

The Effect of Applying Guerrilla Marketing Techniques on the Emerging Sports Brand Equity

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Abstract

Purpose: the purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of applying guerrilla marketing techniques on emerging sports brand equity.

Methods: The research methodology is semi-experimental in terms of practical purpose and terms of data collection method, and the participants were divided into two groups, an experimental group, and a control group. The data collection instrument was the Special Brand Value questionnaire developed by Kim et al. (2003). The statistical population included emerging and new sports brands, one of which was selected via convenience sampling. As for the descriptive statistics, the statistical indices of frequency and percentage were run and for inferential statistics, the independent samples t-test was run to compare the mean scores of the research groups. Then, Levene's test was run to test the homogeneity of variances for three variables (brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand image) in the experimental and control groups. Due to the multivariate nature of the data and the normal distribution, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run via SPSSV19 software.

Results: Based on the results of the between-group comparisons, posttest results indicated significant effects for the brand image variable (effect size = 0.251, $F = 12.764$), perceived brand quality (effect size = 0.069, $F = 2.814$), as well as brand loyalty (effect size = 0.098, $F = 4.142$).

Conclusion: The findings of the present research suggest that the use of guerrilla marketing techniques significantly affects the value of emerging sports brands.

Keywords: Brand, Guerrilla Marketing, Brand Equity, Emerging Sports Brands.

Introduction

In the world where businesses are developing, not only they should be able to meet the demands of their customers, but also should try to understand people's feelings, because customers are more subject to their emotions than to their minds and logic, and for this reason, they respond faster to emotional stimuli (Jaafari et al., 2016). Therefore, they are more attracted to products that evoke a pleasant feeling for them (Jaafari et al., 2016). Brand, as the highest intangible asset of any organization, plays an important role in effective communication with customers and the success of the organization due to the tremendous superiority it creates. Therefore, to influence the decision-making and purchase intention of customers, creating and maintaining the right brand positioning in their minds is one of the remarkable goals of any organization. A strong brand performs in a way to being a tool for creating differentiation and competitive advantage for companies and is responsible for describing the personality of consumers and reducing their risk, ultimately leading to more profit and long-term success (Derakhshanian et al., 2019). About Bastos and Levy (2012), "the brand is both a sign and a symbol" and therefore, creating a strong brand image is also a necessity that helps companies to have a stronger presence in business fields. Each brand's personality traits provide emotional values or symbolic meanings that can help consumers prioritize preferences. But consumers often tend to use brands with strong personalities so that they can communicate with them and show their personality (Safari et al., 1400). One of the most important factors in marketing is brand equity or business, brand equity increases the probability of choosing a brand by creating loyalty among customers and consumers, and the result attracts many loyal people to a brand (Raj, 2005). Brand equity is defined as the willingness of individuals and customers to continue shopping, therefore measuring brand equity has a significant relationship with measuring brand loyalty (Zulu

et al., 2020). Brand characteristics guarantee a stable image of the brand at any time and allow customers to express their characteristics in the mind of the customer (Valti et al., 2011).

In brand equity, its prestige is also discussed; Brand prestige is one of the most outstanding aspects of a brand that plays a significant role in brand trust and loyalty in a company. Prestige is the standard against which all brands are judged (Borland et al., 2009). Brand equity has attracted the attention of many writers in the field of marketing over several decades because most customers have become value-oriented and value can play a fundamental role in the relationship between the brand and the customer. Consumers are considered problem solvers or seekers of entertainment, excitement, fantasy, pleasure, and stimulation of the senses. A product or service can simultaneously satisfy the needs of customers and allow them to experience excitement, pleasure, and good feelings about themselves. (Su and Chen, 2014). This value can include tangible and functional features (such as twice the power of washing or half the fattening rate) or include intangible and emotional features (such as the brand from the point of view of problematic people) (Ahmadzadeh, 2019). Brand value refers to the consumer's understanding of what he receives in return for what he gives and can lead to the creation of an emotional relationship between the brand and the customer. Batra et al. (2012), and Butz and Goodstein (1996) have defined brand equity as a type of emotional dependence between the consumer and producer experience after using the outstanding product or service provided by the supplier.

People establish strong emotional relationships with brands that remain in the person's mind even for years and turn that person into a loyal people towards the brand. Therefore, in various companies, one of the most valuable factors in creating brand equity to attract consumers is customer loyalty (Khodayari et al., 2019).

Over the past years, the concept of marketing has

been accompanied by many changes, and this has led to its expansion and development (Jorgensen, 2017). Consistency in marketing brings fewer achievements and it is necessary to continuously take steps on creative fronts to be able to continue the movement in the direction of evolution, therefore doing different marketing techniques at any time makes everyone face a challenge. During all the changes and challenges in this field, Levinson used all his experience and knowledge and an innovative idea of marketing and advertising that is with the philosophy of successful marketing of products and services of companies and small startups with a low budget. And using creativity and the accompanying surprising effect introduced it as guerrilla or guerrilla marketing (Kaden, 2006; Isaac, 2014; Rajpal and Nayak, 2015). Guerrilla marketing is perfect for today's generation. This style of marketing activities using tools such as emotional marketing, environmental marketing, viral marketing, hype marketing, and ambush marketing has created three effects surprise, publication effect, and low-cost effectiveness, and in addition to reducing costs, the attractiveness, durability, and effectiveness of messages. It increases advertising in the minds of consumers and creates an image of the company, brand awareness, willingness to buy and loyalty (Sadeghian & Taghipour, 2017). This type of marketing is a creative method that depends on the marketer to use his initiative to design appropriate unconventional methods and simple techniques to advance the goals (Torabi and Torabi, 2013).

In the book "Guerrilla Marketing Attack", J.C Levinson claims that small and medium-sized companies can compete with large companies by using technology and innovation (Levinson, 1989). The creative director of Guerrilla Marketing Agency Bazooka confirms this idea. Santos states that a good guerrilla marketing initiative is finding a niche in a crowded market to capture consumer attention (Santos, 2010).

In guerrilla marketing, achieving success relies

on the art of capturing attention and employing effective sales strategies. This necessitates staying updated through various sources of information, such as media, competitors, customers, and current events. Bigzadeh et al. (2019), in their research, discovered that guerrilla marketing demands open-mindedness and fresh perspectives to generate remarkable excitement among the audience by breaking away from the monotony of conventional advertising methods. Furthermore, experience and imagination take the place of extensive advertising costs, proving to be highly advantageous and impactful from a psychological standpoint. In this form of marketing, the emphasis extends beyond mere product and service sales to encompass the profitability of these offerings (Bigzadeh et al., 2019).

Based on the existing literature, it is clear that utilizing various marketing techniques, particularly guerrilla marketing, holds greater significance in the context of sports brands. Previous research has predominantly focused on advancing the objectives of established companies and well-known sports brands while paying relatively less attention to newly established brands, which is a unique aspect of this study. This research aims to shed light on emerging brands that have recently entered the market and are yet to gain recognition or attention from customers and the relevant community. Having all these points in mind, the question is: Can newly emerging sports brands, lacking significant popularity or recognition, benefit from implementing guerrilla marketing techniques employed by renowned brands? Can newly established sports brands effectively use guerrilla marketing techniques, like Nike, Adidas, Under Armour, and others, to succeed and establish a strong presence among their target audience and community? Or do these strategies have a limited impact on newly established brands? Furthermore, what level of effectiveness do these techniques have in terms of creating brand awareness and fostering

loyalty among emerging sports brands? Consequently, the present study aims to examine the influence of employing guerrilla marketing techniques on the unique brand value of emerging sports brands.

Materials and Methods

The present research is applied in the classification of research based on the purpose and it was conducted as a semi-experimental method. The statistical population includes emerging sports brands that have been established for about 5 years and have started producing goods and providing services and have registered their brand and are trying to introduce themselves to the target community and customers and gain popularity and fame. Increase in their environment and market and be able to enter the public mind; to achieve the research goals, an emerging sports brand named Ghafari was selected as an available sample, created in East Azarbaijan province. It should be noted that the Ghafari sports brand is active in the field of producing combat sports equipment such as gloves, leggings, and clothes, as well as importing a series of general sports equipment such as t-shirts and leggings. Concerning the customer statistical population, there was an average of 180 customer visits to the respective brand per month. Given the challenges of reaching all customers and conducting research on the entire population, as well as the lack of cooperation from certain customers and guardians, we sought guidance from our supervisor and consulted with a statistics expert. Ultimately, we utilized G Power software and set a test power of 0.7 and an alpha level of 0.05. As a result, a recommended sample size of 40 individuals was determined. The number of samples in both the control and experimental groups includes 40 customers of the mentioned emerging brand, who were selected by accessible sampling method due to the difficulty of accessing all sample members, 20 of them in the experimental group and 20 in the experimental group controls were divided.

The measurement tool includes the brand equity questionnaire that was designed by Kim et al. (2003), which was later modified by Yoganakan et al. (2015) and was approved by university professors after choosing this questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of different parts, and this coefficient was 0.86 for the total variables, later that the said questionnaire was given to two control and experimental groups before starting the process of using guerrilla marketing techniques. The information about brand equity should be recorded before the start of the guerilla marketing process, then collecting the relevant information from the two control and experimental groups, it was time to design guerilla marketing techniques, and this part of the research is only used for the experimental group and the relevant process related to the use of guerrilla marketing techniques was not given to the control group, so that the results of the use of the experimental group could be compared with the results of the non-use of the control group.

The questionnaire has a total of 25 questions, 5 of which are related to the collection of demographic information and other qualitative information, and 20 of which are related to the measurement of brand equity. It should be noted that brand equity referring to Kim et al. (2003) has three items called brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand image, which brand loyalty includes 5 questions, perceived brand quality includes 8 questions and the brand image includes There are 7 questions that the sub-hypotheses of the research are designed based on those three items related to the brand equity. Then the collected data were analyzed by covariance method and SPSS version 19 software was used.

How to implement guerrilla marketing: to design techniques related to guerrilla marketing, the help and guidance of several professors and elites in the field of guerrilla marketing were taken, so that first, in coordination with the

Ghaffari brand, who agreed to assist in conducting the research and provide discounts and gifts to customers. First, it was decided that in one of the multi-purpose sports halls of Tabriz city, which held training classes in various disciplines (including martial arts and group sports), some banners were placed in different parts of it, where the elites of the marketing field designed by guerrilla marketing, it was installed under the title: "Your children see you = Ghaffari leaves a good example of you". In this way, when parents bring their children to the gymnasium for training classes (mostly, parents would wait for an hour for their children's training class to finish, it was such that they had to spend an hour in the room at that time. (Waiting for them to sit down and their time was completely wasted) they faced the existing banner and were somehow influenced by it, which was written under it, if you have a child who is an athlete, with the services and discounts of Ghafari in the same hour of your education. Make it an exerciser, that this case was a cheap and effective creative method for the clients and parents, which caused an impact on them. With the bilateral arrangements made with the gym as well as the Ghaffari sports brand, it was decided that the gym will offer a series of training hours

in the form of slimming and bodybuilding classes for their parents at the same time as the starting times of the children's classes. There was a 10% discount for parents with an athletic child. Also, on the other hand, the parents who registered in that plan were introduced to the Ghaffari brand to buy the sports equipment they needed from the gym, and they were given a 5-10% discount when buying from the brand. In fact, with this, both parents were drawn to sports and it caused a whole educational class to be added to the list of classes in the gym (which if they wanted to fill the corresponding classes under normal circumstances, they would have to spend a lot of time and money on advertising and recruiting customers for collection classes) and on the other hand, the Ghaffari brand, which had just entered the market, made more sales and also entered the public mind and could increase its popularity.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the participants such as gender, age, level of education, field of study, work experience, and employment status are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

	Type	Frequency	percentage
The number of interviewees		40	100%
Gender	Female	14	35%
	Male	26	65%
Year	Under 25	12	30%
	Between 26-35	16	40%
	Between 36-45	6	15%
	Above 45	6	15%
Degree	Bachelor and above	18	45%
	Associate Degree	5	12.5%
	Diploma	9	22.5%
	High school	8	20%
Discipline	Science	10	25%
	Technical and engineering sciences	11	27.5%
	Humanities	19	47.5%

Experience	More than 20 years	6	15%
	Within 10-20	10	25%
	Less than 10	24	60%

In the beginning, the pre-test scores of three variables, namely "brand loyalty," "perceived brand quality," and "brand image," were compared between the control and experimental groups. Levene's test was used to assess the equality of variances for these variables across the two groups, and no significant differences were found ($P=0.341$ for brand image, $P=0.664$ for perceived brand quality, $P=0.802$ for brand loyalty). Furthermore, independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to examine the equality of means for these variables, and no significant differences were observed ($P=0.061$ for brand image, $P=0.124$ for perceived brand quality, $P=0.669$ for brand loyalty). As a result, the pre-test scores were not considered as covariates in the statistical model. Considering the study's multivariate nature and the normal distribution of residuals based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) model was employed to analyze the data, incorporating the three dependent variables, namely "brand loyalty," "perceived brand quality," and "brand image."

For data analysis, the MANOVA test was performed using SPSS software. The Box's test was utilized to assess the equality of covariance

matrices, which resulted in the rejection of this equality ($P=0.003$). Consequently, the Pillai's Trace test was conducted to investigate the multivariate effect. The outcome of this test indicated a significant value of 0.002, suggesting that at least one combination of the three post-test variables being studied has a different mean between the control and experimental groups.

To evaluate the homogeneity of linear variances within the model, Levene's test was employed. The results of this test revealed that, except for the loyalty post-test score, the other two variables exhibited homogeneous variances ($P=0.0193$ for brand image, $P=0.248$ for perceived brand quality, $P=0.037$ for brand loyalty). The findings of the between-group effects tests are presented in Table 2. According to the table, the mean scores of brand loyalty and brand image in the post-test variables differed significantly between the two groups, while the mean scores of perceived brand quality did not demonstrate any noteworthy differences. In summary, guerrilla marketing exerted a significant influence on brand loyalty and brand image variables, but it did not affect perceived brand quality.

Table 2. Results of Between-Group Effects Tests

Variable	F-Statistic	Significance	Effect Size η^2
Brand Loyalty Post-Test Score	4.142	0.049	0.098
Perceived Brand Quality Post-Test Score	2.814	0.102	0.069
Brand Image Post-Test Score	12.764	0.001	0.251

According to the effect sizes obtained, the impact of guerrilla marketing on the variable "Brand Image" is greater than its impact on the variable "Brand Loyalty". To enhance the visual representation, the average changes in the three

variables, namely Brand Loyalty, Perceived Brand Quality, and Brand Image, have been graphed separately for both the control and experimental groups in Figures 1 through 3.

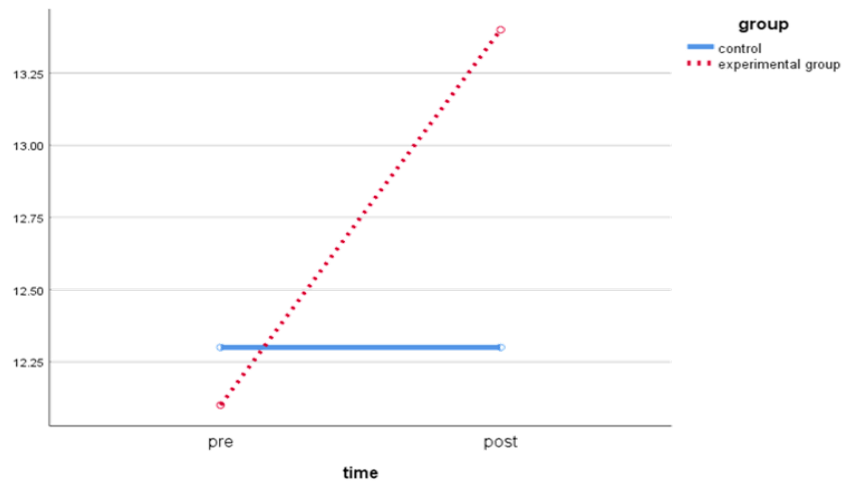


Figure 1. The graphical representation of average changes for the variable "Brand Loyalty" about the control and experimental groups

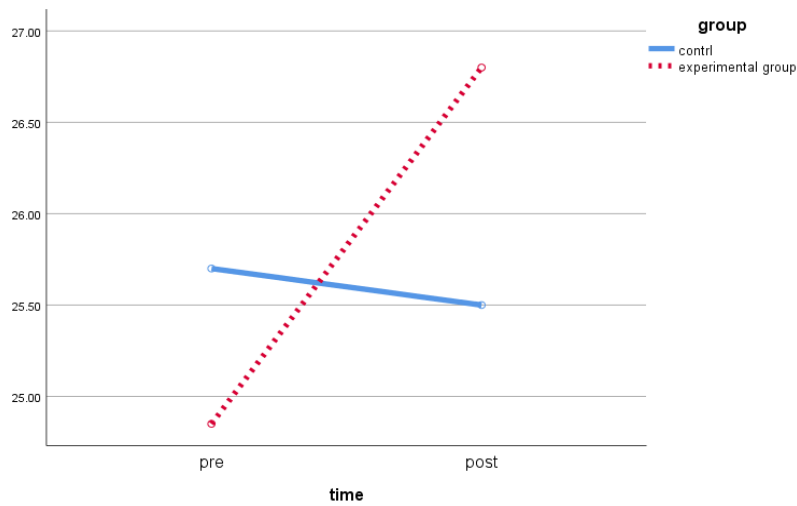


Figure 2. The graphical representation of average changes for the variable "Perceived Brand Quality" about the control and experimental groups

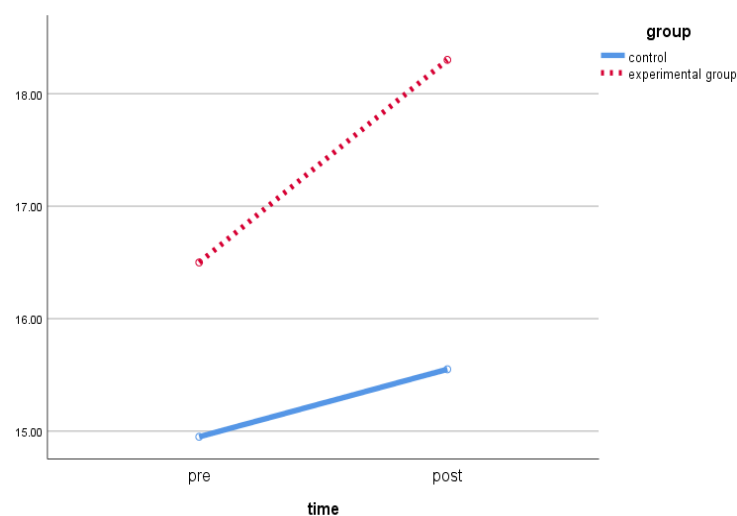


Figure 3. The graphical representation of average changes for the variable "Brand Image" about the control and experimental groups

Discussion

The primary objective of this study is to explore the influence of guerrilla marketing techniques on the brand equity of emerging sports brands. The observed results indicate a statistically significant impact of guerrilla marketing techniques on the brand equity of these emerging sports brands, as evidenced by the significant statistical values obtained from the tests conducted, demonstrating the significant effects of the respective components. Given the importance of brand equity for emerging sports companies, enhancing brand equity results in emotional connection with customers, brand loyalty, and repeat purchases. Therefore, incorporating guerrilla marketing features, particularly in emerging sports brands, ensures a consistent brand image over time and allows customers to resonate with the brand's unique characteristics. Consistent with the findings of this study, Tarabi et al. (2014) investigated guerrilla marketing and its influence on sales strategies, suggesting that capturing attention is the key to successful viral marketing. Viral marketing, even with minimal budget allocation, can have a profound impact on the audience's perception. Furthermore, when combined with effective sales strategies, viral marketing can lead to significant success for both small businesses and large corporations (Tarabi et al., 2014). Beigzadeh et al., (2018) in their study under the title of presenting the indigenous model of guerilla marketing in small and medium-sized start-up businesses in Iran based on the theory of information behavior of companies, the results of which showed that guerilla marketing requires open minds and new attitudes to eliminate the uniformity of advertisements will create an amazing animation in the audience. Also, experience and imagination have replaced countless advertising costs, which have become very effective and useful based on psychological positions (Beigzadeh et al., 2018). Brand equity has actively used the credibility and popularity of its respective brands. For example, the increase in

sponsorship costs due to affiliation with sports brands has increased the income of sponsored sports companies (Jensen, 2017). Also, Gladden and Milne (2003, p. 193) explained in their research that expanding marketing focus increases brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty. A sports manager or a marketer can improve the frequency and degree that leads to positive market results. Therefore, the current research is in line with the research of (Torabi et al., 2013), (Beigzadeh et al., 2018), Jensen (2017), and Gladden and Milne (2003).

The results of the present study indicate a significant difference in the average brand loyalty scores between the control and experimental groups in the post-test phase. In this regard, Sadeghian & Taghipour (2017) conducted research titled Investigating the effect of guerilla marketing on the improvement of service sales performance in schools in Tehran and the results indicated that the higher the knowledge, expectations, and perception of customers in schools, the better. It is estimated that the sale of services will be more; Also, Khodayari et al. (2019) conducted a case study on the effect of product innovation features and brand communication on brand equity, and the results of this research indicated that among the variables of product innovation features, relative advantage, tangibility, and consistency are the value of equity. Brands have a positive effect (Khodayari et al., 2018). Van and Branscom (1990) during a study they conducted regarding the loyalty of fans of sports teams concluded that fans who have the highest level of identification maintain their loyalty even when the team is performing poorly. Whereas those fans with low levels of identification are more likely to disassociate themselves from a losing team (Van & Branscomb, 1990). In a similar vein, Sutton et al. (1997) also suggested that fan identity consists primarily of an emotional connection that must be enhanced by interaction to increase the symbolic benefits of brand loyalty (Sutton et al., 1997). Therefore, the results of the current research are in line with the results of

(Sadeghian & Taghipour, 2017), (Khodayari et al., 2018), (Van and Branscom, 1990), (Sutton et al., 1997).

Based on the statistical findings of the present study, there is no significant difference in the average scores of perceived brand quality between the control and experimental groups in the post-test phase. These results align with the research conducted by Saffiteri (2023) investigating the influence of perceived brand quality, country of origin, and consumer ethnocentrism on the purchasing decisions of Korean skincare brands (Study conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Business, General Sudirman University). Similarly, Febi et al. discovered that perceived brand quality can be influenced by biases within different ethnic groups, potentially impacting brand perception. However, there is a limited number of studies specifically focused on perceived brand quality within the context of emerging brands, which makes accessing relevant background information challenging. Nevertheless, other studies, such as the research conducted by Zarei et al. (1400) titled "Examining the Effects of Packaging Features and Perceived Brand Quality on Consumer Willingness to Pay: The Moderating Role of Consumer Type," have been conducted in this area. The outcomes of that study revealed a positive association between packaging features and consumer willingness to pay, packaging features and perceived brand quality, as well as perceived brand quality and consumer willingness to pay (Zarei et al., 1400). According to Ekoglu and Azbek (2022) in their study entitled "The Influence of Brand Experiences on Brand Loyalty through Perceived Quality and Brand Trust," they discovered that perceived quality and brand trust are vital factors in fostering customer loyalty within the sports industry. They further observed a direct and positive correlation between brand experiences and perceived quality, brand trust, and brand loyalty. Additionally, they highlighted the significant mediating role of perceived quality and brand trust in managing

the connection between customer brand experiences and brand loyalty (Ekoglu & Azbek, 2022). These findings are not in line with the results of the studies conducted by Zarei et al. (2021) and Ekoglu and Azbek (2022). The variation in outcomes could be attributed to the fact that both mentioned studies focused on well-known and established brands, where individuals had already developed a psychological trust in them.

The current study's results indicate a significant difference in the average scores of brand image based on group membership (control and experimental) in the post-test phase. In a similar vein, Tabatabaee (1401) conducted a case study entitled "Examining the Influence of Brand Experience, Brand Image, and Brand Trust on Brand Attachment and Purchase Intentions." Its findings demonstrated that brand image has a direct and significant impact on customers' purchase intentions and brand trust. Also, brand experience has a significant direct effect on brand image, brand trust, and customers' dependence on the brand. Finally, brand trust leads to an increase in customers' dependence on the brand, and customers' dependence on the brand also increases customers' purchase intention (Tabatabai, 1401). Also, Soltani-Nejad et al. (1401) conducted research titled the effect of store image and service quality on private brand image and purchase intention, the results of which show that store image has a positive and significant effect on brand image, and service quality has a positive and significant effect on intention. Buying a private brand has perceived value. Also, the perceived value and image of the private brand have a positive and significant effect on the intention to purchase the private brand (Sultani-Nejad et al., 2001). Sarah Brown et al. (2022) during research on whether fans care about an active athlete or not, concluded that the level of people's attitude towards the athlete's activity significantly affects their perception of the brand image of an active athlete. Transition (Sarah Brown et al., 2022). Therefore, the results of the present research are

consistent with previous research such as Tabatabai (1401), Sultani-Nejad et al. (1401), and Sara Brown et al. (2022).

Conclusion

The findings of the present study demonstrate that the use of guerrilla marketing techniques has an impact on the perceived value of emerging sports brands, with brand image having a stronger influence compared to brand loyalty. Perceived quality, however, does not show a significant effect. Consequently, the importance of brand image is emphasized based on the magnitude of its impact. This is particularly relevant for newly established sports brands that have yet to gain substantial popularity among their target audience and the general public. These brands can utilize the research findings to strategically and scientifically design guerrilla marketing techniques that aim to enhance their brand's unique value and establish a strong presence in the minds of their customers.

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