

Identify the Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior in Digital Sports Marketing

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the current research was to identify the factors affecting consumer behavior in digital sports marketing.

Method: This research has a qualitative approach and the Grounded Theory method of Strauss and Corbin has been used as the research method. The statistical sample of the research was experts and experts in the field of sports management, who were selected by the targeted bullet method, and the sample size was also determined by considering the assumption of theoretical saturation. A In-depth and semi-structured interview has been used to collect data. The researcher conducted 14 interviews with professors and researchers who have reached theoretical saturation in the field of consumption and digital marketing, but for more certainty, he conducted one more interview. The validity of the questions was confirmed step by step by experts, and the reliability of the interview questions was 92% by retest method. that during three stages of open coding, central coding and selective coding, the desired results were obtained.

Results: Factors affecting consumer behavior in digital sports marketing were categorized as three main factors with 6 components as follows, digital marketing (electronic marketing, content marketing, email marketing), organizational factors (external organizational factors, internal organizational factors) and psychological factors.

Conclusion: Therefore, it is better for digital marketing officials and managers to have a strategy-oriented and process-oriented view on digital consumer behavior, and the structure of the organization should be based on knowledge, learning, and performance.

Keywords: Consumer behavior; Digital marketing; Organizational factors; Psychological factors; Sport.

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Introduction

In today's competitive world, customers are the focus of companies. It is important that the satisfaction of the customers is met and taken into consideration by accurately identifying their needs, their desires and expectations, their abilities and limitations in the preparation and purchase of their products (Porzarnegar, 2022). And it is only in recent times that consumption has been considered as a subject of study. Consumer behavior means the study of the processes related to choosing to buy, use or discard these products, services, thoughts or experiences by people to satisfy their needs and desires (Solomon, 2012). Also, consumer behavior focuses on why and how customers choose to spend money to buy goods and services; But evaluating actual consumption behavior is challenging; Because distributing and collecting questionnaires at the time of consumption and purchase is a difficult and costly task (Aizen, 2005). Aizen believes that behavior is predicted and predicted by intention and desire for it (Jamaat & et al). The discussion about the important factors in the purchasing behavior of consumers in the e-commerce environment needs to focus on the accessibility of information. Success in digital shopping is related to the ability to use information to predict and satisfy consumer needs. (Smit & Stuart, 2016). On the other hand, with the very high growth of the Internet penetration rate in Iran in recent years, the creation of new businesses in this field, as well as the migration or development of many traditional businesses towards digital business, more than ever before. Growth and emergence have been faced and this business environment has created a concept called digital marketing (Farshad Gohar & et al, 2017). Therefore, the inclusion of digital marketing in the field of sports marketing means that the conditions and field of marketing are changing and there are more tools to create a relationship with consumers than in the past (Smit & Stuart, 2016). Digital marketing is the form of marketing of products

and services that is used through digital channels and the use of digital technologies to promote the brand, acquire customers, retain customers and increase sales (Canan & Lee, 2017).

Empowering digital marketing in the field of sports marketing means that marketing conditions and opportunities are changing, and compared to the past, there are more tools available to establish relationship with consumers (Smit & Stuart, 2016). And increasingly, consumers are using the Internet as an additional purchasing channel (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). This development has led to a shift in sales revenue in favor of web-based retail (Anna & Ferank, 2017). In general, digital sports marketing indicates that consumers are exposed to a massive volume of marketing and have a wide range of sports products and services to choose from (Smit & Stuart, 2016). Although Internet users are mainly interacting with computer systems and cannot physically touch and feel tangible products, they can make electronic decisions using information provided by digital stores. Therefore, discussing important factors in consumer purchasing behavior in the e-commerce environment requires a focus on information accessibility (Belali Sherbiani & Macci, 2016).

On the other hand, individuals allocate their time and financial resources to sports and recreational activities based on their preferences. Consumer behavior in sports is a fundamental aspect of life. Consequently, marketing efforts should have a better understanding of consumer decision-making before developing any expansion strategy (Daniel Fanc, 2014). Also, sports marketers should educate consumers on when to make a purchase, and how to prolong its usage for an extended period (Shuarz & Hanter, 2019).

Asghar Poor & et al (2022) In a research, they came to the conclusion that the category of communication was the most effective and the category of education was the least important

factor influencing the creation of new businesses in sports and Abasian & et al (2022) In their research, they came to the conclusion that social networks affect technical variables and cultural and social variables, Also research Farsi & et al (2021) showed that social networks have the largest share in the marketing model of sports business and electronic services have the least share in this marketing model and Kaihan & et al (2021) In a research, they came to the conclusion that cultural and social factors, educational and awareness factors, environmental factors, innovation and creativity factors, legal environment, managerial factors and organizational factors are among the effective factors on the development of electronic businesses in the sports industry, Also research Jamaat & et al (2017) It showed that the mix of marketing, psychological factors and environmental factors have a significant positive effect on people's sports consumption behavior and Elena & Mihai (2021) showed that the level of social responsibility of a company is very important for 58.5% of people and Nass (2021) In her research, she showed that a common perception of consumer behavior refers to certain perceptions of habits, lifestyle, attitude and performance, also research Anthonia & Prof (2021) In a research, they showed that the majority of respondents are aware of digital marketing platform services and use them. This study also showed that consumers support the tolls of online shopping sites and Toy (2021) In her research, she showed that there is a positive image of e-commerce in Finland, the quality of information and diversity were the most important factors for online consumers to buy sportswear, also research Kevin & et al (2021) In their research, they came to the conclusion that social media interaction is used as a criterion for ranking athletes as brand endorsers, also research Alghizavi (2019) It showed that digital marketing has become a part of our global life through mobile

technologies, social media platforms. The research conducted on the research factors (digital marketing, organizational factors, and psychological outcome factors) shows in a general way, but the components have not been investigated, so the gap in this field is inferred from previous research.

Today, the concept of sports, through the application of marketing principles, has transformed into a revenue-generating industry in developed countries in this context, the concept of sports marketing is of significant importance, given the complexities involved in it (Mizani & et al, 2014) And the appropriate marketing strategies and advertising methods by sports companies and institutions become even more critical to increase their market share and profitability in this industry (Hoseini & et al, 2016) On the other hand, participating in sports is one of the most popular recreational activities, and therefore, any case related to the expansion and development of this field attracts greater attention (Rezvandi, 2019). In general, achieving economic revenue and competitiveness in the national and international market in the field of sports undoubtedly relies on the adoption of scientific and modern marketing methods. (Baktash & et al, 2014).

Research for special cases about sports needs. In some cases, research is conducted when there is insufficient information about the target market during the research and organizations cannot make appropriate decisions about location selection, but sports surveys even when there is sufficient information. But the application of this unknown information is also needed in these studies. Since this type of business, compared to all types of jobs and works, since it must always exist and has its own conditions and characteristics, the study of business for this type of business and the factors influencing it is very important. It is important. and it is important A general opinion on the history of research shows that sports

marketing and information about the characteristics and needs and interests of consumers and the factors affecting the buying behavior of consumers and their final decision-making are among the popular research areas in recent years. world and despite the research done in this field, there are still many questions in the researcher's mind. Therefore, paying attention to the gap in this field which is inferred from the review and review of the researches, therefore, it can be acknowledged that the action of this research will be able to take an important step towards the development of the sports industry, Therefore, this research examines and analyzes the factors that affect consumption in digital sports markets, and the results of this research can help clear up some ambiguities.

Materials and Methods

The current research is practical in terms of its

purpose, and it was conducted as a qualitative study, using the Grinded Theory method with a systematic approach and the Shtrauss and Corbin method. The statistical population of this research was professors and researchers who are specialized in the field of sports consumerism and sports digital marketing and have been active in this field.. Sampling was performed using a chain reference method. Table 1 describes the demographic characteristics of the interviewees. A semi-structured interview was used to collect information, and in the 14th interview, repetition was observed in the received data, but for more certainty, the 15th interview was also conducted, and the data was completely "repetitive". As a result, the researcher reached theoretical saturation with 15 interviews, and once theoretical saturation was achieved and the data became repetitive, the interview concluded.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the interviewees

Row	Job	Education	academic rank.	Area Activity	work experience, educational and research
1	University faculty member	PhD in sports management	Professor	State university	28
2	University faculty member	PhD in sports management	Professor	State university	25
3	University faculty member	PhD in sports management	Associate Professor	State university	24
4	University faculty member	PhD in sports management	Associate Professor	State university	20
5	University faculty member	PhD in sports management	Associate Professor	State university	18
6	University faculty member	PhD in sports management	Associate Professor	State university	18
7	University faculty member	PhD in sports management	Associate Professor	Azad University	13
8	Teacher	PhD in sports	Teacher	Azad	11

		management		University	
9	University faculty member	PhD in sports Management	Assistant professor	Payam Noor university	9
10	Teacher	PhD in sports management	Teacher	Payam Noor university	8
11	Teacher	PhD in sports management	Teacher	Payam Noor university	8
12	Teacher	PhD in sports Management	Teacher	Payam Noor university	7
13	Teacher	PhD in sports management	Teacher	Payam Noor university	5
14	Physical education teacher	PhD in sports Management	Teacher	Education	25
15	Physical education teacher	PhD in sports management	Teacher	Education	15

executive

The interview questions were validated step by step by the experts. In some interviews, the questions were modified based on the experts' recommendations. To calculate the reliability of the conducted interviews, the test-retest reliability method was used. In order to calculate the retest reliability, three interviews were selected as samples from the conducted interviews, and each of them was coded twice by the researcher in a short and specific time frame. Then the assigned codes were compared within two time frames for each interview. The retesting method is used to evaluate the stability of the researcher's coding. In each of the interviews, the codes that are similar in two-time frames were labeled as "agreement" and

the dissimilar codes as "disagreement". The reliability assessment method between the coding performed by the researcher in two-time frames is as follows

$$\text{Retest reliability percentage} = \frac{\text{Number of agreements} \times 2}{\text{The total number of data}} \times 100$$

In the current research, to calculate the retest reliability, 3 interviews were selected from those conducted interviews and each of them was coded twice in a 10-day interval by the researcher. The results of these coding's are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Calculation of retest reliability

Row	The title of the interview	The total number of data	Number of agreements	Number of disagreements	Test reliability)Percent(
1	Third	60	27	9	90%

2	Seventh	42	20	5	95%
3	Eleventh	38	18	5	94%
4	The total number of data	140	65	19	92%

As seen in Table 2, the total number of codes recorded by the researcher in two time periods was 140 symbols; the total number of agreements between these codes was 65, and the total number of non-agreements between these codes was equal to 19. Retest reliability for interviews conducted using the mentioned formula is equal to 92%. Considering that this reliability rate is more than 60%, the reliability of the coding's is confirmed and it can be claimed that the reliability rate of the current interview analysis was suitable. Since this research was conducted using the foundation data method, it should be noted that this method is typically used in fields that have not been researched much before. In these cases, either there is no pattern or the presence of patterns does not help to solve the problem. The interviews were analyzed through three stages: open coding, central coding, and selective coding. From the data collected from the interviews, 450 initial codes were obtained, and then the initial codes that referred to a specific

concept were categorized, resulting in 21 sub-categories, which were further coded, and then concepts with similar meaning were labeled under a single code resulting in five categories. Finally, the researcher worked on conceptualizing the relationship between the categories identified in the axial coding pattern, and the necessary analyses were performed.

Results

After analyzing the interviews, the researcher began to identify concepts and select appropriate labels, combining these three concepts. Therefore, the identified concepts, their features, and dimensions were discovered in the interviews, and phrases from the interviews that referred to a specific concept were labeled under common codes, resulting in 450 initial codes. Then, the initial codes that had the same semantic load were categorized and 21 subcategories were obtained. In this way, open coding was done. Table 3 shows an example of the initial coding

Table 3: An example of the initial coding of the conducted interviews

meaningful unit	Initial code	Subcategory
Pi 1 -Virtual advertising	Virtual advertising	e-commerce
Pi 45 – Creating internet connection with stores	Internet connection	
Pi 88 -All activities and processes to meet the needs of customers online	Online activity	
Pi 89- All activities and processes to meet the need of customers in the offline space	Activity in the offline space	
Pi 209 -Focusing on online reviews can develop strategies	Online reviews	Digital monitoring and control
Pi 450 -The effect of online reputation management efforts on sports consumer behavior	Online reputation management	

Pi 7 -Creating motivation for services and products	Motivation	Internal motivation
Pi 57 -Shopping with pleasure and enthusiasm	Pleasure and passion	
Pi 376 -Interest and motivation in the digital space has an effect on consumer behavior in the digital space	Interest and motivation	

Then the sub-categories that had the same semantic load and concepts were placed in a set

Table 4 shows the selected coding.

E-commerce - digital online channels - offline digital channels - electronic marketing	Electronic marketing
Content marketing - marketing mix - social media marketing - social networks – platforms	Content marketing
Email Communication - Email Marketing Strategy	Email marketing
Customer feedback - Threats - Uncontrollable factors - Political issues	External factors
Internal measures - marketing commitment - monitoring and digital control	Internal factors
Individual factors - internal motivations - customer's psychological factors	psychological factors
Customer activity - customer growth and development - customer behavior - optimal choice	Consumer performance
Psychological factors of the client - internal motivations - mental structure of the client	Consumer psychological issues
Online shopping - Customer's decision-making process - Customer's preferences	Consumer purchase decision
Customer feedback - post-purchase behavior	Post-purchase consumer evaluation

In the selective coding process, a cohesive and improved approach to the concepts was applied. In other words, the findings from the previous coding stages were taken, the central category was chosen, and connected to other categories in a systematic way, those relationships were proved, and the categories that needed further

improvement and development were completed. Therefore, the central category plays a significant role in integrating and improving the category. Table 5 shows the main categories of axial coding.

Table 5: Axial coding

Subcategory	Main article
Digital marketing	Electronic marketing- Content marketing Email marketing

Organizational factors	External factors- Internal factors
psychological factors	psychological factors
Digital consumer behavior	Consumer performance- Consumer psychological issues- Consumer purchase decision- Post-purchase consumer evaluation

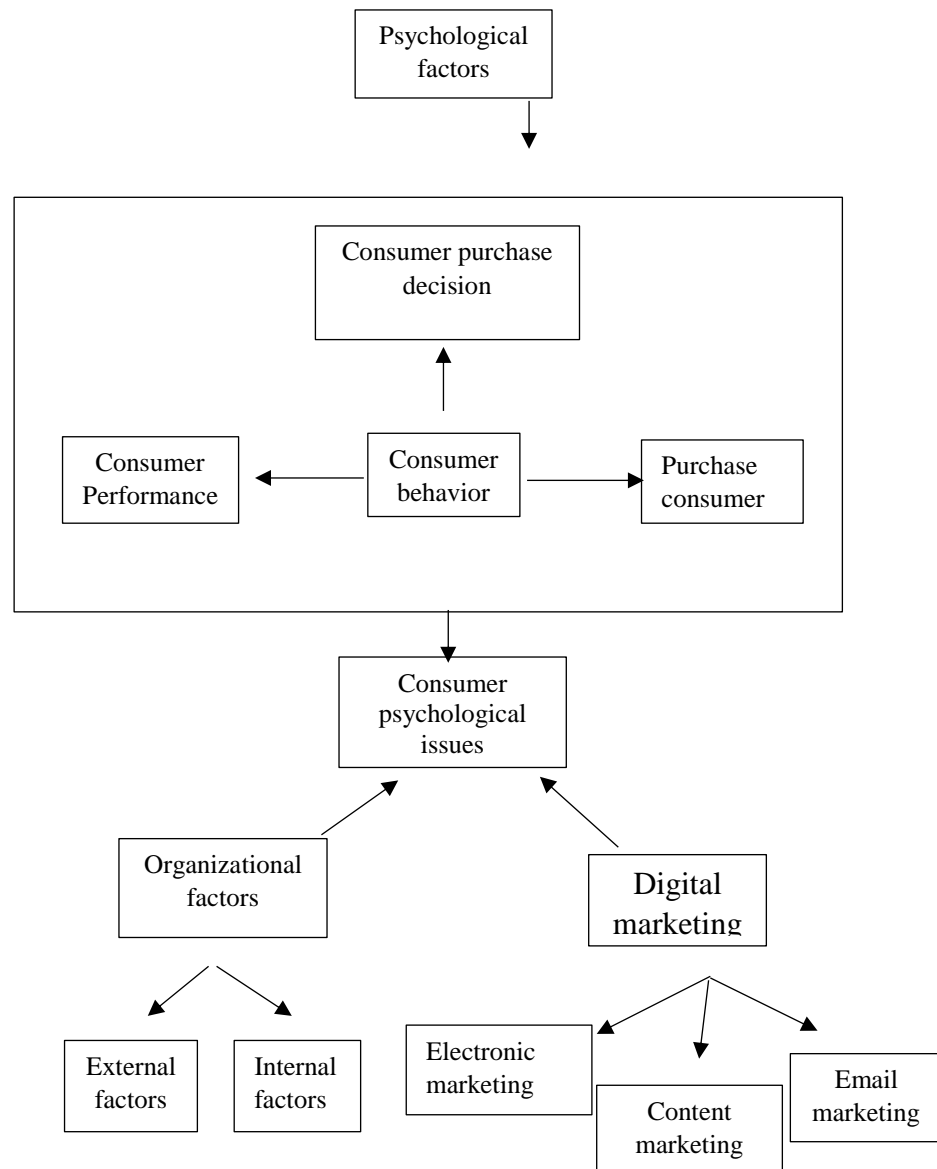


Chart 1: Research model

Discussion

In the current research, factors affecting consumer behavior in sports digital markets were identified, which form these factors as the following categories, organizational factors that include two components of organizational factors and external factors, psychological factors and digital marketing. This factor also

includes three components, including electronic marketing, marketing and email marketing. The digital marketing environment enables consumers to search for information and buy goods and services through direct connections with online stores. Digital shopping is not based on the actual experience of purchasing goods but on appearances such as images,

shapes, information, and advertising. Therefore, acceptance of online shopping and conducting it depends to a large extent on consumer communication and how individuals interact with sites. Behind each purchase, there is an important decision-making and persuasion process that needs to be examined. The stages that a consumer goes through to decide what kind of product to buy and from which site, depend on the quality and quantity of digital marketing (e-marketing, content marketing, email marketing) that optimal digital marketing leads to good customer performance in the digital space. Therefore, desirable digital marketing is an effective step for consumer behavior. In addition, the organization should continuously pay attention to the information and knowledge coming from the higher-level organizations and preserve them within their organization, and if new instructions, information, and knowledge emerge, they should be incorporated into the organization as part of an ongoing process. Contextual factors affect the adopted strategies. If external factors such as threats, laws and regulations, sanctions, economic conditions, natural disasters, seasons, special events, public holidays, climate changes, political issues, customer feedback, and internal organizational factors such as commitment to Business, monitoring customers, reacting to negative feedback, gaining customers' trust, complying with business rules and complying with ethical standards and psychological factors, including interests, customer motivation, and desire, pleasure and passion, income, lifestyle, education and literacy, gender, should be considered and examined in a favorable way, we can have an effective and efficient strategy in the organization, also the organization can have a good positioning by analyzing the demand, knowing the customers and reaching the target audience and segment the market effectively. Research results of Abasian & et al (2022) showed that social networks as a factor of digital marketing has an effect on consumer

behavior and is in line with the results of the present research. In research by Asgharpoor & et al (2022) the results showed that the category of communication was the most effective and the category of education was the least important organizational factor influencing the creation of new businesses in sports, which align with the results of the present research. Research results of Farsi & et al (2021) Showed that social networks have the largest share in the marketing model of sports business and electronic services have the least share in this marketing model, and in this research, social networks as a digital marketing factor were in line with the current research and services Electronics as another factor of digital marketing was inconsistent with the results of the present research. Research results Keyhan & et al (2021) showed that management factors, and organizational factors are among the influential factors on the development of electronic businesses in the sports industry. Organizational factors and management in this research align with the research findings. Research by Jamaat & et al. (2017) showed that the mix of marketing, psychological factors, and environmental factors have a significant positive impact on the behavior of people's sports consumption, that the mix of marketing and psychological factors were in line with the results of the present research.

In the research conducted abroad, also research of Antonia & Prof (2021) Showed that the majority of the respondents are aware of the digital marketing platform services and use them, and the digital marketing platform was recognized which was in line with the results of the present research. Research Elena & Mihai (2021) showed that gender and age characteristics are key factors in distinguishing the strategy in many cases, but the level of education, occupation, or income also plays an important role. In this research, psychological factors are in line with the results of the current research. Research results Kevin & et al. (2021)

showed that follower engagement was significantly higher for male athletes than female athletes. In this research, gender as a contextual factor was aligned with the current research.. In research by Toy (2021), showed that Online and offline buyers received information mainly through social media. In this research, the causal factors identified align with the results of the current research. Research by Nas (2021) showed that a common perception of consumer behavior refers to specific habits, lifestyle, attitude, and performance, which habits, lifestyle and attitude are considered psychological factors in the current research findings. Research results of Alghizavi (2019) demonstrated that digital marketing has become a part of our global life through mobile technologies, and social media platforms and acts as a new way of communication and marketing. In this research mobile technologies, and social media platforms align with the present research.

Conclusion

in the present era, organizations are increasingly facing dynamic and changing environments. Therefore, in order to survive and thrive, they must adapt to environmental changes. Successful and efficient organizations in the present era are those that can not only align with current societal developments but also predict future changes and guide them toward creating desirable transformations for better futures. Therefore, it is recommended that managers and marketers utilize innovative methods provided by the Internet, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, etc., to attract customers and consider consumer behavior aspects, including beliefs and purchasing behavior, in Internet marketing. Additionally, the website's purchasing process should be user-friendly and simple, allowing even non-professional users to access information about products, services, purchasing methods, payment methods, and shipping options. Marketers must understand and anticipate the needs, purchasing behaviors,

and desires of their customers. The Internet and e-commerce have become a means for companies and many organizations to generate income, interact with customers, and offer electronic sales of products. A sports organization is reliable when it fulfills its commitments. According to e-commerce laws, measures should be taken to formulate regulations, guidelines, and executive instructions for e-commerce in sports. Such disorder in this space can be prevented by enacting comprehensive laws and regulations in the field of e-commerce. Facilitating and promoting a conducive environment, it can contribute to the economic growth and improvement of businesses, as well as attracting domestic and foreign investments. Additionally, in order to enhance economic growth and improve the business environment, it is necessary to eliminate outdated, contradictory, and restrictive laws in the field of e-commerce, and often these laws need to be reviewed. Considering that the interviewees were a special segment of society and experts, professors and researchers who were active in the field of sports digital marketing and sports consumer behavior, it was very difficult to access the interviewees, so the researcher tried to conduct a long-term interview over the phone and virtual space and face-to-face interviews of experts who were available to achieve the main objectives of the interview. Finally, it is recommended to also consider other factors in this area.

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