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The Factors Affecting Brand Associations of the Iranian Football League Organization

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Branding is the main process of profitability and it can be defined as critical basis for sport industry. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the factors affecting the brand associations of the Iranian football league organization. The research population of the study included the faculty members of universities, members of the board of directors of the football federation, the board and staff of the league organization, and the managers and experts of the football federation. The research sample was selected through convenience sampling. A researcher-developed questionnaire was distributed for collecting the research data. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by ten professors of sports management and the reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha test. To analyze the research data, Partial Least Squares test (PLS) was applied. Findings showed that the research variables included tradition, competitive balance, stadium atmosphere, management, competition, star player, education, competition, game show, community pride, socialization, player development, getting rid of everyday life, nostalgia, interest in a special team, excitement, acceptance in the peer group, logo, and product delivery had a positive and significant effect on the brand associations of Iranian football league organization. Therefore, it is suggested that managers and officials of sports federations use the results of this research to enhance the brand positioning of the football leagues.

Introduction

Football is an industry in which branding and brand identity are extremely important. Among sports, football is the most popular that provide football organizations with a remarkable revenue generation. Major football tournaments, such as the World Cup, generate huge profits, and professional football leagues attract the attention of millions of spectators (Wann, 2006). Brand value is evidenced by loyalty, positive perceptions, the ability to attract new customers and demand higher prices, ease of

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entering new markets, and preventing new competitors from entering (Keller, Parameswaran, & Jacob, 2011). In the sports industry today, fans pay more for the symbolic aspect, the most important of which is the brand of each club. Branding is the main process of profitability and is the basis of the current economy (Filo, Funk, & Alexandris, 2008). In the sports industry, any team can be considered as a brand and its fans as customers. Therefore, brand managers in this industry can use branding strategies (Sultan Hosseini, Nasr Isfahani, & Javani, 2013). When a consumer becomes emotionally attached to a brand, he or she is more likely to be satisfied with that brand, which in turn provides the basis for further associations (H.-Y. Kim, 2007). To determine brand associations, a consumer metric may be identified. A filtered group of one or more consumers may be created in which each consumer in the filtered group is subject to the consumer criterion. Based on the calculated ratio, the brand dependence between the consumer criterion and the brand of interest is determined. This dependency can be used to target marketing materials for one brand to second brand consumers. The development of league brands is a strategic approach aimed at expanding the league's consumer markets and strengthening consumer participation with the product. This, in turn, should help clubs within the league attract and retain consumers (Kunkel, Funk, & Hill, 2013). Brand orientation consists of brand preference and brand associations. Brand preference is the brand-oriented bias that a customer has towards a particular brand and also defines the intention to buy a customer map to buy from a particular brand and to spend considerable time and attention on that brand. Brand Preference A personal psychological interpretation of a brand includes both practical and symbolic aspects. Brand preference is defined as the extent to which the customer considers the services provided by the current company to be superior to and superior to the services provided by other companies (Marković, Raspor, & Šegarić, 2010). Brand satisfaction and brand trust lead to brand dependence. That is, if the brand leads to satisfaction and consumers trust it, brand dependence and preference will develop. Therefore, brand satisfaction has a positive effect on brand dependence and preference and brand trust has the same positive effect on brand dependence and preference (Marković et al., 2010). The consequences of brand associations and preference are loyalty and willingness to pay extra for the brand (Sánchez-Hernández, Martínez-Tur, Peiró, & Moliner, 2010). A positive emotional experience while visiting the store may facilitate affiliation with a particular brand. Emotions when dealing with the brand in stores affect customer responses and create biases in future marketing processes. This is done through inferential semantic mechanisms such as psychological cues. Which leads to the retrieval of memories related to positive emotions (Lim, Tan, & Tan, 2013). Consumers' dependence on the brand depends in part on their perceptions of the brand's personality and the extent to which they interact with the role and promotion of the individual through the brand's personality. Given that people usually consider themselves dependent on positively perceived objects or ideas. Brand personality traits should facilitate this dependence and enhance the impact of positive brand emotions (Ladhari, 2008). Brand associations, that is, links, relationships, and brand identity, is a powerful predictor of brand purchase in the past and future. Therefore, brand associations has a positive effect on current and future purchases (El Saghier & Nathan, 2013). Brand associations reflects the consumer's relationship with the brand, which leads to repeat purchases. Brand associations is an emotional connection between the brand and the consumer that goes beyond the brand attitude and emerges with a sense of desire and pleasure. Accordingly, the consumer about the brand at the level of self-concept engages with the brand and becomes dependent on it in such a way that it is not willing to cut ties with it (Ha & Jang, 2009). Brand commitment is the product of non-random and continuous behavioral responses. Emotional commitment reflects the consumer's commitment to a particular brand. The results show that brand personality has a positive effect on brand preference, brand dependence, commitment, and purchase intention (Ladhari, 2008). Brand Associations: Associations refers to the degree of closeness and entanglement of actions and communications, and the degree of coherence and interaction between the brand and customers. Brand associations, that is, links, relationships, and brand identity, is a strong predictor of past and future brand purchases. Therefore, brand associations has a positive effect on current and future purchases. The brand stakeholders and its customers have a commitment to each other and a desire

to improve or maintain the quality of the relationship over time, and when this commitment is violated by either party, they feel uncomfortable (Mirjavadi, Saidnia, & Abedi, 2019).

In recent years, the development of the consumer-brand relationship has been an important issue in branding theories. Hence, research has focused on the type of consumer relationship with their consumer brand. The types of relationships that can be mentioned are brand loyalty, brand trust, satisfaction, and etc. Meanwhile, brand associations is a new topic that has received less attention Iranian football setting. Because the football clubs of the Premier League in the country, having a large number of fans, have a high capacity in the field of revenue generation through activities related to brand management. To fulfill the research objective, the researcher is trying to investigate the factors affecting the brand associations of the Iranian Football League.

Methodology

The research was applied correlation. The statistical population of the study included the faculty members of universities, members of the board of directors of the Football Federation, the board and staff of the league organization, and the managers and experts of the Football Federation. The research subjects were selected through convenience sampling. By reviewing the literature, a researcher-made questionnaire was developed. The validity of the research questionnaire has been confirmed by ten expert professors, and its reliability has been done through Cronbach's alpha test. To analyze the research data, we used the partial least squares test (PLS).

Results

According to the descriptive results, the highest percentage of respondents in the gender section were male with 88% frequency. Descriptive results also showed that 82% of the respondents were married. In terms of age, the results showed that the age group of 31 to 40 years with 46%, have the highest frequency. From the education table of the respondents, it can be said that about 62% of the respondents in this survey had a doctoral degree. About 40% of the job table were faculty members. From the field of study, 93% were in the field of physical education.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of group, gender, age, marriage, the field of study, degree, Occupational side

	Description	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	88	88%
	Female	12	12%
Marital status	Single	18	18%
	Married	82	82%
Age	20 to 30 years	5	5%
	31 to 40 years	46	46%
	41 to 50 years	30	30%
	More than 50 years	19	19%
Field of Study	Physical Education	93	93%
	Non-physical education	7	7%
Degree of education	BS	13	13%
	MA	32	32%
	PhD	62	62%
Occupational side	Expert	18	18%
	Manager	14	14%
	Faculty member	40	40%
	Connoisseur	22	22%
	Other	6	6%

Table 2. Original Sample, Standard Deviation, T Statistics & P Values

|	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Brand associations -> Admission in the peer group	0.509	0.084	6.091	0.000
Brand associations -> Competition	0.819	0.033	24.762	0.000
Brand associations -> Competitive balance	0.858	0.029	29.843	0.000
Brand associations -> Education and training	0.820	0.037	22.182	0.000
Brand associations -> Get rid of everyday life	0.707	0.049	14.578	0.000
Brand associations -> Interest in a particular team	0.648	0.076	8.500	0.000
Brand associations -> Logo	0.508	0.099	5.115	0.000
Brand associations -> Nostalgia	0.674	0.057	11.887	0.000
Brand associations -> Player progress	0.734	0.053	13.753	0.000
Brand associations -> Pride of the community	0.774	0.054	14.453	0.000
Brand associations -> Product delivery	0.478	0.072	6.611	0.000
Brand associations -> Race	0.839	0.050	16.687	0.000
Brand associations -> Show game	0.797	0.036	21.973	0.000
Brand associations -> Socialize	0.758	0.049	15.452	0.000
Brand associations -> Stadium atmosphere	0.856	0.029	29.363	0.000
Brand associations -> Star player	0.835	0.036	23.203	0.000
Brand associations -> Thrill	0.648	0.063	10.362	0.000
Brand associations -> Tradition	0.861	0.028	31.062	0.000
Brand associations -> _Management	0.855	0.026	32.987	0.000
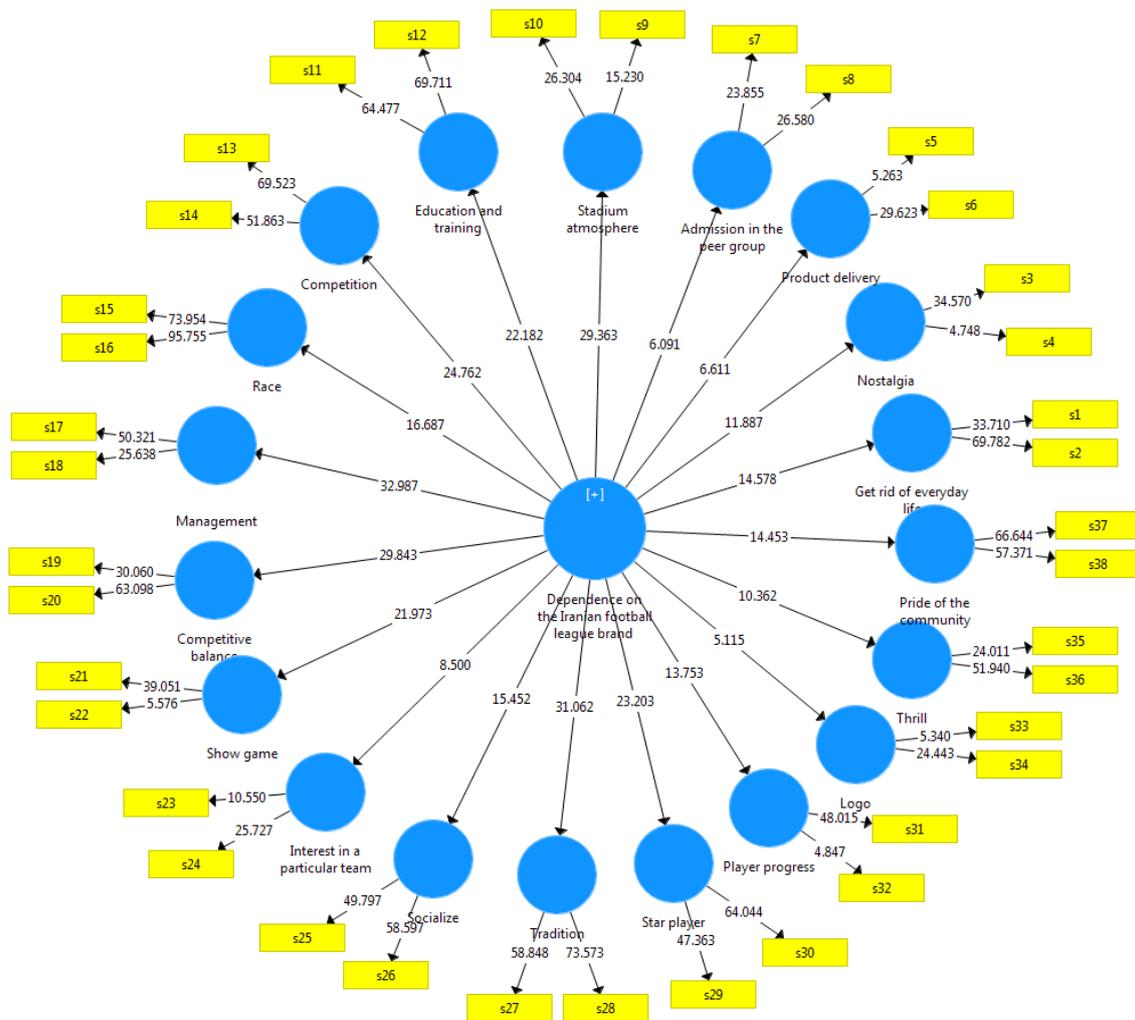
Fig. 1. T Statistics of the research model

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study showed that the factors of tradition, competitive balance, stadium atmosphere, management, competition, star player, education, competition, game show, community pride, socialization, player development, getting rid of everyday life, nostalgia, interest in a particular team, Excitement, acceptance in the peer group, logo and product delivery have an impact on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League.

Findings showed that the factor of tradition is effective on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. The background of my favorite team shows the stability, reliability, and performance of the past to the present. Past team performance can affect team brand evaluation. It is suggested that the managers and officials of the league organization encourage the fans by providing background and adding their information. In this regard, Esfahani et al. (2014) conducted a study entitled designing the Brand Identity Model of the Iranian Sports Industry (Case Study: Premier Football League). Findings showed that success factors, color, name and logo, delivery, clothing, fans and rivals, geographical links and history, star and tradition players, performance, stadium and non-player staff in the country's sports industry have a significant impact that has the results are similar to this study (Moshabbeki Esfahani, Vahdati, Khodadad Hosseini, & Ehsani, 2014). In addition, Rose, James, and Vargas (2006) conducted a study entitled "Developing the Measurement Scale of Team Business Associations in Professional Sports." Findings showed that non-player personnel, team success, team history, stadium community, team play characteristics, brand, commitment,

organizational characteristics, scores, social interaction, and competition affect team brand associations. Which achieved alignment results (Ross, James, & Vargas, 2006).

The results showed that the competitive equilibrium factor affects the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. The more competitive the teams that make up the league, the harder it is to predict matches, and as a result, the league will be more attractive. In this regard, it is suggested to the managers and officials of the league to increase the quality and attractiveness of the competitions by creating a competitive balance in the league matches. In this regard, Rose et al (2006) conducted a study entitled Development of a Team Brand Dependency Scale in Professional Sports. Findings showed that competitive balance has an effect on the brand associations of teams that is consistent with the results of this study (Ross et al., 2006). Also, Meehan et al (2014) in a study entitled Competitive Balance and Attendance in Premier League Football Games concluded that one of the important factors to increase the tendency of fans to attend stadiums is the existence of competitive balance; Therefore, the existence of competitive balance in different sports is essential, which is consistent with the results of this study (Meehan Jr, Nelson, & Richardson, 2007).

The results also showed that the atmosphere of the stadium affects the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. The attractive atmosphere of the stadium is one of the influential factors for the presence of the fans of their favorite team. The managers and officials of the league organization are suggested to create facilities and conditions in the stadium to increase the attractiveness of the stadiums to make those who are eager to watch the matches in the stadiums. In this regard, Lee, Gibson, and Barnhill (2017) in a study entitled "Experience of spectator flow and stadium atmosphere perceived: the moderating role of team identification concluded that stadium flow is directly related to spectator perception of stadium atmosphere" (Lee, Gipson, & Barnhill, 2017). In addition, Rose, James, and Vargas (2006) researched the development of a team brand measurement scale in professional sports. Findings showed that stadium atmosphere has an effect on the brand associations of teams that the results are consistent with this study (Ross et al., 2006).

Findings showed that the management factor is effective on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. Proper management in the sports industry and league competitions can be done by using the facilities, equipment, and skilled manpower to attract the league and satisfy the fans. Managers and officials of the league organization are suggested to increase the performance of their organization with proper management and proper assignment. In this regard, Esmailpour et al. (2018) in a study entitled "Presenting a conceptual model of customer experience management of brand dependence based on the data theory of the foundation". According to the research results, the customer experience management process affects brand dependence (Esmailpour, Saeednia, & Haghshenas, 2018). Also, Izadi et al. (2014), a study entitled Factors Affecting the Success of Communication Management with Iranian Football League Fans, achieved consistent results with this study (Izadi, Ehsani, Kuzechian, & Tojari, 2014).

The results showed that the match factor is effective on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. In league matches, any team can play with any team, and unpredictable defeats and victories in these competitions add to the excitement of the games and the league. Therefore, it is suggested to the managers and officials of the league organization to pay attention to the quality of league games and their excitement and unpredictability. In this way, they add to the attractiveness of the league. In this regard, Koenig-Lewis et al. (2017) in a study entitled Sports events and interaction between spectators: a study of the predecessors of spectator value creation. The results showed that the evaluation of in-field performance (football match) has a greater effect on the overall satisfaction than the quality of off-field services, which is consistent with the results of this study (Koenig-Lewis, Asaad, & Palmer, 2018). Biscaia et al. (2016) also reached similar conclusions in a study called the role of fan club membership on perceptions of team brand equity in football (Biscaia et al., 2016).

Findings showed that the star player factor affects the associations with the brand of the Iranian Football League. The presence of star players in the teams attracts the attention of the team fans and attends the stadiums and ads to the attractiveness of the games. According to the obtained results, it

is suggested that the managers and officials of the league organization, considering the role of the star players, try to have a more colorful presence in the competitions to make the league more attractive and exciting. In this regard, Carlson and Donavan (2013) in a study entitled Human Winners in Sports: Personality and Athlete Brand Recognition concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between human brands (athletes) and the presence of spectators (Carlson & Donavan, 2013). Also, Azadi and Javani (2018) in a study entitled the effect of social responsibility on the personal brand of athletes with the mediating role of reputation and brand attachment (Case study: Ali Daei) concluded that the activity of athletes in the field of social responsibility is one of the factors Can make them a popular brand among fans and increase the dependence of fans on the personal brand of the athlete and thus benefit the community and the athlete himself. Similar results were achieved with this study (Azadi & Javani, 2018). Daniels, Kunkel, and Karg (2019) also explored new brands: contextual differences and the development of brand communication over time. The findings show that they highlight the underlying differences between brands and show the impact of star players on teams in sports brand architecture (Daniels, Kunkel, & Karg, 2019). In addition, Fallahi, Asadi, and Khabiri (2009) in a study entitled Comparison of factors affecting the presence of occasional, regular, and fanatical spectators in Premier League football matches concluded that financial factors, stadium facilities, and team affiliation favorite players, The good performance of the favorite team, the evaluation of the performance of the players and coaches, the loyalty of the players to the team and the desire for victory were identified as influential factors that are consistent with the results of this study (Fallahi, 2009).

Findings showed that the education factor is effective on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. In today's society, sports and education are closely related. In addition to watching sports matches, people also learn proper social behaviors. The managers and officials of the league organization are suggested that the co-workers, players, coaches, and officials of the clubs have suitable conditions for the game as well as a quality league so that we do not witness inappropriate behavior in the matches. In this regard, Kunkel et al. (2017) in a study examined the impact of the league brand on the relationship between team brand and behavioral goals: a consistent approach to the study of brand dependence and business relationships. The findings of this study showed that the brand characteristics of the league affect the behavioral goals of the team, which achieved consistent results with this study (Kunkel, Funk, & Lock, 2017). Yağızi (2020) also researched the role of fan identification in the relationship between league brand associations and psychological commitment. The results showed that identifying league fans is a vital psychological link in developing the psychological commitment of league consumers to a sports league and a mediator between brand dependence and nostalgia, peer group acceptance and acceptance, and psychological commitment that was consistent with the results of this study(Yağız, 2020).

Findings showed that the competitive factor is effective on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. Healthy competition and an attractive and exciting game will fill the stadiums and attract the fans. Managers and officials of the league organization are suggested to try to create healthy and good competitive conditions in the league to attract fans. In this regard, Esfahani et al. (2014) conducted a study entitled designing a Brand Identity Model for the Iranian Sports Industry (Case Study: Premier Football League). Findings showed that the competitive factor has been identified as one of the influential factors (Moshabbeki Esfahani et al., 2014). Rose, James, and Vargas (2006) also developed a team dependency scale in professional sports. Findings showed that non-player personnel, team success, team history, stadium community, team play characteristics, brand, commitment, organizational characteristics, scores, social interaction, and competition affect team brand associations. Which is in line with the results of this study (Ross et al., 2006).

The results showed that the game display factor is effective on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. In the field of game show agents, it is suggested that the managers and officials of the league organization show high quality, aggressive and unpredictable matches and create a sense of excitement and enthusiasm among the fans, as well as provide services that everyone can use in team matches. To watch their favorite to increase their desire to attend stadiums or watch matches

through the media. In this regard, Martinez and Cros (2018) in a study entitled Football demand in Portugal: a new insight into the uncertainty (Martins & Cró, 2018) of the result and also Dashtbany et al. (2016) in another study entitled The effect of ambiguity on the result of increasing levels Competitive balance on the demand for spectators in the Iranian Football Premier League concluded that the match factor has an effect on team and brand dependence and the presence of stadium fans, which is similar to the results of this study (Dashtbany, Abrishami, & Sajjadi, 2016).

Findings showed that the factor of public pride affects the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. National pride can be created, grown, and strengthened after a victory in a competition, and it can create excitement in society, however short and fleeting, and create happy memories in the public mind, or it can cause frustration and sadness. Be brief and transient, though. In this regard, it is suggested to the managers and officials of the league organization to increase the quality of the league competitions by raising measures and raising the level of the competitions and to evoke a feeling of joy and pride in the minds of the public. In this regard, Shahverdilo (2016) in a study entitled the relationship between the performance of the passing team in the national league with sports identity and pride of citizens of Hamedan concluded that sports teams, in general, have a direct relationship with national pride and sports identity, which is similar to the results of this study are (30). In this regard, Asefabad and Dabestani (2015) studied the impact of holding the Iranian youth football team matches on the identity and pride of the people of Bushehr. The results showed that there is a significant and direct relationship between the results with all dimensions of national pride and is part of the identity of a sports nation and at the national and provincial levels, the sport has a significant impact on the identity of people in each region, which is consistent with the results (Asefabadi, 2015).

Findings showed that the factor of socialization affects the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. Because attending sports forums leads to better social relationships with friends, acquaintances, and people present at the sports venue. However, the managers and officials of the league organization are suggested to pay more attention to the presence of more spectators in stadiums and sports associations. In this case, Alizadeh Golrizi, et al (2014) conducted a study entitled "Comparison of loyalty motivations, support history and the presence of fans of popular clubs in the Iranian Professional Football League." The results showed the factors of sense of belonging to the club, socialization, escapism, and normal life routine, football science, excitement, proxy victory (individual victory), club management, the influence of others, interest in others (player, color, name, and Sign) affects fan loyalty (Alizadeh Golrizi, Saatchian, & Elahi, 2014). Also, Reyhani et al. (2013) in a study entitled "Motivations for the support of fans of Iranian Premier League football clubs" concluded that a total of six factors: team loyalty, social pride, team identity, entertainment pleasure, social interaction, and external perception of the team as motivational subscales of fans, their presence and support is consistent with the results of this study (Reyhani, Eydi, Ramezaninezad, Mirzayee, & Abbasi, 2013). Neale and Funk (2006) also studied the loyalty motivations of Australian football spectators and found that socialization was related to fans' willingness to attend (Neale & Funk, 2006). And also, Milad (2019) in a study entitled "Assessment of the desire of football fans to attend the football stadiums of the away team" And related factors that achieved consistent results with this study (Milad, 2019).

Findings showed that the player development factor is effective on associations with the brand of the Iranian Football League. In the field of player development, it is suggested to the managers and officials of the league organization to build players by giving the field to young people and new players in teams and competitions. Which in itself attracts the attention of fans and youthfulness in the teams. Therefore, Kim et al. (2018) in a study entitled the effect of reputation on brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, brand loyalty, and destination attachment concluded that the reputation of individuals affects the destination brand and the cohesion of festival communities. Pass (S. S. Kim, Choe, & Petrick, 2018). Kunkel et al. (2014) also achieved alignment results in a study entitled Conceptual Understanding of Consumer League Brand Unions (Kunkel, Funk, & King, 2014).

Findings showed that the factor of getting rid of everyday life is effective on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. Given that one of the strongest motivations for the presence of spectators in the stadiums is to get rid of everyday life. For this reason, it is suggested to the managers and officials of the league organization that the entertainment aspect of the league should be increased. In this regard, Alizadeh Golrizi et al (2014) conducted a study entitled Comparison of loyalty motivations, support history, and the presence of fans of popular clubs in the Iranian Professional Football League. The results showed the factors of sense of belonging to the club, socialization, escapism, and normal life routine, football science, excitement, proxy victory (individual victory), club management, the influence of others, interest in others (player, color, name, and Sign) affects fan loyalty (Alizadeh Golrizi et al., 2014). Also, in another study, Khoshtinat and Shahabadi (2019) examined the psychological factors affecting the pattern of loyal behaviors of women professional sports fans with a self-sufficiency approach in financing. Findings showed that psychological factors of identification with the team and the identity of individuals as well as other motivational factors such as escape from everyday life, nationalism, and excitement affect loyal behavior and team and brand dependence, which is consistent with the results of this study (Khoshtinat & Shah Abadi, 2019).

Findings showed that the factor of nostalgia affects the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. Since today we are witnessing the importance of sports and the growing number of different sports as well as the population of fanatical fans, in this regard, nostalgia is a factor for happiness and a sense of belonging and reminds people of good memories of their favorite team. For this reason, it is suggested to the managers and officials of the league organization that they can create a good feeling in the fans in creating these good memories and reminding them of the good events of the past. In this regard, Filo and Funk (2008) conducted a study entitled the role of brand trust in the relationship between brand dependence and brand loyalty in sports and fitness. The results showed that brand trust mediates the relationship between brand loyalty and brand management and popularity (Filo et al., 2008). Also, Kordnaeij, Nejat, and Shahi (2018) in a study entitled the effect of nostalgia and brand heritage on the formation of the desire to buy; Case study: Nokia mobile phone brand concluded that personal nostalgia and historical brand nostalgia have a positive and significant effect on brand heritage. Finally, brand dependence has a positive and significant effect on brand desire, which is consistent with the results of this study (Kordnaeij, Nejat, & Shahi, 2018).

Findings showed that the factor of interest in a particular team affects the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. Some teams are popular and people come to the stadium to watch them play closely with other fans. In this regard, the managers and officials of the league organization are suggested to take the necessary care by informing and informing and creating facilities for the presence of their fans in the stadiums. In this regard, Bina et al. (2020) examined the prioritization and recognition of the relationship between motivations and factors affecting the presence of fans: a case study of Shahravard Tehran. The results showed that the motivations for supporting the team, interest in football, the beauty of football, and the excitement of the game are related to the presence and the interest in the team of their hometown (urbanism) is also very welcome (Bina, Elahi, & Saffari, 2020). Similarly, Yagiz (2020) in a study entitled The Role of Fan Identification in Relationships between League Brand Associations and Psychological Commitments achieved consistent results (Yağız, 2020).

Findings showed that the factor of excitement is effective on associations with the brand of the Iranian Football League. The managers and officials of the league organization are suggested to increase the enthusiasm of the competitions by creating an exciting and attractive competition to draw the fans of the teams to the stadiums. In this regard, Alizadeh Golrizi et al (2014) conducted a study entitled Comparison of loyalty motivations, support history, and the presence of fans of popular clubs in the Iranian Professional Football League. The results showed the factors of sense of belonging to the club, socialization, escapism, and normal life routine, football science, excitement, proxy victory (individual victory), club management, the influence of others, interest in others (player, color, name, and Sign) affects fan loyalty (Alizadeh Golrizi et al., 2014). Bina et al. (2020) also examined the

prioritization and recognition of the relationship between motivations and factors affecting the presence of fans: a case study of Shahravard Tehran. The results showed that the motivations for supporting the team, interest in football, the beauty of football, and excitement of the game are related to the level of presence and interest in the team of their city (urbanism) is also very welcome which is consistent with the results of this study (Bina et al., 2020).

The results showed that the acceptance factor in the peer group is effective on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. Peers influence each other in unique and major ways in shaping each other's personality, social behavior, values, and attitudes. Sports communities will pave the way for the creation of cohesive and sustainable social relationships. The managers and officials of the league organization are suggested to draw the youth to sports and sports associations by advertising and creating suitable conditions. However, Yagiz (2020) conducted a study entitled The Role of Fan Identification in Relationships between League Brand Associations and Psychological Commitments. The results showed that identifying league fans is a vital psychological link in developing the psychological commitment of league consumers to a sports league and a mediator between brand dependence and nostalgia, peer escape and acceptance, and psychological commitment (Yağız, 2020). Doyle et al. (2012) also examined the stability of brand associations of sports teams in a study. The findings indicate that the factors of head coach, escape, acceptance of peer group, and pride in place, star players, success, and identification of fans were influential, which is consistent with the results of this study (Doyle, Funk, & McDonald, 2012).

The results showed that the logo factor is effective on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. Logo design is very important. The unique logo makes the team look better. The team logo represents the identity of the players and the team. The feelings of the fans of a team are well represented by this logo. It is the logo that greatly enhances team unity and promotes loyalty and support. Managers and officials of the league organization are suggested to be more careful in designing the logo. The unwanted non-professional logo also shows the team as unprofessional. In this regard, Bakhshizadeh et al. (2017) in a study entitled the effect of visual dimensions of environmental advertising in commercial complexes on brand awareness, brand preference, and customer loyalty. Findings showed that the visual dimensions of environmental advertising, including brand, logo, typography, color, and slogan of environmental advertising, have a significant and positive effect on brand awareness and brand preference (Bakhshizadeh, Kordnaeij, Khodadad Hossaini, & Ahmadi, 2017). Song et al. (2019) also found in another study entitled the effect of image, satisfaction, trust, love, and respect on the formation of loyalty for brand coffee shops that the brand image is a useful source for satisfaction and trust. Is. In addition, it affected trust satisfaction, and brand loyalty and trust were positively correlated with brand loyalty, which is consistent with the results of this study (Song, Wang, & Han, 2019).

Findings showed that the product delivery factor is effective on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. Based on the research results, it is suggested to the managers and officials of the league organization that the characteristics of a service or sports product such as the beauties of a sports event and the unpredictability of the match result and good game of a sports team cause excitement, entertainment, and enjoyment. It becomes spectacular. Also, to provide appropriate quality services to the spectators based on their needs to increase the satisfaction of the team fans. Also, professional football clubs should try to provide the necessary conditions for the presence and support of the fans of their favorite team by providing the desired facilities and facilities. Finally, football clubs can achieve the satisfaction and loyalty of their fans by offering a game with high technical quality. In this regard, Esfahani et al. (2021) conducted a study entitled designing a Brand Identity Model for the Iranian Sports Industry (Case Study: Premier Football League). Findings showed that success factors, color, name and logo, product delivery, clothing, fans and competitors, geographical links and history, star and tradition players, performance, stadium, and non-player staff have a significant impact on the country's sports industry. They achieved similar results with this study (Moshabbeki Esfahani et al., 2014). Doyle et al. (2012) also examined the stability of brand affiliation with sports teams. The findings indicate that the factors of head coach, escape, acceptance

of peer group, and pride in place, star players, success, and identification of fans were influential, which is consistent with the results of this study (Doyle et al., 2012).

The findings showed that the variables (tradition, competitive balance, stadium atmosphere, management, competition, star player, education, competition, game show, community pride, socialization, player development, getting rid of everyday life, Nostalgia, interest in a special team, excitement, acceptance in the peer group, logo and product delivery) have a positive and significant effect on the brand associations of the Iranian Football League. In this regard, sports managers and officials can improve the team-fan relationships and quality of the league in football context to achieve team success, and fan satisfaction by focusing on brand association components.

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