Developing the Brand Equity of Football Clubs: The Partial Role of Identity Distinction, Identity Attractiveness, and Fan-Team Identification (Case Study: Iranian Premier Football League)

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study aimed to develop the brand equity model of football clubs in the Iranian premier football league. We emphasized the partial role of identity distinction, attractiveness, and fan-team identification.

Methodology: The research method was quantitative, correlational, and practical. The participants consisted of football fans in the Pro League of Iran, and a sample of 450 fans was selected through random sampling in virtual pages attributed to chosen clubs. The research tool was a combination of standard questionnaires. Their content validity was verified using marketing experts' comments, and the structural validity was verified using confirmatory factor analysis. According to Cronbach's alpha equal 0/82, the questionnaire's reliability was confirmed. Structural Equations Modeling (SEM) by AMOS software has been applied to use the validity of the results.

Finding: The results showed that identity distinction and attractiveness significantly and positively affected fan-team identification. Fan identification also had a substantial and positive impact on brand equity. The effect of identity distinction and identity attractiveness on fan-team identification and fan-team identification on brand equity demonstrated the importance of psychological and social elements in football club branding.

Originality: Trying to make the identity of Iranian football clubs attractive and different can provide the necessary ground for the unity of the fans with the clubs and facilitate the branding by improving brand equity. This research can be one of the few studies conducted in the field of sports brands in Iran by combining identity distinction, identity attractiveness, fan-team identification, and brand equity as a comprehensive model.

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1. Introduction

Creating powerful brands and managing their various dimensions to create brands with high brand equity in the minds of sports fans has attracted a lot of attention in the field sports industry (Ma & Kaplanidou, 2021). Paying attention to sports organizations and clubs as commercial brands have forced sports managers to see sports as an attractive industry and seek effective management of its relevant dimensions (Ghasemizsdeh Nugh et al., 2022). The brand of sports teams can provide the basis for using strategies to build powerful and attractive positions of sports clubs among the fans. Every brand evokes certain features in the minds of its audience (Wakefield et al., 2021); therefore, attention should be paid to the management of concepts such as the attractiveness of the brand identity, the distinction of the brand identity, the fan-team identification with the sports teams, and finally the brand equity in the minds of sports fans. The attractiveness and recognition of the brand identity, the title of fans with sports teams, and the brand equity of sports teams can provide sports managers with comprehensive information about the characteristics and tendencies of their fans. Studying these variables that lead the fans towards greater integration with the sports teams may establish positive behaviors and emotions toward the sports team (Tarighi et al., 2021).

Brand equity can create significant potential in the actions and reactions of fans towards sports teams. Wakefield et al. (2021) emphasize that the brand equity of sports teams has considerable potential in managing fans' buying behaviors, attending matches, and watching sports events (Wakefield et al., 2021). Creating a higher commitment to sports teams and increasing loyalty and emotional attachments of fans to sports teams can be defined as the consequences of strengthening the exceptional brand value of sports teams and clubs. Chen and Tseng (2010) have paid attention to brand equity as a source of competitive advantage for organizations (Chen & Tseng, 2010). In brand management, brand equity development will lead to greater penetration of the brand in the market and an increase in the brand's share in the market (Pina & Dias, 2021). The brand equity of sports teams is one of the most vital and critical aspects of business management in sports organizations (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007) that provides a competitive advantage in the changing market (Kiani & Nazari, 2022). The main goal of brand management is to create exceptional brand value for products or services. Since achieving unique brand value and differentiating sports brands can be defined as the goal of sports managers and marketers (Rezaei & Sharifian, 2021), the special attention of sports managers to this crucial goal and the study of factors affecting it can be of great importance.

Research conducted in the social identity field has pointed out the importance of identity distinction in creating a superior brand identity (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). People like to be with teams or people with values, distinguishing them from others (Ahearne et al., 2005). Brand identity can be critical in developing customers' commitment to football brands (Asadollahi et al., 2020). Mariutti and Giraldi (2020) believe credibility and prestige will improve the brand's value. Therefore, the distinctiveness of sports teams as a social institution can lead fans to be closer to these teams and ultimately strengthen the exceptional value of the sports teams' brand in the fans' attitude and behavior (Mariutti & Giraldi, 2020). Cucka (2005) also emphasizes that displaying an identity that expresses

distinction is necessary for an organization to become attractive (Cucka, 2005). According to Carlson et al. (2002)'s findings, identity distinction and prestige effectively affect fans' identification with their favorite team, purchases, and attendance of fans in stadiums. The distinctiveness of a sports team brand can provide the ground for more identification with the sports team and increase the presence of fans and the amount of their purchases. Ma and Kaplanidou (2021) believe that the nature and identity of the performance of sports teams play an essential role in the development and expansion of sports brands. According to the findings of Mazloomi Soveini (2022), fan-team identification had a positive effect on the brand equity of the Persepolis football team. Rionaldo (2020) considers brands' identity and credibility adequate in engineering brand value. The findings of Jaberi et al. (2020) revealed that self-definitional needs, including similarity identity, distinction identity, and prestige identity, had positive and significant effects on the brand equity of football teams.

On the other hand, the attractiveness of identity in marketing and business is considered one of the necessary conditions for fan-team identification (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Researchers have revealed that the level of identification of people with an organization depends on the level of organizational attractiveness (Dutton et al., 1994). Therefore, to take advantage of the benefits of fan-team identification (such as higher loyalty and brand development), sports organizations and clubs should seek to formulate and implement effective strategies to make their identity more attractive to their fans. Ahearne et al. (2005) have defined the attractiveness of identity as the degree of preference and support of individuals towards a company (Ahearne et al., 2005). The beauty of brand identity is one of the elements that lead to customer identification with a brand (Marin & Ruiz, 2007). Ashforth and Mael (1989) believe that people cognitively identify with successful organizations to satisfy their internal needs, such as self-esteem and distinction. According to Osborne and Cowen (2002), recognition can be considered an effective way to attract customers in organizations with a high-performance level. Since the level of attractiveness of an organization is adequate in meeting at least one of the audience's self-expressions needs (identity similarity, identity distinction, and identity prestige) (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), sports managers should pay attention to the fans' wishes and motivations in supporting the team. Sports events are of great importance in meeting fans' expectations and ultimately making the identity of sports clubs attractive to fans. Hodson (2021) considers creating a connection between brand identity and customer-oriented brand value is necessary.

The identification and sense of belonging of fans to sports teams is also considered one of the key concepts in developing sports brands (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). Fan-team identification is a fan's unity and close connection to a particular team (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Identification with a sports team is an example of organizational identification (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007), and this issue has attracted the attention of many researchers who pay attention to sports fans as sports customers (Chen & Tseng, 2010). The reasons why fans identify with sports teams can be different according to the various motivations of people towards sports teams. Fans who are very serious and fanatical usually show stronger loyalty and consider team identity an essential part of their identity (Brondoni, 2001). The findings of Jaberi et al. (2019) demonstrated that

attractiveness and distinction significantly affect fans' identification with football teams (Jaberi et al., 2019). In addition, fans identified with sports teams have a more positive attitude towards their team. For example, this group of fans will have a greater desire to consume the products of the companies sponsoring their team (Branscombe & Wann, 1991). The more the fans identify with their favorite team, the more attitudinal and behavioral loyalty they will have toward their teams. The research literature on fan-team identification has shown that the two indicators of prestige and distinction are predictive elements of fan-team identification (Bhattacharya et al., 1995). The research of Jaberi et al. (2014) has also revealed that fan-team identification has a positive and significant effect on the loyalty of football fans. According to He et al. (2012), fan-team identification is an essential predictor of fan attendance at university sports events. Liaogang et al. (2007) also emphasized the effect of identification on ticket and product sales. Based on their findings, Wu et al. (2012) stated that sports organizations should devote their primary resources to developing identification with fans. This phenomenon can significantly increase the desire for support among sports fans. To develop fan-team identification, sports teams should focus on improving the fans' trust in the team. Increasing the interaction of fans with sports teams and organizations can also strengthen fan-team identification (Wu et al., 2012). It seems that achieving a team brand image that fans like to identify with can make fans spend more time and money on their team and related products (Carlson et al., 2002). Sport marketers can be more efficient in sports by concentrating on the identification concept (Jaberi & Barkhordar, 2022).

The survival and continued success of sports teams and clubs as commercial organizations in the sports industry is guaranteed by their ability to create higher equity (Holt, 1995). In other words, the performance and actual value of sports organizations and teams are determined by intangible assets such as brand equity. Fortunato (2008) believes that the development of brand awareness can strengthen the brand image, and the strengthening of the brand image may lead to the improvement of brand equity and, finally, the increase of the loyalty of the fans. Mahlangu et al. (2013), in a study to evaluate fans' perceptions of brand equity, found that brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand association were respectively the most important in creating brand equity from the fans' point of view. The results of the research conducted by Mahlangu et al. (2013) showed that to reach loyal fans, and sports marketers should resort to multi-faceted branding strategies because this issue can lead to the sustainable success of sports team brands. Holt (1995) believes that images, logos, and symbols effectively create exceptional brand value in sports. Ross (2006)'s research has also shown that brand awareness and associations are critical in creating brand value in sports. Ventura and Dedeoglu (2013) found that sports venues, star players, and team successes were the most important in creating the brand value of football teams in Turkey. Underwood et al. (2001) presented a model in which identification is defined as a mechanism to create an emotional connection between fans and services related to the brand. These researchers believed that the more fans experience a higher identification with their favorite team, the higher value they will place on the brand of their favorite team. In addition, Underwood et al. (2001) believe that some characteristics of sports services can lead to fans' identification with sports teams. In sports, brand equity is particularly

effective in the financial success of sports teams (Ross, 2006). Therefore, if sports managers and marketers have a complete and better understanding of the importance of the brand value of sports teams and the factors affecting it, they will be able to achieve better competitive advantages and more loyal fans.

With the professionalization of sports and, primarily, football in recent years in Iran, paying particular attention to the factors affecting the financial development of sports clubs can provide the basis for strengthening the economic foundation of sports teams. Although Iranian football clubs enjoy considerable popularity among fans, and this issue has created exceptional potential for team branding and revenue generation, the lack of ability of clubs to manage incomes against expenses has put football clubs in an unstable financial condition. Moreover, the solid economic dependence of most Iranian football teams on government and quasi-government budgets and their inability to generate income have made it inevitable to pay attention to the concepts related to sports branding in the current situation. In this regard, studying the process relevant to strengthening the brand equity of sports teams will be an increasing need in the sports field in Iran. Despite the studies that have been conducted in the field of Iranian football marketing, the examination of psychological and sociological factors, including fan-team identification, identity attractiveness, identity distinction, and brand equity through a comprehensive model for explaining the relationship between fans and sports teams in the direction of branding has been neglected. The current research combining marketing concepts (brand equity) with psycho-social concepts (fan-team identification, identity attractiveness, and identity distinction identity) can be considered an essential step in covering this research gap in the research literature in the domestic sports market.

Having a comprehensive understanding of the process of creating identification and developing the brand equity of sports clubs provides the opportunity for sports marketers and managers to present their sports goods and services in a way that satisfies the needs of their fans and covers their needs and demands effectively. Even though significant research has been conducted in the field of brand equity in the Iranian football setting, this research is considered one of the few studies in the field of sports brands in Iran with a combination of identity distinction, identity attractiveness, fan-team identification, as well as brand equity in the form of a comprehensive model. In other words, Iranian football marketing has observed no research with this combination of the so-called variables through the proposed model. According to the research literature reviewed above in previous sections, the relationships between the variables are drawn and investigated based on what is presented in the conceptual model shown in Figure 1. In the framework of this model, the impact of components such as identity distinction, identity attractiveness, and fan-team identification on the brand equity of Iranian football clubs will be studied. In other words, the researchers seek to answer the following question: what is the role of distinction identity, identity attractiveness, and fan-team identification in explaining the brand equity of the brand of football clubs in the Iranian premier league?
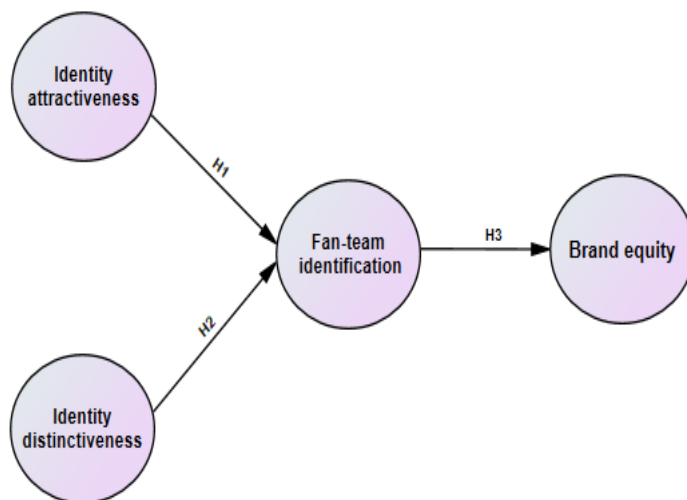
Figure 1. The research conceptual model.

2. Methodology

The research was a quantitative, correlational, and practical study conducted in the field. This research was an applied study in terms of purpose. Library studies and a field study among the statistical population (football fans in the Iranian premier league) have been used to collect the research data. In this research, library methods were mainly used to collect data related to the research literature and background, and the field method was used to collect data to confirm or reject the relationships among the research variables. Standard questionnaires designed based on the 5-point Likert were used as the research tools. In general, the questionnaire included four variables with 13 items. Data collection tools were Bhattacharya and Sen (2003)'s identity differentiation questionnaire (three items), Ahearne et al. (2005)'s identity attractiveness questionnaire (three items), Mael and Ashforth (1992)'s fan-team identification questionnaire (three items), and Yoo and Donthu (2001)'s brand equity questionnaire (four items). The content validity and confirmatory factor analysis methods were used to ensure the validity of the questionnaire. The content validity was verified by inserting the opinions of seven sports marketing experts. Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the reliability of scales. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to verify the construct validity of the questionnaire. The confirmatory factor analysis results demonstrated the questionnaires' structural validity (factor loadings for all items were evaluated as more than 0.50). The results of confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha value have been presented for each construct in Table 1.

Table 1. The result of CFA and reliability values of the research constructs.

Construct	Items	OL (>0.70)	α (>0.70)
Identity attractiveness	Q1	0.80[a]	0.81
	Q2	0.81[a]	
	Q3	0.82[a]	
Identity distinctiveness	Q4	0.83[a]	0.83
	Q5	0.81[a]	
	Q6	0.86[a]	
Fan-team identification	Q7	0.83[a]	0.80
	Q8	0.81[a]	
	Q9	0.80[a]	
Brand equity	Q10	0.82[a]	0.82
	Q11	0.83[a]	
	Q12	0.81[a]	
	Q13	0.86[a]	

Notes: a: $P< 0.05$. OL= Outer Loading. α= Cronbach's Alpha.

As Table 1 shows, the values of indices all reach the acceptable amount and indicate a good model fit.

Based on the history of the clubs, winning the championship, the number of fans, participation in the Asian Champions League, the activity of the club's website, and the amount of media attention paid to the clubs, the fans of Esteghlal Tehran, Persepolis Tehran, Sepahan Isfahan, Tractorsazi Tabriz, and Foolad Khuzestan were selected as statistical population. Morgan's table evaluated the number of suitable samples for the research as 384 people. Due to the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the absence of fans in the Premier League matches during the research period, virtual pages attributed to the clubs were used to collect data. For this purpose, to reach a suitable and sufficient number of samples, considering the possibility of non-return of the questionnaires or invalidity of some of the questionnaires for various reasons, 450 questionnaires were randomly distributed among the fans on virtual pages attributed to the clubs (via email and social media). To do this, the research group sent a message involving the research aim and the fans' consent form for the selected fans on virtual pages, and after getting their telephone numbers and email addresses, the questionnaires were sent to them via email and social media (Whatsapp, Instagram, and Telegram). From the distributed questionnaires, 398 items were returned, and 388 were qualified for data analysis after the initial review. SPSS version 23 and AMOS version 24 were used for data analysis.

3. Results

The demographic features of the research sample have been given in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic features of the research sample.

Demographic features		Percent %
Employment status	Employed	42%
	Not employed	58%
Age	18–29	54%
	30–39	29%
	40–49	15%
	>=50	2%
Education	University degrees	80%
	Diploma & high school degrees	20%
Favorite team	Esteghlal FC	28%
	Sepahan FC	19%
	Perspolis FC	30%
	Tractorsazi Tabriz	15%
	Foolad Khoozestan	8%
Marital state	Married	37%
	Not married	63%

Structural equation modeling has been used to test the relationships among the research constructs. Table 3 presents the general fitness indicators of the research model.

Table 3. General indicators of research model fit.

Index	CMIN/Df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Final model	2.82	0.91	0.91	0.90	0.91	0.088
Acceptable	<3	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	0.10<

According to Table 3, the general indicators revealed excellent fitness for the research model. In other words, the collected data support the research model. The structural equation model of the research, along with the regression coefficient, has been presented in Figure 2.
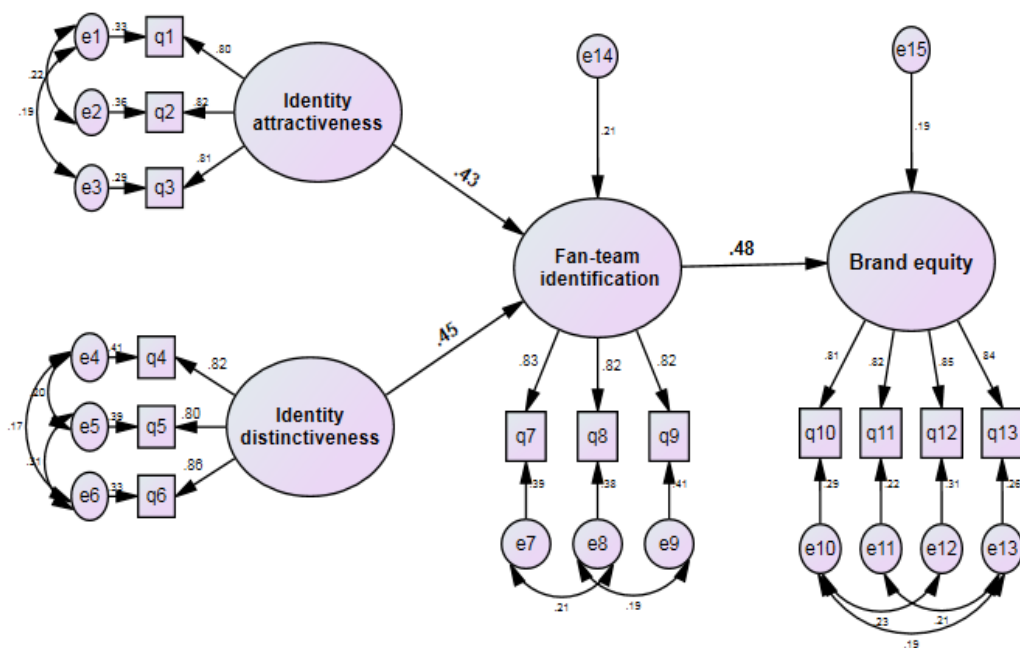
Figure 2. Structural equation of the research model

Critical value and p-value have been used to test the significance of the relationship among the constructs. Based on the significance level of 0.05, the critical value should be greater than 1.96. Less than this value, the model's relevant parameter is insignificant. Also, values less than 0.05 for p value indicate a significant relationship. Table 4 shows the relationships among the constructs in the research model along with regression coefficient values.

Table 4. Regression coefficients and test results of relationships.

Number	Exogenous variable	Path	Endogenous variable	Beta coefficient	Critical value	Significance level	Result
1	Identity distinctiveness		Fan-team identification	0.43	13.96	*	Supported
2	Identity attractiveness		Fan-team identification	0.45	17.63	*	Supported
3	Fan-team identification		Brand equity	0.48	16.87	*	Supported

$0.05 < p*$

4. Discussion and conclusion

Building powerful brands has become the marketing priority of many organizations due to the significant advantages it creates. Strong brands can create a distinctive and attractive identity for sports clubs among fans. Creating suitable fields to respond to the growing needs of fans as customers and the core audience of football has forced the managers of sports and marketing to evaluate and satisfy the needs of fans and, in this way, create the

ground for increasing attendance (Ahearne et al., 2005). Bringing the identity of sports brands closer to the identity needs of fans will provide the basis for more communication between fans and sports clubs and will lead to strengthening the fan base and the brand equity of sports clubs. Therefore, one of the requirements of positioning sports brands is investigating fans' attitudes, emotions, and behaviors towards sports clubs through marketing studies and brand equity development.

Based on the research findings, identity distinction can provide the basis for developing the attractiveness of the brand identity of Iran's premier football league teams among fans. This finding is consistent with (Ahearne et al., 2005; Cucka, 2005). People like to show their characteristics different from similar groups by being members of other teams and meeting the need to differentiate their identity. The distinctiveness of a sports team can provide the basis for developing a stronger identity with the sports team and increase the presence of fans and the amount of their purchases (Carlson et al., 2002). Having special and unique features such as employing famous players, using attractive and unique colors and designs in team uniforms, and providing services and facilities that are different from other competitors can be considered essential in addressing the differentiation needs of the football fans' identity. Ashforth and Mael (1989) believed that people often cognitively identify with winning and successful teams and people, which leads to satisfying their self-esteem. Tajfel and Turner (2004) emphasized that people need to differentiate themselves from others. People want to be associated with teams or people with specific values that distinguish them from others (Ahearne et al., 2005). Cucka (2005) also emphasizes that displaying an identity that expresses distinction is necessary for an organization to become attractive. In organizations with a high-performance level, difference can be considered an effective way to attract customers (Osborne & Cowen, 2002).

Moreover, the findings of Jaberi et al. (2020) demonstrated that distinction identity positively affected the brand equity of football teams. Therefore, identity distinction is considered one of the essential factors in the attractiveness of an organization's identity, which can influence the tendency of sports fans and spectators towards sports teams as attractive brands. Suppose a sports team displays its unique characteristics as an organizational brand. In that case, it will create particular values in the minds of fans and spectators and make the ground for fans to connect with the team. According to Carlson et al. (2002) findings, identity distinction is practical in fan-team identification, purchases, and presence of fans in stadiums. Since high levels of personality and brand identity dimensions can increase brand prestige and excellence (Carlson et al., 2002), managing brand identity dimensions and drawing a strong identity of sports clubs in the minds and perceptions of fans can lead to strengthening prestige and the perceived distinction of fans from sports clubs and to provide the basis for increasing the identification of fans with sports clubs.

Part of this research revealed that the attractiveness of the identity has a positive effect on fan-team identification. Therefore, increasing the factors related to the attractiveness of the fans of Iranian football clubs can improve the identification and integration of fans with the sports clubs, and this phenomenon can lead to the creation of significant potential in the development of the fan base and generating more income for sports clubs. This

finding supports the results of studies by Jaberi et al. (2014); Marin and Ruiz (2007) and is consistent with them. Ashforth and Mael (1989) believe people cognitively identify with successful organizations to satisfy their inner needs. Therefore, paying attention to fans' emotional and psychological needs can be of particular importance in developing the brand of sports clubs and increasing fan-team identification. The research of Ahearne et al. (2005); Ashforth and Mael (1989); Bhattacharya and Sen (2003); Dutton et al. (1994); Osborne and Cowen (2002) also confirm this part of the findings. According to the results, it can be said that the provision of attractive elements in a way that makes the sports club and team different and beautiful compared to the competitors can create the ground for the fans to feel more identified with the clubs. If such a psychological and social relationship is established, the fans will feel their favorite clubs are a part of their existence and will support their club with all their heart. Undoubtedly, creating such conditions will create a platform for developing the clubs' brand equity and, as a result, generate more revenue from the fans' channel.

To develop fan-team identification, sports organizations should focus on increasing the fans' trust in the clubs. Increasing fans' interaction with sports clubs can also strengthen fans' identification (Wu et al., 2012). Using places and ceremonies that make the participation and presence of fans in football sports events attractive for fans can be effective in creating the identification of fans with their favorite clubs. If the identity of a sports team includes features that satisfy the fans' intrinsic needs and if the club's identity has values that distinguish that team from other competitors and at the same time have higher prestige than competitors, in this situation, the fans perceive their favorite clubs as an attractive club. They can identify with their clubs and are more committed to their favorite team (Jaberi et al., 2014).

Another part of the findings showed that fan-team identification had a positive and significant effect on the brand equity of the Iranian football clubs among the fans. Identification with favorite teams is a tool managers can use to reduce fans' sensitivity to the price of goods (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Carlson et al. (2002) also believed that brand equity positively relates to the level of identification with the sports clubs. Underwood et al. (2001) found that the greater the identification between the customer and the product, the higher the brand equity value will be. The research of Jaberi et al. (2014) has also shown that fan-team identification has a positive and significant effect on the loyalty of football fans. Fan-team identification is an essential predictor of fan attendance at university sports events (He et al., 2012) and ticket and merchandise sales (Liaogang et al., 2007). Mazloomi Soveini (2022) demonstrated that fan-team identification is critical in improving the brand equity of the Persepolis football club (Mazloomi Soveini, 2022). Developing the fan-team identification level can also affect the behaviors of football fans toward sponsorships in the Football context (Jaberi & Barkhordar, 2022). Because a brand with a higher value can be the basis for more loyalty among consumers, sports managers, and marketers should use the brand equity of the brand as a significant competitive advantage to effectively manage the behavior and attitude of fans to attract more loyal fans and generate more revenue. In sports, which is considered a competitive setting for sports clubs, creating a distinct identity for teams and clubs can help strengthen clubs as commercial brands. Sports organizations should devote their primary resources to

developing identification with fans because this phenomenon can significantly enhance the desire for support among sports fans (Wu et al., 2012). By strengthening the identification of fans with sports teams and, as a result, improving their brand equity in fans' minds, sports teams can hope for higher revenue generation by having more loyal fans. Achieving a team brand image that fans want to identify with can make fans spend more time and money on their team and related products (Carlson et al., 2002).

Observing the attitudes and tendencies of the fans to match the identity of football clubs with the fans' wishes can be a crucial element in bringing the essence of the clubs closer to the fans. Using the fans' opinions and approaching them using different communication channels to make them participate in the management process of football clubs can provide the necessary opportunity to create fan-team identification. Creating an attractive and distinct identity requires a detailed assessment of the psychological, social, and cultural tendencies of the fans, and therefore, trying to address the fans' preferences can play a crucial role in creating and strengthening the brand of Iranian football clubs. The use of different approaches in the management of football clubs and fans and the use of socio-psychological experts in managing the behavior and emotions of fans can lead to improving the attractiveness of football clubs and ultimately improving their brand equity. Increasing the attractiveness and distinguishing the identity of football clubs, the use of attractive and famous players and coaches, as well as paying particular attention to visual elements in the design of places and uniforms attributed to football teams and clubs, can address part of the internal needs of the fans and provide the ground for the identification of the fans with football clubs. Sports marketing can be defined as a managerial-social process.

Therefore, a deep and detailed study of the marketing process for the sports industry will not be possible without considering sociological and psychological concepts. Effective communication management with fans in sports requires assessing fans' needs and evaluating their sociological and psychological needs. Considering the importance of relationship management with fans (as the core customers of the sports setting) in strengthening the brand equity of sports clubs and, as a result, increasing the revenue generation of sports clubs, the use of such studies can be one of the critical elements in the field of sports industry. Without a doubt, the correct management of CRM in sports will be impossible without paying attention to the sociological and psychological components governing the relationship between fans and sports clubs. Therefore, studying psychological and sociological aspects as a critical prerequisite in sports marketing in Iranian sports and conducting quantitative and qualitative studies to explain the different parts of fans' relationships with sports clubs is suggested. Considering that the brand equity of sports teams and clubs is a subjective and intangible concept, examining the process of developing the brand equity of sports clubs centered on fans in the sports field by conducting profound qualitative studies is recommended.

Disclosure statement and funding

Acknowledgment

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توسعه ارزش ویژهٔ برند باشگاه‌های فوتبال: نقش نسبی تمایز هویت، جذابیت هویت، و هم‌هویتی هوادار–تیم (مطالعه موردی: لیگ برتر فوتبال ایران)

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چکیده

هدف: هدف از انجام پژوهش حاضر توسعه مدل توسعهٔ ارزش ویژهٔ برند باشگاه‌های لیگ برتر فوتبال ایران با تأکید بر نقش نسبی تمایز هویت، جذابیت هویت و هم‌هویتی هوادار–تیم بود.

روش: روش انجام تحقیق حاضر کمّی-پیمایشی، از نوع همبستگی و با هدف کاربردی بود. جامعه آماری تحقیق شامل هواداران باشگاه‌های منتخب لیگ برتر فوتبال ایران بودند که تعداد ۴۵۰ نفر به عنوان نمونه آماری به طور تصادفی در صفحات مجازی منتسب به باشگاه‌های منتخب مورد مطالعه قرار گرفتند. ابزار تحقیق ترکیبی از پرسشنامه‌های استاندارد بود که روایی صوری و محتوایی آن با استفاده از نظرات متخصصان و روایی سازه با استفاده از تحلیل عامل تأییدی بررسی گردید. پایایی آن بر اساس آلفای کرونباخ معادل ۰/۸۲ محاسبه و مورد تأیید قرار گرفت. برای سنجش روایی و برازش مدل از روش مدلسازی معادلات ساختاری با نرم‌افزار ایموس استفاده گردید.

یافته‌ها: یافته‌ها نشان داد که تمایز هویتِ برند و جذابیت هویت برند تأثیر مثبت و معناداری بر هم‌هویتیِ هواداران داشته است. هم‌هویتیِ هواداران نیز دارای تأثیر مثبت و معناداری بر ارزش ویژه برند بوده است. تأثیر تمایز هویتِ، جذابیت هویت بر هم‌هویتیِ هوادار–تیم و تأثیر هم‌هویتیِ هوادار–تیم بر ارزش ویژهٔ برند، حاکی از اهمیت عناصر روانشناختی و جامعه‌شناختی در فرایند برندسازی باشگاه‌های فوتبال بوده و نشان دهنده لزوم توسعه چنین رویکردی در حوزه‌های پژوهش و اجرا می‌باشد.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: تلاش برای جذاب و متمایز ساختن هویت باشگاه‌های فوتبال ایران می‌تواند زمینه لازم را برای هم‌هویتی هواداران با باشگاه‌ها فراهم ساخته و برندسازی از باشگاه‌ها را از طریق افزایش ارزش ویژهٔ برند تسهیل می‌کند. این تحقیق از معدود مطالعاتی محسوب می‌شود که در حوزه برندهای ورزشی در کشور ایران با ترکیب تمایز هویت، جذابیت هویت، هم‌هویتی و ارزش ویژه برند در قالب یک مدل منسجم صورت گرفته است.

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