.86 | 0.011 | 0.001 | 0.84 | 0.88 | 80.30 | 0.000 |
| Random | 73 | 0.91 | 0.045 | 0.002 | 0.82 | 1 | 20.40 | 0.000 |

(p<0.01) *

The results of Table 5 indicate that the overall effect size under the fixed model with Cohen D index is

0.86, while it is 0.91 under the random effects model. According to the result obtained for index D

regarding the model of random effects (0.86) and fixed (0.91) we see a large effect size in the studies (Rahimi & Nasiri, 2021). Therefore, it can be concluded that in general, the factors studied by researchers have been significantly effective in

supporting sports and the impact is greatly assessed based on Cohen's classification.

The results of meta-analysis of multiple independent variables by stochastic effects method are reported in the following table 6.

Table 6: Effect size of independent variables

| Factor code | Type of factor or variable | Number | Effect size | Lower limit | Upper limit | Z | P |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| 1 | Media & Advertising | 8 | 0.915 | 0.759 | 1.016 | 5.314 | 0.001 |
| 2 | Sales, customer and competition | 9 | 0.612 | 0.471 | 0.788 | 3.216 | 0.001 |
| 3 | Economic | 10 | 0.982 | 0.658 | 0.945 | 7.416 | 0.001 |
| 4 | Sociocultural | 7 | 0.511 | 0.793 | 1.220 | 6.719 | 0.001 |
| 5 | Managerial | 9 | 0.764 | 0.762 | 1.357 | 5.153 | 0.001 |
| 6 | Structural | 8 | 0.863 | 0.743 | 1.678 | 6.637 | 0.001 |
| 7 | Other factors | 22 | 0.852 | 0.478 | 1.118 | 8.562 | 0.001 |

(p<0.01) *

As the Table 6 shows, economic factors with an effect size of 0.982 and media and advertising factors with an effect size of 0.915 have the highest effect size among the effective variables in support of football. The lowest size of the work was related to the socio-cultural factor with a work size of 0.511 and all work sizes were significant.

Heterogeneity analysis

After calculating the average effect size, the heterogeneity in the effect sizes is investigated using the results of the Cochran Q test and I square. The following table presents the results of the Q test and the value of the square I to investigate the heterogeneity of the research included in the meta-analysis:

Table 7: Q test results to check heterogeneity

| Q value | Degree of freedom(Q) | P-value | Square I |
|---------|----------------------|---------|----------|
| 1224.62 | 72 | 0.001 | 94.121 |

(p<0.01) *

The value of the Cochrane Q index is significant at the level of? and this result shows that the studies included in the meta-analysis are not homogeneous and the assumption of homogeneity between those studies is rejected. Therefore, the role of moderating variables can be studied. Given that the number of hypotheses extracted from the 11 main studies is 73, the heterogeneity of the results is natural, and on the other hand, the multiplicity of factors studied to support football is another reason for this heterogeneity.

Diffusion bias analysis

Rosenthal's Fail-safe N test

The Rosenthal's Fail-safe N test was also used to investigate the problem of diffusion bias. The number of missing studies (with an average effect of zero) means the number of studies confirming the zero hypothesis that must be added to the analysis to obtain a statistically insignificant overall effect size and change the result (Ghorbanizadeh & Nangir, 2014: 56). The results are presented in table 8:

Table 8: Rosenthal's Fail-safe N test classic error

| Index | Value |
|--|-------|
| Z value for observed studies | 79.43 |
| P value for observed studies | 0.000 |
| Alpha | 0.001 |
| Domain | 2 |
| Z value for alpha | 1.959 |
| Number of studies observed | 73 |
| Number of missing studies that bring the value of P to alpha | 9824 |

The results of rosenthal's Fail-safe N test classic error indicate that there should be 9824 missing studies if the alpha level exceeds 0.01. Since this number is much larger than the number of studies observed (11 studies with 73 factors), it indicates the accuracy and absence of diffusion error and the issue of diffusion bias is not confirmed.

Funnel diagram

Also, one of the review methods is to compare the standard diffusion error diagram (right figure) and the accuracy of the results (left figure) through a funnel or funnel diagram.

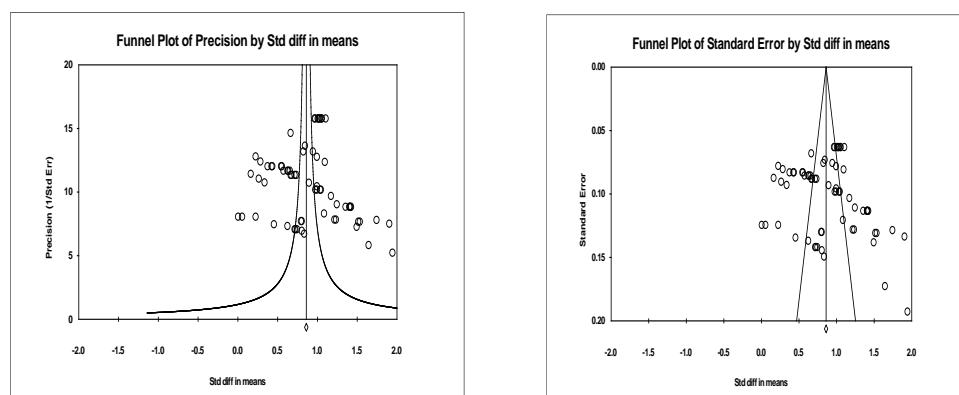


Figure 1: Funnel diagram of studies included in meta-analysis

The relative symmetry of the two funnel-shaped diagrams shows the absence of propagation error. In both graphs, however, studies with a larger sample size are placed at the top of the graph and around the size of the composite effect, while studies with a smaller size are placed at the bottom of the graph. As can be seen, most studies are at the top of the graph due to the larger sample size and, by its nature, the smaller amount of standard error, and the issue of diffusion bias is ruled out.

Width of Egger origin

Begg and Masumdar rank correlation coefficient
The results of the width of egger origin were not significant in both cases and this lack of significance indicates no diffusion bias ($p = 0.07$, t

$= 1.76$). Also, the Begg and Masumdar rank correlation coefficient was not significant in bilateral condition and this lack of significance indicates no diffusion bias ($P = 0.281$, $Z = 1.07$).

Discussion

The present study was conducted as a meta-analysis of studies of factors affecting the support of Iranian football. The results indicate that in general, the factors studied by the researchers have been significantly effective in supporting football and the effect size calculated using the random effects model (0.86) and fixed (0.91) with the amount Impact is greatly assessed based on Cohen's classification. Over the past forty years, sponsorship has evolved from its traditional form of cooperation and short-term economic ties between

sponsor and sponsor to long-term economic ties; These relationships and collaborations are based on legal and multilateral agreements (Mazodier & Quester, 2014), hence today, financial support for sports is a unique way of advertising (Weigh et al, 2010). Increasing the price of media advertising, and leisure activities and sporting events, proving financial support, extensive media coverage of sponsored events, and reducing the effectiveness of traditional media advertising are among the factors influencing the growth of sports financial support (Jobber, 2015).

Economic factors with the largest effect (0.982) among the independent variables on football support. Numerous researchers consider the structure and economic system of countries as an important factor in attracting financial support for sports and in this regard, point to issues such as the existence of a competitive structure and the amount of foreign direct investment and economic barriers as the most important obstacle to attract financial support in sports (Gikoo, 2004; Salimi et al, 2015). Given all the importance and value of economics and sports marketing, special and scientific attention has not paid to Iran's sports various for the reasons which are still unknown. The lack of sports marketing specialists in the federations of delegations and clubs has caused their officials to be unjustified regarding the issue of sponsors and, consequently, they were unable to attract any sponsors. Today, most experts believe that Iran's economy has suffered a lot from extensive government ownership, monopoly market structure, introversion and lack of interaction with the outside world. The solution prescribed to solve these problems is to establish a competitive structure and develop interaction with the global economy through expanding the role and position of the private sector and placing it as the main element in the activity of economic enterprises (Khabiri & Elahi, 2006). It is said that the major share of sponsors are foreign companies. Therefore, market liberalization, and high share of foreign investment attraction are considered as a stimulus for attracting sports financial support by foreign companies. Also, the emergence of a competitive

structure in the country's economy will cause commercial companies to compete with each other for powerful advertising tools such as football (Elahi et al, 2010). Ehsani et al (2017) Showed that the goal of the financial managers of the clubs in the Premier League is to enable the Premier League to display their company brand. So, the factors identified in the qualitative analysis showed that the focus of companies is on achieving appropriate results of financial support through maximum acquisition (Ehsani et al, 2017). Hassanpour et al study (2020) entitled Determining the factors affecting the termination of financial support of the supporters of the Iranian Premier League clubs showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the economic factor and investment attraction. Also, platforms for attracting international sponsors, clubs' involvement in the stock market, success of Iranian clubs in the Asian Champions League, the possibility of participating in the Iranian market for many foreign investing companies are among the effective factors that do not attract sponsors in Iranian professional football (Askarian & Azadan,2013).

Also, Media and advertising factors with the size of the effect (0.915) has the second position among the independent factors on football support. The attractiveness of sports and sporting events for the general public around the world as a publicity target has been considered by sports sponsors to promote their company's unique products and brand (Naseh et al, 2020). In general, sports sponsorship has direct and indirect goals. Its direct purpose is to increase sales; indirect goals, on the other hand, focus on increasing product sales by raising awareness, building customer relationships, and competing with other companies (Shank, 2009). Usually, the most important goals of sponsors are to increase company brand awareness (Jae, 2008; Dean, 2002; Cornwell, 2001), success in global competitions (Ruth & Simonin, 2003), increase sales (Tribou, 2007; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004), and target customers by paying attention to their interests and lifestyles (Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004; Roy & Cornwell, 2004). Maxwell and Logg (2009) believe

that raising awareness of the company's logo and creating a positive image of it is the most important goal of sponsors; since it makes the company logo more in mind and, as a result, the consumption of goods and services increases. Advertising is a method of inducing a thought or idea to develop and spread it in the individual or the public, and sponsors try to use all the potentials in sports to communicate with sports audiences. Thus, enabling sponsors to use match tickets for advertising, and use stadiums and training grounds more appropriately, and appealing for press conferences for advertising, create active and strong websites for clubs, and Marketing committees in clubs and marketing experts' involvement have been introduced as variables in this factor that encourages sponsors to invest. Providing promotional conditions for sponsors and its variables, either in the regulations of the Football Federation and the league organization as the custodians of the Premier League or in contracts between clubs and sponsors, is a common and natural thing that allows sponsors to take advantage of the necessary will pay for their investment (Azadan et al, 2012). Taybi et al. (2020) Showed that media are one of the important factors in the development of professional football in Iran. This factor consists of three main indicators including the index of publications and press in the first rank, the index of cyberspace tools in the second rank and the index of radio and television in the third rank. In the ranking of sub-indexes of magazines and press in examining the factors affecting the development of professional football, the sub-criterion of a news officer in football clubs ranks first, the sub-criterion of proper interaction with journalists of national magazines ranks second, the criterion of publishing specialized football magazines ranks third, the sub-criterion of having a publication by each club in the fourth rank and the sub-criterion of publishing the status of the Premier League and League One teams in each province in the local publications ranks sixth. It also showed the findings related to the ranking of sub-indices of cyberspace tools were as follows: sub-criterion of suitable sites for each club ranks first, the sub-

criterion of providing information related to holding competitions through social networks ranks second, sub-criteria of Optimal cyberspace capacities ranks third, sub-criteria of providing the necessary Internet in Stadiums are for journalists ranks fourth and ineffective monitoring the performance of clubs in Cyberspace ranks fifth. As for radio and television sub-indices ranking with regard to factors affecting development Professional football ,the sub-criterion of the registration system for representatives of the audio media and Image in the league organization ranks first, the sub-criterion of the existence of radio and television communication department in the secretariat of the league organization ranks second, the sub-criterion of the existence of suitable satellite facilities for Appropriate coverage of games on television ranks third, the sub-criterion of the existence of radio communication and Television in the secretariat of the league organization ranks fourth and insufficient space and necessary facilities for broadcasting TV programs in the stadiums rank fifth (Tayebi et al, 2020).

The results also indicate that structural factors with an effect size of 0.863 is the third factor affecting the attraction of sponsors in the football industry. State ownership of clubs in the country resulted in a government-oriented, dependent and non-competitive structure in the Iranian sports industry (Torabi et al, 2016). Izadi (2005) and Azadan et al. (2012) state that, the football industry will not be able to meet the goals of sponsors well due to the non-implementation of copyright law in Iran. According to Article 44 of the Constitution, all sports clubs must be privatized and monetized in Iran, but so far these laws have not been fully implemented. Thus, developing rules and incentives for sponsors will undoubtedly increase their interest in sponsoring the sport and give them more confidence in achieving their goals (Fallahi et al, 2018). Moradi Chaleshtari et al (2013) showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between legal factors and attracting foreign investment in the Iranian football industry. Asagba (2008) also referred to the lack of codified rules on sponsors of professional sports as one of the most

important weaknesses of sports in some countries. Salimi et al. (2015) identified major problems in the field of intellectual property law and copyright in the country, as well as the lack of explicit laws. He pointed to lack of oversight of current laws as obstacles to attracting financial support in championship sports. Also, lack of professional background is one of the structural factors which are considered effective barriers in supporting companies in championship sports. Also, the lack of enforcement of laws to reduce corporate taxes in return for sponsorship of sports is one of the most important issues. Findings of Askarian and Azadan (2013) and Azadan et al. (2012) show that professional development is one of the factors affecting the financial support of sponsors of football.

The results also indicate that other factors with an effect size of 0.852 is the fourth factor affecting the attraction of sponsors in the football industry. Environmental factors and the use of special people are among these factors. In today's world, sponsors can better achieve their goals by transferring the reputation and popularity of the team to their company (Soltan Hoseini et al, 2012). For example, the presence of famous players and coaches, veterans and influential people in clubs also increases the popularity and reputation of the club. Therefore, it is suggested that competition officials and sports managers should try to increase the quality of competitions and consequently gain credibility and reputation for sports teams and disciplines. In this way, they can attract more attention of fans and mass media and provide a platform for the presence of supporters (Tayebi Sani et al, 2020). In this regard, Fallahi et al. (2018) suggests that more efforts be made to improve the quality of competitions and the environmental conditions of sports teams in order to satisfy the support activities and retain supporters.

The results show that managerial factors with an effect size of 0.762 has the fifth effect among the present variables on football support. A study of previous research shows that managerial factors are effective in financial support of private companies for championship sports (Seyed Bagheri &

Sharifian Ghahraman, 2017 & Azadan et al, 2012). Also, the existence of the same problems in different levels of sports in the country, involvement of non-sports managers and absence of sports marketers in different levels of sports and lack of financial and work standards in the field of sports are obstacles in developing attracting sponsors (Doherty & Murray, 2007; Seyed Ameri et al, 2009). Many managers focus only on their own needs and not on the needs of partners. Partners whose needs are not met will likely not continue their relationship with the club as soon as the initial contract expires. Therefore, sports managers should pay full attention to the needs of potential partners and develop standards that target their needs to solve problems and issues in this partnership and cause the presence of sponsors in sports (Fallahi et al, 2018). Elahi et al (2010) believe the barriers to the development of attracting sponsors in the Iranian football industry showed that improper management and managers' lack of business and income-generating ideas and expertise in the football industry of barriers to attracting sponsors' investment in the industry Football is the country.

Also, sales-customer-competition factor with an effect size of 0.612 is the sixth independent variable among the factors affecting the support of the football industry. In general, supporting the direct goals of sports sponsors is to increase sales (Tayebi et al, 2020). Sports club managers and heads of delegations believe that private companies can achieve a new market segment by financing sports (Seyed Ameri et al, 2009). Maxwell and Logg (2009) believe that raising awareness of the company logo and creating a positive image of it is the most important goal of sponsors, because it makes the company logo more in mind and, as a result, increases the consumption of goods and services. Targeting customers by paying attention to their interests and lifestyles is another goal of sponsors. (Bennett & Lakowitz, 2004 and Roy & Cornwall, 2004). Jae (2008) showed that proper knowledge of the company logo and a positive image of it affect the desire to buy customers who are actively involved in sports.

The results also indicate that socio-cultural factors with an effect size of 0.511 is the seventh effective factor in attracting sponsors in the sports industry. According to Ramezaninejad et al. (2012), this criterion is the most important in choosing a sports team by sponsors. The higher the quality and value of sport as a product and the more it can attract more enthusiasts, the more attractive it is to increase the management interest in choosing sports support. Therefore, clubs, federations and sports delegations should make more efforts to increase the interest of managers and encourage them to invest in support by providing appropriate support plans and considering the appropriate facilities and conditions. Because the final decision makers are managers and owners of organizations and companies decide to accept or reject the support plan (Torabi et al, 2016). Nuseir (2020) also believe that the personal attitudes and interests of company founders can influence advocacy activities.

Conclusion

The football industry will not be able to meet the goals of sponsors well due to the non-implementation of copyright law in Iran. According to article 44 of the constitution, all sports clubs must be privatized and monetized in Iran, but so far these laws have not been fully implemented. Hence, developing rules and incentives for sponsors will undoubtedly increase their interest in sponsoring the sport and give them more confidence in achieving their goals. Lack of professional development is one of the effective barriers to supporting companies in football. Also, the lack of enforcement of laws to reduce corporate taxes in exchange for sponsorship of football is one of the most important issues. Also, lack of private sector participation in professional sports is one of the weaknesses of Iranian sports. Furthermore, suitable grounds and facilities to encourage the private sector to invest in this area is of particular importance. Also, poor transmission of commercial messages through sponsors, lack of advertising facilities for sponsors, low level and credibility of sports teams, lack of live broadcast of sports

competitions and lack of instructions and regulations for sponsor advertising at all levels of sports are the most important obstacles to attracting sponsors. Our football needs reforms to generate revenue and attract sponsors, and these reforms must be in structure and management to facilitate the attraction of sponsors. In order to achieve solutions to attract sponsors in football, first the structure of clubs must be reformed and then the managers and management of football must be reformed. It is suggested that the executive and practical rules for attracting sponsors and the use of experienced sports managers be on the agenda of sports managers and remove the barriers to the presence of sponsors in football to provide the presence of multiple sponsors in football because attracting sponsors is more synonymous with Comprehensive development of football in the community.

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