

Sports marketing strategy and its relationship to the competitive advantage of institutional clubs in Iraq

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Abstract

The research aimed to identify the correlation between the sports marketing strategy and the competitive advantage of institutional sports clubs in Iraq. The researchers used the descriptive approach using the analytical survey method and correlational relationships, in order to suit the requirements and procedures of his research. For the purpose of achieving the objectives of any research and studying its variables, it is necessary to know the original society with its characteristics and components. Because the use of any method is considered an incomplete case unless the study population is described clearly and accurately. The research population was determined from members of the administrative bodies of institutional sports clubs in Iraq, who numbered (404) members of the administrative body, distributed among (49) sports clubs, and a sample was determined. Search from the origin community by a percentage of (.86.63) Since the research sample was approved as (350) members of the administrative body out of the total number, the questionnaires were distributed to the application sample, which numbered (150) members of the administrative body in the institutional clubs on 3/28/2022, and the phrases were arranged randomly so that the respondent would not be limited to one area. One particular over the other. Then the questionnaires were collected after a specific period, and they were rearranged in an organized manner according to each field in preparation for subjecting them to statistical treatments. The researchers used the SPSS statistical package, through a set of statistics that suit the requirements of the research and methods for obtaining the required results. The results of the sample proved Application: There is a moral correlation to the results of the significance level values between the two research measures (sports marketing strategy) and (competitive advantage). The researcher attributes this to the moral correlation in the variables being that competitive advantage requires successful management that believes in organizational change to develop a sports marketing strategy that will be a center for achieving imports. The additional

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level is under specialized marketing management, and all the results of the three measurement areas have been discussed in detail.

Keywords: strategy, sports marketing, competitive advantage, institutional clubs.

Introduction

All sports clubs and federations seek to be among the accelerating pace of change for the better, so as not to miss keeping pace with development and not to remain confined to traditional frameworks and administrative monotony in their management. Therefore, they are obligated to search for innovation and to possess the elements that make them among this accelerating pace, if the competition is Among these clubs and sports federations lies several characteristics that may distinguish one club from another, such as human resources, financial resources, methods of marketing their outputs, and investing their resources as an aspect of organizational change for their performance .

Sports marketing is a broad field of research and investigation into its requirements, procedures, application methods, plans and programmes, in order to improve its structure towards continuous development and growth as an aspect of supporting sports and competition towards optimal achievement.

Today, sports marketing has become an integrated system with foundations, characteristics, and programs with an administrative strategy that aligns with scientific, commercial, and economic acceleration to interact with each other in creating a new structure in the field of sports marketing, which has made this term the primary concern of many scholars of management, trade, and economics to strive towards expanding ideas, programs, and systems. related to it, to represent one of the important courses in the field of academic education and specialized training courses to prepare administrators in this important field.

In order for sports clubs and federations to keep pace with development and advancement in their field of work and to achieve their presence within the ranks of competition and excellence in achievement and to attract fans, those interested and followers of sports and to know what is going on around it; What requires them to deal well and behave in setting all goals and planning marketing methods with systematic and studied strategies based on real facts and information and their analysis, and dealing with all the details, obstacles, and elements of success, and improving the quality of work according to internal and external variables and available capabilities, and employing them in determining the sports marketing strategy, in the work of these clubs and federations. Sports on an ongoing basis, and the extent of its relationship to the type of excellence required in all its sports programs and the orientation towards competition in attracting sponsors on the one hand and beneficiaries on the other hand to ensure Sustaining the work of sports clubs and achieving financial profits is a major aspect of developing sports.

From the above, the researcher's interest was directed to this problem, studying it, and identifying its causes through the sports marketing strategy in achieving competitive advantage in institutional clubs in Iraq.

The importance of the research lies in several directions that quickly integrate in their contents to generate a scientific destination concerned with the sports marketing strategy for the aspects of the administrative work of clubs to strive towards excellence in the internal circle

of sports competition as a main gateway to global competition, as well as the relative modernity of the sports marketing process to create a competitive advantage for sports clubs. In addition to this, the growing interest of sponsors and the desire to finance sports clubs through systems and programs prepared in a way that ensures keeping pace with global development in this profitable field. As well as the desire of sports clubs to address the issue of sports marketing, the extent of its relationship with beneficiaries and funding bodies, and the nature of change to move towards the field of excellence and competition to achieve good attraction for its followers. And attract the attention of responsible authorities in giving a comprehensive view of this topic in light of sports competition and the importance of marketing programs and administrative practice from a modern and contemporary perspective. (Salman et al., 2022)

(Previous and related studies) There are many studies that used this strategy, and I mentioned a study (Muhammad bin Khamis 1999), which aimed to determine the extent of the interest of the Omani private sector in developing strategies for developing sports marketing, and the extent of their conviction in the importance of the sport aspect in the Sultanate of Oman as a means of promoting the product and brand, (Nashwan, 2024) then Revealing the reasons leading to the weakness of the sports marketing process, following the descriptive analytical approach on a sample of workers in economic establishments (33%) according to a questionnaire designated for this purpose to reveal the themes Sponsorship, financing and promotion, as the study concluded that sport has become a profitable commercial operation and sports marketing has become one of the most important types of marketing, in addition to considering corporate sponsorship of sporting events as an advanced marketing tool that is distinguished from other means. It was also found that a large percentage of Omani private establishments have sponsored events and activities. Sports events held in the Sultanate, and this sponsorship varied between a main sponsor, an official sponsor, and joint sponsorship (Al-Husseini, 1999, p. 50). & (Nashwan, 2024)

The study (Qasi Islam and Rizq Tar 2017) was mentioned, which aimed to determine the effects of sports marketing in private economic institutions on the development of sports, and the expected benefit for the sports sector from sports marketing for private economic institutions, using the descriptive analytical approach and correlational relationships on a sample consisting of (68) clubs. An athlete in the state of Bouira, with a specific questionnaire that included several questions to the heads of sports clubs, as it was found that private economic institutions have a constant willingness to support the sports sector, and that private economic institutions rely on sports marketing to promote Its products, and the increased profitability of private economic institutions due to the methods of promotion and sale that sports marketing provides, and it recommended activating the friendly sale of the products of private economic institutions through major and official sponsorship of sports clubs, which increases the popularity of their products (Islam and Tariq, 2017, p. 3) .

The study (Soha Abdel Moneim 2020), which aimed to identify the impact of sports marketing activities on the organizational effectiveness of sports institutions represented by the Egyptian Olympic Committee, and the relationship between marketing activities and organizational effectiveness, was mentioned on a sample of (102) managers in the Olympic Committee, and the study concluded that there is an important relationship between Research variables and application of marketing thought to the components of promotion, distribution, pricing, and benefiting from advertising rights. It recommended focusing on paying attention to the needs of the market and the desire of the beneficiaries to Covering their requirements to support sports in general and gain the trust of its followers (Muhammad, 2020, pages 34-87) .

The study (Ibrahim Ali 2019), which aimed to know the general reality of the sports marketing strategy in the internal and external environment and the extent of sports institutions' interest in developing marketing strategies, was mentioned on a sample of (101) officials and leaders of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, marketing experts, and the Olympic Committee. The study concluded that there is reluctance in developing marketing strategies. Clear marketing strategies advance its work, and it recommended attention to developing a strategy with a specific mechanism that keeps pace with the global acceleration in the sports factory circle (Gharab, 2019, Pages 4-5). & (Nashwan & Alzoubi, 2022)

The study (Nasri Abdel Qader 2015) mentioned that it aimed to know the organizational and planning policy with which sports bodies are linked to achieve the marketing process by working to provide areas of sponsorship, advertising and promotion of sports, cultural, social and artistic activities for employees, on a sample of (100) consisting of leaders and employees. In professional football clubs, the Olympic Committee, and officials of telecommunications companies, the study concluded that there was a difference in the strategic planning processes for sports marketing and recommended a strategic planning policy approach for all their marketing programs to support sports in accordance with the principle of marketing policy. (Abdel Qader, 2015, p. 23).

The study (Tariq Ali 2015), which aimed to identify the current reality of the process of marketing sports club services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Western Region as an outlet for self-financing, was mentioned in a study of (500) people from the public who benefit from the club's administrative services. The study concluded that there is no specialized marketing department. And a marketing team within the organizational structure of Saudi sports clubs, and there is no database for the audience's data, requirements, and future desires. It recommended placing a main aspect in the organizational structure that works to manage sports marketing and expand knowledge of the reality of the public and what it desires to gain their trust towards Sports clubs (Dahem, 2015, p. 17).

The study (Ibrahim Ali Saleh 2010), which aimed to know the extent of the availability of policies and laws to cover the field of sports marketing in sports institutions and federations, and the extent of the importance of sports marketing to them, was mentioned on a sample of (105) people who work in the sports field for the Ministry of Youth and Sports, sports federations and clubs, and specialized experts. The study concluded that there are no provisions and regulations that define the laws regulating the science of sports marketing, as well as a weakness in marketing management by the leadership of sports clubs and federations. The study recommended increasing awareness of And the culture of sports marketing in clubs and federations, developing systematic programs to improve the sports marketing strategy, and adopting research and studies supporting this purpose (Gharab, 2010, pages 35-36)..

The study (Haider Radi and Abdullah Hazza 2019) was mentioned, which aimed to know the administrative trend towards sports privatization of Baghdad clubs participating in the Iraqi Premier Football League from the point of view of coaches and players. The researcher used the descriptive approach using the survey method to suit it with the nature of the problem, and the research sample consisted of coaches. The number of Baghdad club players participating in the Iraqi Premier League for the sports season (2018-2019) is (110). Individually, the researcher proposed (25) phrases for the scale and presented them to (17) experts who agreed on (20) phrases. After that, the scale was applied to the research sample to extract and discuss the results of the study, and it appeared that there was a desire on the part

of coaches and players for the Iraqi Premier League football clubs. In the administrative trend towards sports privatization (Raheem & Hazza, 2019)

Method and tools

The researcher used the descriptive method using the analytical survey method and correlational relationships, in order to suit the requirements and procedures of his research. This approach is considered one of the most common and widespread approaches, especially in educational research, which “is concerned with evaluating trends, seeking to find out points of view, aiming to collect demographic data about individuals, or aiming to know work conditions and means)”. Al-Kazemi, 2012, p. 17 “(The research community was determined from members of the administrative bodies of institutional sports clubs in Iraq, who numbered (404) members of the administrative body, distributed among (49) sports clubs. The research sample was determined from the original community by a percentage of (86.63). The research sample was approved as (350) administrative body members out of the total number, and then the sample was divided according to scientific conditions into (the exploratory experiment sample, the construction and preparation sample, and the application sample) ,Sample exploratory experiment :The sample of the exploratory experiment consisted of (30) members of the administrative body, with a percentage of (8.57), who were selected randomly.

Construction sample :The sample for constructing the research criteria included (170) members of the administrative body, with a percentage of (48.57), who were selected randomly.

Application sample :The sample for applying the standards included (150) members of the administrative body, with a percentage of (42.85), who were selected randomly .

The researchers used the following methods, tools and devices.

· Arab and foreign sources and references.

· Personal interviews with specialists.

· Field visits to collect information.

· A special questionnaire for the purpose of identifying the most important areas and phrases of search criteria.

· Data collection and emptying form.

· International electronic information network (Internet).

· Dell electronic calculator.

A stopwatch (Casio) to know the time to answer the statements of the two scales

In order to achieve the research objectives, the researcher adopted the questionnaire as a main tool for his research, as it is “the only easy means to expose respondents to carefully selected and arranged variables for the purpose of collecting data ”.(Dallin, 1984, p. 395) as the appropriate tool for collecting information and data, and provides an opportunity for the subjects to express their opinions freely. Therefore, in order for the research tool to be accurately prepared in designing the questionnaire, sources that provide information were used in its construction, as follows:

· Reviewing a set of ready-made questionnaires and standards in a section of Arab and foreign studies that dealt with the topic and variables of research in sports marketing strategy and its relationship to competitive advantage among members of the administrative bodies of sports clubs in Iraq .

·Reviewing some literature and references related to the theoretical aspects of research variables in sports marketing strategy and its relationship to competitive advantage among members of the administrative bodies of sports clubs in Iraq .

·Personal interviews with some specialists in colleges of physical education and sports sciences, and workers in sports clubs, Ministry of Youth and Sports .

Sports marketing strategy scale :The scale consists of (61) distributed items (7) areas, as the scale enjoyed high consistency, high discriminatory ability, and a reliability coefficient whose value reached (0.753). This represents the correlation of half of the statements, as the researcher later found the reliability coefficient for the scale using the Sieberman-Brown correlation coefficient, which showed a value of.(0.827)

Results

Table (1) shows the results of the statistical description

Scale	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Torsion coefficient	The mediator	minimum degree	higher degree
Sports marketing strategy	176.653	13.4708	4000.	176.000	150.00	215.00

Competitive advantage measure :The scale consists of (30) distributed items (5) areas, as the scale enjoyed high consistency, high discriminatory ability, and a reliability coefficient whose value was (0.733), and this represents the correlation of half of the statements, as the researcher later found the reliability coefficient for the scale using the Sieberman-Brown correlation coefficient, which showed a value of.(0.789)

The data was processed statistically using the SPSS program to obtain the results, and among these statistical methods that the researchers used are: - (arithmetic mean, hypothetical mean, standard deviation. (t) test for symmetrical and asymmetrical samples.

Table (2) shows the results of the statistical description

higher degree	minimum degree	The mediator	Torsion coefficient	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Scale
133.00	76.00	99.000	0.165	10.7232	100.583	Competitive advantage

Table (3) It shows the arithmetic mean, the standard deviation, the calculated (T) value, the hypothetical mean, and the level of significance.

Variables	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Degree of freedom	value)T(Indicative value	Significance level
Sports marketing strategy	176.653	13.4708	149	5.770-	0.000	Dal
Hypothetical mean	183					

·The significance value is significant if it is $0.05 >$

Table (4) It shows the arithmetic mean, the standard deviation, the calculated (T) value, the hypothetical mean, and the level of significance.

Variables	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Degree of freedom	value(T)	Indicative value	Significance level
Competitive advantage	100.583	10.723	149	12.048	0.000	Dal
Hypothetical mean	90					

·The significance value is significant if it is $0.05 >$

Table (5) shows the level of correlation between the two research metrics

Search metrics		Sports marketing strategy	Organizational change	Competitive advantage
Sports marketing strategy	Correlation coefficient	1	0700.	0850.
	Moral value		3950.	3020.
	Sample number	150	150	150
Competitive advantage	Correlation coefficient	0.085	0 939.	1
	Moral value	3020.	0.000	
	Sample number	150	150	150

·The significance value is significant if it is $0.05 >$

Discussion

Table (3) shows the results of the T test. When comparing the achieved arithmetic means, it turns out that there are statistically significant differences in favor of the hypothesized mean for the scale) Sports marketing strategy ,(as the moral value reached (0.000), which is smaller than the significance level (0.05), in addition to the results of the achieved hypothetical mean level being greater than the arithmetic mean value of the scale.(Kazar & Kazim, 2020)

This is due to the fact that all sports clubs affiliated with government institutions are proceeding correctly in the marketing process, but very slowly and in limited aspects, and do not consider developing a real marketing strategy. We can summarize some of the marketing processes in some Iraqi clubs with the following points:

- Marketing players, as we found all the clubs, especially some of the major clubs such as (Al-Zawraa - Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya - Al-Shorta - Al-Karkh) depends heavily on paying attention to age groups, developing talents, progressing them until they reach the first level, and then marketing them internally or externally through professional contracts that go back to managing the club and the player at the same time. With good money, and this matter is excellent because these clubs, throughout their long history, are considered a football school.(Salih et al., 2024)

Benefiting from the infrastructure of some clubs and properly using their halls and facilities brings in money, no matter how relatively small it is given the size of the club's disbursements, but it is another source of money. Al-Karkh Club is considered the biggest beneficiary in this aspect due to its location in the heart of the capital, Baghdad, in a commercial location, and its ownership of a large number of shops that It generates money for them in addition to the advertising pieces that are rented by private sector companies on a monthly basis, and they also have problems with the Ministry of Education because of these imports and are prohibited. The Ministry stops funding the club from time to time due to the club receiving direct imports from shops and advertising pieces. (HalahAtiyah et al., 2024)

- Taking advantage of sponsoring companies to put their logo on players 'clothes and achieving relatively good imports. It is noted that sponsoring companies are the ones who benefit most from this process, as they are looking for elite clubs only or for football clubs in the Premier League, and they are not interested at all in the rest of the games, whether they are group or individual, as well as companies. The sponsor takes advantage of the sponsorship price because there are not many competitors, and during our dialogue with some club administrations, such as the Kahraba Club, they complained of their inability to agree with the companies sponsoring the private sector. Because of their direct affiliation with the Ministry of Electricity, the Ministry is arguing with them to develop a slogan (rationalizing consumption affiliated with the Ministry). It was noted that some of the club's administrators have no desire to develop the marketing process for fear of problems with the Ministry.(Mahmood & Kadhim, 2023)

- Benefiting from renting advertising pieces in agreement with advertising marketing companies during the club's matches or at the club's website.

- Match tickets are a mechanism that interacts with the federations organizing the games.

- Benefiting from television broadcast revenues for matches, which amounts are considered very small, even though they are limited to football and basketball and their Premier League only. As for the rest of the games, they do not have any direct transmission or any imports for broadcast rights.

Selling sportswear that bears the club's logo is not managed properly and does not generate many profits for the club, in addition to the fact that the majority of buyers are fans of the club, so this is limited to the big clubs only.

Sports clubs in Iraq seek to make their marketing successful through the work of committees determined by members of the Sports Authority, but they do not care about developing a real marketing strategy through the presence of specialists in this field who have full time for this process. We have also noticed that there is no marketing department or marketing director whose primary duty is the complex marketing process. In many areas of the club, they can bring in other new imports. (Kadhim, 2024a)

Tawfiq (2005) (1) defines strategy as "a unified, integrated, and comprehensive plan that links the organization's competitive advantages and environmental challenges, which is designed to ensure the achievement of the organization's basic goals through their good implementation by the organization, and that all strategies are based on the four stages of success (select what you want". Do something, notice what happens, change what you do until you get what you want (Abdul Rahman, 2005, p. 166).

Al-Shafi'i and Hijazi (2009) (2) believe that developing a strategy for sports marketing and investment is one of the most important directions to achieve marketing competition, advanced marketing development, and effective investment in the sports institutions sector, if we want to raise the level of sports and raise the level of local, international and global sports teams, and this requires adopting advanced procedures. To raise the level of sports awareness by clarifying the importance of sports practice, changing the goals of the sports institution and supporting it economically, achieving these goals necessarily requires providing Professional management in addition to volunteerism, achieving competition between different sports institutions, paying attention to self-development in addition to providing high-level and quality sports services, achieving self-satisfaction with the activities provided and increasing them (Al-Shafi'i and Hijazi, 2009, p. 49). & (Abdulhussein et al., 2024)

Table (4) shows the results of the (T) test. When comparing the achieved arithmetic means, it turns out that there are statistically significant differences in favor of the arithmetic mean for the competitive advantage scale, as the moral value reached (0.000), which is smaller than the significance level (0.05), in addition to The results of the achieved arithmetic mean level are greater than the hypothesized mean value of the scale.

This is due to:

All institutional clubs have a competitive advantage towards development and competition between themselves and other clubs of the same class through the leagues in which they participate, through the games in the club, from the various group games or the various individual games, and as everyone knows, we do not have a club that contains all the team and individual Olympic games together. (Mousa & Kadhim, 2023)

The competitive advantage that exists in the clubs constitutes a support for the process of development in its many forms, whether from the sporting aspect of its sports or from the administrative aspect that leads to sporting development, and despite the disparity in ability between the major clubs that suffer from delayed financing or the need for more financing and the differences in funding amounts from a fan club to another. Another popular club, and also among the small clubs that complain of lack of funding, therefore we see that money constitutes a great advantage and an urgent need for the continuity and development of sports work and to remain in continuous competition. (Farhan et al., 2016)

Janawi Sharif and Janawi Ishaq, 2022 explained that the importance of competitive advantage lies in the elements below (Sharif and Ishaq, 2022, p. 32):

v Creating value for customers that meets their needs and ensures their loyalty, and promotes and improves the reputation and image of the organization in their minds.

v Achieving strategic distinction from competitors in the goods and services provided to customers with the possibility of excellence in the resources, competencies and strategies pursued in light of a highly competitive environment.

v Achieving a market share for the organization as well as high profitability to survive and continue in the market.

v Competitive advantage is the strategic concept that reflects the good and continuous competitive position of an organization vis-à-vis its competitors.

v Outstanding performance of internal resources and strategic competencies within the various systems, strategies, activities and operations of the organization.

It is one of the most important elements of competitive advantage (Jaafar, 2020, page 13)

- Examine the project carefully.
- Understand customer mentality.
- Testing distinctive strengths.
- Monitor competitors' activities.
- Brand.
- Studied prices.
- Collect information.

·Relying on technology.

It is clear from Table (5) of the results of the application sample that there is a significant correlation to the results of the significance level values between the two research measures (sports marketing strategy) and (competitive advantage).(Kadhim, 2024b)

The researcher attributes this to the fact that the moral correlation in the variables is that competitive advantage requires successful management that believes in organizational change to develop a sports marketing strategy that will be a center for achieving additional imports under specialized marketing management.(Kadhim, 2023)

The development of sports in general and the development of the sports marketing process in particular confirms the necessity of the club operating as commercial companies operate and changing or modernizing its organizational structure by having departments or a division or merging a specific department with another important department such as the media department, the marketing department, the media and marketing department, or the investment and marketing department.(Kazim et al., 2019)

If we compare the work of important telecommunications companies that rely heavily on modern technology, such as Asia Cell, Zain Iraq, Korek, Earthlink, or Fastlink, we find that they have several departments, all of which are under the umbrella of marketing and the marketing department, such as:

- Marketing manager for their product (Sim card - Internet... etc.).
- Manager responsible for road advertising pieces, television advertisements, and social media advertisements.
- Sponsorship manager for shops.
- Director of sponsorship of events, conferences and exhibitions.
- Director of juvenile care and communication with the community and citizens.

·sales manager.

What is interesting about the matter is that all managers must express their comments and approval to complete any new work.

These companies and others do not have a long history like the history of institutional sports clubs. Rather, their history is much shorter than some clubs. Here we are not comparing the club to commercial companies, but we are comparing the marketing work and the success of the marketing operations in them, which placed the marketing department and marketing director within its organizational structure since the opening and collected information about The market and developed a correct marketing strategy that can be constantly updated, and competition began from the start of work.(Kadhim et al., 2021)

Having a similar marketing strategy, albeit in a simpler form and with specialized and efficient management, will significantly increase the club's revenues and reduce reliance on government grants and funding, thus developing the club's games and facilities, increasing competition with everyone locally, regionally and internationally, gaining qualified athletes and coaches, and increasing the fan base.

The presence of specialists in the marketing process does not necessarily give them full powers, but they have full powers to exercise their duties and assist them in various available ways. Therefore, the president and members of the club's management body are the ones who make the final approval decision.

Conclusions

1. Institutional clubs rely heavily on government funding.
2. Lack of suitable infrastructure for investment and obtaining additional funding for a large number of institutional clubs.
3. Weakness in rehabilitating the infrastructure built for a number of fan clubs and benefiting financially from the development of infrastructure.

Recommendations

1. A marketing manager who specializes in marketing work and has experience in this field. His duty is to develop plans, ideas, and follow up on the marketing and investment process in a way that is interconnected with the club's programs. The club management can rely on a person from the club after refining his talent through intensive courses in modern marketing.
2. An employee fluent in Arabic and English and proficient in electronic designs and technological work.
3. Two assistant employees whose responsibilities are determined by the Marketing Director and are ready to work inside or outside the club.

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