



Strategic Innovation Framework in Sports Business: A Grounded Theory

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to design a framework for strategic innovation in sports businesses based on Grounded theory. Data was collected using interviews, which involved 19 participants including sports management professors, sports business owners, as well as sports managers. Based on Grounded theory, 156 open codes, 18 substantive codes, and 6 theoretical codes were identified. The factors affecting strategic innovation in sports businesses included institutional factors (culture, institutions, and laws), innovative human resources (providing innovative ideas, recognizing innovative opportunities, and strategic thinking), knowledge of the team and business environment (team, market, and macroeconomics), infrastructure (education, technology, and university-industry connection), and management of innovative business processes (marketing research, branding, empowerment, and human resource capability). The development of strategic innovation in sports businesses is a topic that has received less attention, and understanding the factors affecting it can provide the basis for promoting and developing the innovation ecosystem in sports.

Introduction

Nowadays, innovation is a basic and important condition for the organizations' survival. In the current competitive environment, innovation can help the competitive advantage and sustainability of businesses. In this regard, sports organizations are constantly seeking to develop and create innovative ideas. Different strategies are used for innovation in sports organizations because of the innovative nature of sports. In other words, strategic management

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and modern sports innovation have been combined and created a concept called strategic innovation (Tjønndal, 2016).

Strategic innovation seeks new rules of the game to create values. Developing new value is accompanied by change. New game strategies are often looking for a way to create value and allocate it. Creating new value can include new markets and industries, destruction, or strengthening of product market positions. As a result, strategic innovation is a game-changing innovation in products or services, business models, business processes, and determining the position in front of competitors in order to improve performance (Afuah, 2009).

A new game strategy is a set of activities that lead to the creation and allocation of value through new methods and strategies. The strategy of the rules of the game determines the performance of the company. Adopting the strategy of the rules requires creating a new chain of value-creation activities differently than in the past. Entrepreneurs who create new rules of the game for the first time will be the first pioneers and other business owners will follow them (Afuah, 2009).

The options and processes that companies adopt to create and allocate value are different and diverse. Among the options that can end up changing the rules of the game are: technology (invention, selection of products/processes, resources, complexity), product design (cognitive beauty, performance, physical characteristics, quality), product manufacturing process (assembly, capacity, integration, location, parts production, procurement, raw materials), marketing (advertising, triage, brand, packaging, prices, sales force), distribution (channels, integration, transportation, inventory, storage) and services (price, speed, warranty, independence) (Afuah, 2009).

Sports businesses need creativity and innovation to adapt develop and grow. Various strategies have been used for businesses or sports organizations in ways that have changed the perspective, organization, and view of sports (Tjønndal, 2016). Innovations in sports can be done fundamentally and gradually. Innovation leads to a big change in sports products and services. Incremental innovation focuses on small changes (Ratten, 2020b). In the discussion of strategic innovation, the goal is to create a big change that the rest of the sports organizations follow and turn to gradual innovation. The policy of countries is to create innovation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in such a way that this type of innovation leads to a big change and creates favorable economic and social effects. In other words, factors affecting the promotion of strategic innovation are considered an important issue by politicians to create financial advantages for businesses (Ratten, 2016).

Few studies have investigated strategic innovation in sports, including the research of Ringuet-Riot et al. (2014), which considered the structural approach for strategic innovation in sports, including needs assessment, needs analysis and innovation and review. All three phases reflect the opportunities to address performance gaps through technology innovation. Altuntaş et al. (2013) concluded that innovation is highly dependent on company orientation and acts as a mediating variable to promote organizational performance. No relationship between strategic orientation and innovation and organizational performance was observed. AlQershi et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between strategic innovation and business performance and concluded that strategic innovation has a significant effect on the performance of small and medium-sized businesses, in this regard; they considered the role of structural capital as a mediating variable. Most studies have been done in the field of business and the promotion of different businesses and they have stated the factors affecting the promotion of business. Meanwhile, the current problem in sports businesses is the lack of sufficient attention to innovation and innovative strategies in sports businesses. Since the economy of developing countries is not knowledge-based, as a result, innovation is not much sought in companies or businesses.

The duration of sports businesses has decreased over time because of the lack of innovative performance in this type of business (Papi et al., 2021). On the other hand, sports innovation is important for organizations, individuals and governments because of the important role of

sports in the global market (Ratten & Ferreira, 2017). In addition, the results of past research show that no research has been done in the field of sports and sports businesses on the issue of strategic innovation. Therefore, considering the importance of the sports industry in today's world and the attractiveness and popularity of international sports events and competitions and the importance of services in sports is an important category for scientific studies. Therefore, the purpose of the current research is to formulate a strategic innovation framework in sports businesses based on the Glazer approach.

Theoretical Foundations and Research Background

Innovation and new technologies in sports

The sports industry has been significantly affected by innovation, especially technological innovation. Technology in sports is evident in various fields such as game experience, consumption, and spectators. Considering the inherent need for technology in sports, understanding how to develop a comprehensive strategy regarding innovation management becomes more important (Ratten, 2020a).

Prominent innovations such as Metaverse, data mining, data science, block chain, Nano, artificial intelligence, evolution in sports platforms, and the Internet of Things (IoT) have affected the world of sports and led to fundamental innovation. Many organizations and sports businesses seek to apply and follow these types of innovations.

For example, the realm of most businesses has changed based on the incorporation of block chain Tapscott and Tapscott (2017) suggested that although Bitcoin and cryptocurrencies may be “transformative,” a greater understanding of the underlying technology is required. In particular, the conceptualization of block chain technology and understanding of its impact on the sports industry has not yet happened (Naraine, 2019). Indeed, Kwok and Koh (2018) outlined the major areas where block chain could be useful in the tourism industry, including ticketing and reservations, baggage tracking, inventory control, validation management, loyalty programs, and digital payments. Considering the field of sports management and communication, there is some simple acceptance for managers to apply this technology. Incorporating block chain technology into the current structure of professional sports ticketing would not be entirely difficult, although such a change may require significant resources in the short term. Improving ticketing processes can help prevent technological glitches for major tournament events and enhance the consumer experience (Cherny & Lerner, 2018). It will also not be difficult for teams and leagues to accept Bitcoin and other digital currencies. However, block chain and technology have not been applied to other areas of the sports industry, particularly the use of technology for new digital payment and loyalty programs (e.g., increased financial activity) and data management. Block chain ,as an example of a big innovation, has the capacity to simultaneously create new revenue streams and increase fan loyalty, and sports managers can use decentralization to automate records and demonstrate greater transparency and good governance to stakeholders (Parent et al., 2018).

Strategic innovation

Strategic innovation is a game-changing innovation in services/products, business models, business processes, and positioning in front of competitors to improve performance. A new game strategy is a set of activities that create and appropriate value in a new way. This is what determines a company's performance in the face of strategic innovation. It involves performing new value chain activities or existing activities differently from the way they have been done in the past, to create value and/or position a firm to allocate (capture) value. Strategic innovation is often about rewriting the rules of the game, and reversing existing ways of creating and adapting value (Tjønndal, 2016).

Creating a new game can't always be about product innovation. For example, Dell introduced direct sales to end customers. Bypassing distributors also created the commercial, custom-build processes where each customer's computer was built to the customer's specifications and only

after the customer ordered and paid for it. Both of these activities gave Dell advantages over its competitors (Ringuet-Riot et al., 2014; Tjønnndal, 2017).

A review of research has shown that no study was conducted on strategic innovation in sports business based on the GT with emphasis on the Glazer approach. Sports will not be recognized as an industry and will not have a competitive advantage without strategic innovation. In fact, most studies have focused on the effects of innovation, but few have looked at sports clubs' ability to innovate and grow.

Methodology

Study design

The study employed a qualitative research method, specifically utilizing the Grounded Theory based on Glazer's approach. The goal of the research in Glazer's approach (1992) is to discover the main concern and behavioral patterns of the participants (Khanifar & Moslemi, 2018). The Glaser approach involves a systematic process of coding and analysis that is designed to allow theories to emerge from the data rather than being imposed on the data from the outset. This means that the researcher avoids preconceived notions or hypotheses about the phenomena under study.

Participants

The participants in this research study were carefully selected from different professional backgrounds to provide diverse perspectives. In fact, the purposeful sampling method was used. The participant included university professors specializing in sports management with extensive research and publication experience related to strategic innovation. Additionally, sports club managers who demonstrated expertise in driving innovation, implementing new business models, or introducing novel strategies within their clubs were selected. Individuals involved in sports business ownership and sports equipment manufacturing also participated in the study. Lastly, members of the employment and entrepreneurship working group in the sports ministry, who possessed relevant professional experience and academic qualifications in the field of sport innovation and entrepreneurship with over six years of experience, were included.

Table 1 shows the profiles of the participants.

Table 1. Profiles of Interviewees

Row	Sex	Age	Position	Major	Degree
1	Men	49	Faculty member	Sport management	Ph.D.
2	Men	46	Faculty member	Sport management	Ph.D.
3	Women	51	Faculty member	Sport management	Ph.D.
4	Women	48	Faculty member	Sport management	Ph.D.
5	Men	52	Faculty member	Sport marketing	Ph.D.
6	Men	39	Member of the employment and entrepreneurship working group in the sports Ministry	Entrepreneurship	Ph.D.
7	Women	41	Member of the employment and entrepreneurship working group in the sports Ministry	Entrepreneurship	Ph.D.
8	Men	52	Sports entrepreneurs	Sport management	Master

9	Men	38	Sports entrepreneurs	Sports marketing management	Master
10	Men	53	Sports manager	Sport management	Ph.D.
11	Women	47	Entrepreneur	Entrepreneurship	Ph.D.
12	Women	45	Entrepreneur	Entrepreneurship	Ph.D.
13	Men	48	Entrepreneur	Entrepreneurship	Master
14	Women	52	Entrepreneur	Entrepreneurship	Master
15	Men	38	Sports organization manager	Sport management	Ph.D.
16	Men	50	Sports organization manager	Sport management	Ph.D.
17	Men	33	The owner of a sports production business	Sports engineering	Master
18	Men	32	The owner of a sports production business	Sport management	Ph.D.
19	Men	41	The owner of a sports production business	Accounting	Diploma

As can be seen, in terms of job position, 5 participants were faculty members of the university, 3 persons were managers of sports organizations, 9 persons were owners of a sports business, and finally 2 participants were members of the employment and entrepreneurship working group.

Research procedure

At the beginning of the research, unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted. In the theoretical and substantive coding, by examining the open codes obtained based on the continuous evaluation of the codes, they were gradually placed into higher-level categories and concepts through several stages of analysis. Selective encoding continued until the main variable and its related variables reached saturation. Finally, in this process, with the realization of theoretical saturation, the design of the model began.

Data collection

The coding was done in open, substantive, and theoretical manner. The research was a continuous process of data collection, followed by memo writing and analysis, which led to new questions and additional data collection. We kept going through the entire data collection and analysis procedure until we had enough data. The study was conducted without the utilization of any software.

For data collecting, we used documents, 19 unstructured in-depth interviews. The interviews were performed from August to December 2020, varying in length from 30 minutes to 1 hours.

To ensure validity in the Glaser approach, we utilized various methods such as member checking, and systematic and transparent coding process. Member checking involves presenting the findings to the participants to verify the accuracy and relevance of the data. Moreover, a systematic and transparent coding process involve documenting the analysis steps and providing clear definitions and explanations for each code. This can help ensure that the codes are grounded in the data and reflect the participants' perspectives.

To achieve reliability, we strive to ensure that our findings are consistent and repeatable across different samples and contexts. One approach employed to attain this objective is by conducting inter-coder reliability checks. This involves having multiple coders independently code a sample of the data, and then comparing their findings to ensure consistency. Overall, ensuring reliability is a critical component of the Glaser approach and is essential for producing high-quality research results. In addition, we used the triangulation approach. In this technique, with the systematic use of multiple methods and theories in the study of a phenomenon, the bias

caused by individualistic views is minimized and the validity of the research findings is increased (Hooman, 2011).

Results

Based on the coding of the first stage, which is known as primary coding, 156 open coders were identified through the review of the interviews conducted with the experts. The results have shown in table 2.

Table 2. Open, Selective, and Theoretical Coding of Strategic Innovation in Sports Businesses

Open codes	Substantive codes	Theoretical codes		
Creative and innovative minds in sports businesses	Providing innovative ideas			
The innovative attitude in sports businesses				
Freedom of action in ideation in the space of sports businesses				
Providing new patterns in customer orientation for the prosperity of sports businesses				
Providing new ideas to customers to keep them in sports businesses				
Acceptance of change in sports businesses				
Opportunity for innovation to enter the sports markets			Identifying innovative opportunities	Innovative human resource
Opportunity for operational innovation in strategic patterns in sports				
The activity of knowledge bases in the sports industry				
Promoting the position of sports in improving the health of society				
Improving the status of sports in the businesses				
Introducing nature and different areas of the sports industry in the society				
Development and expansion of sports businesses				
Existing the opportunity for innovation to enter sports markets				
Career diversity in the sports industry and its businesses				
Using social networks				
Development opportunities for women's sports	Strategic thinking			
Online streaming of sports games				
Opportunities to use sports to develop public health				
Career diversity in the sports industry and its businesses				
The growth and development of different aspects of the sports industry				
Taking advantage of fundamental innovation opportunities in sports businesses				
Holding sports events online				
The developing trend of innovation in sports businesses				
Attention to new and unique value development strategies in sports businesses				
Value innovation in the sports business environment				
Courage to make a change in the sports business environment				

Spending the least cost and the most income	
Having a strategic approach to innovative changes in sports businesses	
Creating the necessary platforms for entrepreneurship in sports businesses	
Creating an entrepreneurial environment in the sports business	
Identification and introduction of new sports jobs	
Development of sports business culture in education	
Improving the culture of providing services in sports businesses	Culture
Developing a culture of participation in sports in society for the growth of sports businesses	
Cultivation in respect of the intellectual rights of innovation and creativity in sports businesses	
The existence of entrepreneurial culture and teamwork	
Supporting innovative ideas in sports businesses	
Establishing a support fund for sports businesses	
Developing financial, monetary and currency policies in support of effective sports businesses	
Government support for sports industry entrepreneurs	
The level of institutions' attention to removing obstacles to the development of strategic innovation in the sports businesses	Institutional factors
Lack of coherent unions in the sports business	
Changing the approach and policy in relation to entrepreneurs in the field of the sports industry	Organizations and institutions
Implementation of privatization policy in a proper way in the sports industry	
The activity of science and technology parks in sports businesses	
Government support for the supply of raw materials in sports businesses	
The management method of managers to help sports business environment	
Developing policies related to innovation and creativity in the country	
Transparent legal system to improve the model of sports businesses	
The transparency of the laws and regulations of the country for the design of sports businesses	Laws and legal issues
Supportive laws for establishing sports businesses	
Clarification in launching and managing sports businesses	
Legal enforcement agents in support of new sports businesses	

The level of support of officials in the development of production workshops in the sports industry		
Transparency in the space of sports businesses		
Approving and implementing the copyright law in the field of innovation in the sports industry		
Legal enforcement problems in supporting new sports businesses		
The level of support of officials in the development of production workshops in the sports industry		
Designing and using personal and organizational logos specific to sports		
A healthy competitive environment in the space of sports businesses		
Developing appropriate goals for sports businesses		
Management methods of managers to help the sports business environment		
Risk-taking of business owners	Business team	
Creating a commitment to use business capacities to create an entrepreneurial environment		
Attention to business needs for business growth and development		
Paying attention to market policies in designing sports business model		
Paying attention to competitors' abilities in creating a sports business environment		
Identifying the weaknesses of the sports market to design a suitable sports business model	Business market	Comprehensive understanding of the business environment
Access to the world's current information in sports businesses		
The growth of sports equipment and supplies in the sports industry		
Identifying the needs of the market to achieve the appropriate goals of the sports business		
The effect of some social behaviours on sports businesses		
The role of economic issues in increasing tension in sports businesses		
The number of financial resources for the design of sports businesses		
The impact of imposed sanctions on the strategic growth of sports businesses	macroeconomics	
Obtaining facilities from banks and financial institutions		
The effect of restrictions on international communication on the growth of sports businesses		
The number of platforms required for foreign investors in sports businesses		
Software technologies in sports businesses	Technology	

Suitable infrastructure for new sports businesses		
Innovation infrastructure in sports businesses		
Technology infrastructure to create new value in sports businesses		
Use of virtual networks		
Collecting information and data in the field of sports in order to use the data		
Using new technologies in sports		
Development and exploitation of virtual space		
Existence of sports standards in relevant businesses		
The use of artificial intelligence in the sports industry		
The exploitation of data science in determining the trend of sports customers		
Technological strengthening of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in sports businesses		
Publishing books and scientific publications to improve the atmosphere of sports businesses		Business infrastructure
Holding seminars and scientific conferences for sports businesses		
Holding sports business training courses		
Holding entrepreneurial skills empowerment courses in sports	Education	
Introducing the activities and actions of successful models or organizations in the sports business		
Increasing the scientific level of the sports community regarding strategic innovation		
Providing appropriate course units on sports businesses		
Increasing university activity in the field of entrepreneurship in sports businesses	University connection with industry and society	
Intellectual development of sports science graduates in sports businesses		
Creating more competition in the sports industry based on knowledge-based activities		
Branding in sports businesses		
Increasing the quality of products and services that can be provided in sports businesses		
Using the brand name to introduce sports businesses	Branding	Management of innovative processes in businesses
Taking advantage of the principles of competitive advantage in sports businesses		
Identifying the success strategies of other sports business brands		
Encouraging new ideas to create innovative designs and patterns	Empowerment and capabilities	

Strengthening the specialist workforce in the field of sports	of human resources
The entry of sports science experts into the sports business market	
Cultivating innovative forces in knowledge-based sports businesses	
Human power empowerment	
Benefiting from innovative human capital for the survival of sports businesses	
Using charismatic management to develop entrepreneurship in the sports business	
Knowing the customer to design a sports business model	
Sports needs assessment of society	
Marketing research and needs determination	
Understanding the needs of society in sports	
Smart marketing in sports businesses	
Having a research and development team in producing goods or providing services	Market research
Knowing the community and audience of sports social media	
Retaining existing customers to stabilize sports businesses	
Development of innovative strategies in sports business marketing	
Collect data from measurements	
Benchmarking capability	
Create new products or services	
Application of modern science in sports	
Providing new ideas to customers to keep them in sports businesses	
Designing new and innovative sports equipment	
Patent presentation and its commercialization	Creating new value
Producing samples of sports equipment for the first time in the country	
Combination and integration of multiple needs in order to make a comprehensive sports product	Strategic innovation
Creating new value for the customer	
Creating innovative added value in sports	
Strengthening creativity to improve the environment of sports businesses	
Taking advantage of the principles of competitive advantage in sports businesses	Creating a competitive advantage
Competitive advantage in the production of sports goods	

Development of service quality compared to competitors	
The requirement of innovation for sports businesses	
Attracting new contacts	
Using the capacity of sponsors for the income generation element in the business model	
New channels for customers like Metaverse	Innovative business model
Exploiting the virtual environment and Metaverse	
Dynamics of virtual space	
Creating innovative plans in sports businesses	

The final research framework is shown in Figure 1. Based on the framework, creative human resources in a business have innovative ideas, and strategic thinking, and are capable of recognizing innovative opportunities in the vast sports market, considering the business infrastructure. Understanding the business environment and the composition of the business team can serve as catalysts for managing the innovative processes within sports businesses. These factors lay the foundation for evaluating infrastructure, fostering creative and innovative human resources, leveraging branding, empowering the team, and directing strategic innovation through open research. Additionally, the framework acknowledges the influence of institutional factors on the overall development of conditions and concepts within the context of sports businesses.

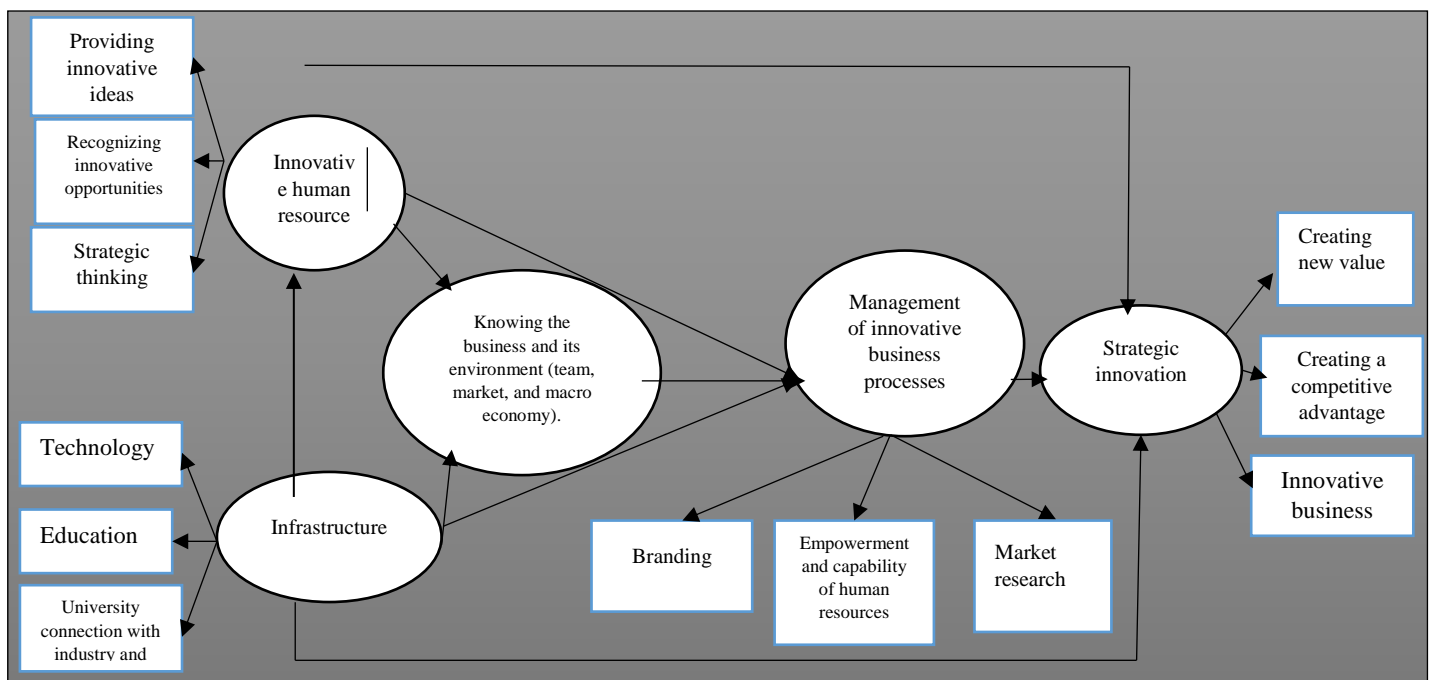


Figure 1. Strategic Innovation Framework in Sports Business based on a grounded theory

Discussion and Conclusion

The study explored the factors that influence strategic innovation in sports businesses using a Glaserian Grounded Theory framework. The findings revealed several key factors that contribute to strategic innovation in this context. The results of the research showed that the framework of strategic

innovation in sports businesses included institutional factors (culture, institutions, and laws), innovative human resources (providing innovative ideas, recognizing innovative opportunities, and strategic thinking), knowledge of the team and business environment (team, market, and macroeconomics), infrastructure (education, technology, and university-industry connection), and management of innovative business processes (marketing research, branding, empowerment, and human resource capability). Each of the components includes concepts extracted from the interviews. By understanding and addressing these factors, sports businesses can enhance their capability for strategic innovation and improve their competitiveness in the sports industry.

Creating new value included concepts such as creating new products or services, applying new science in sports, providing new ideas to customers to keep them in sports businesses, designing new and innovative sports devices, presenting patents and commercializing them, and producing. The example of producing the sports equipment for the first time in the country is the combination and integration of several needs in order to create a comprehensive sports product, create new value for the customer and finally create innovative added value among the concepts that make up the component of value creation. On the other hand, among the components of competitive advantage were: strengthening creativity to improve the atmosphere of sports businesses, taking advantage of the principles of competitive advantage in sports businesses, competitive advantage in the production of sports goods, developing the quality of services compared to competitors, requiring innovation. Finally, among the components of the innovative model for sports businesses were: attracting new contacts, using the capacity of sponsors for the income generation element in the business model, new channels for customers such as Metaverse, exploiting the virtual environment and Metaverse, dynamics of virtual space and creation of innovative plans in sports businesses. Strategic innovation in sports businesses included creating new value, creating competitive advantage, and innovative sports business models. This result is consistent with the findings of the research of Afuah (2009); Motoyama and Knowlton (2017); Rolfe and Dittmore (2015); Tjønndal (2016). Strategic innovation refers to the capacity to create new model in a way that creates new values for customers and generates new wealth. It is also noted that the key competitive advantage comes from innovation in the business model.

According to the results of the research, the factor of innovative human resources includes providing innovative ideas, recognizing innovative opportunities, and strategic thinking. This result is in line with the findings of Fenton et al. (2022); Ratten (2017). Innovation is often broadly attributed to the adoption of an idea or behavior that is new to the organization. The new idea must not only be accepted by the organization but must also be successfully applied. In addition, strategic thinking for integrated methods and creating strong relationships can be effective in creating strategic innovation (Ratten & Ferreira, 2017). The sports industry creates various opportunities such as creating possible ways based on existing business connections (Grant, 2021) in fact, it is the wide opportunities in the sports market that provide more scope for innovation in this field. In this regard, it seems that it is necessary to apply innovative ideas in a world where there are many innovative opportunities, strategic thinking and acceptance of innovation, that such policies and policies affect the operationalization of ideas.

According to the results of the research, the infrastructures of strategic innovation in sports businesses included technology, education, and university connection with industry and society. This result is consistent with the research findings of Best et al. (2021); Moradnezehadi et al. (2019); Sammaknejad (2017); Taghavi Rafsanjani et al. (2021). Paying attention to infrastructures and platforms of strategic innovation, the existence of business success model, transparency and improvement of business management, use of technology and up-to-date information for business development, administrative bureaucracy, and holding specialized conferences were described as the infrastructures of strategic innovation. These factors can have different forms, such as institutional development, and the existence of infrastructures (Hoskisson et al., 2013). These factors affect the competitiveness of the organization and its entrepreneurial ability. Mondalizadeh et al. (2022) also investigated factors such as technical infrastructure, educational programs, technology, and policy on the development of entrepreneurship, and their results showed that there is a significant relationship between business infrastructures and educational programs with the development of entrepreneurship and sports innovation. It seems that the existence of infrastructure is one of the important factors in

the growth and promotion of innovation. If the necessary infrastructure is not provided, the sports business will not benefit from innovative models to promote it. These factors require strong and successful management, which should be headed by people who have the necessary knowledge and sufficient experience in managing the field of sports business, and it is necessary that the people who work in the field of management in these departments report their activities completely transparently, because transparency is an important principle in management issues. Successful management will not be possible without the use of technology. The correct management of human capital not only can be one of the causes of creating strategic innovation but the managers of responsible institutions in sports, both formal and informal institutions, can play an important role in this field. Furthermore, effective management of innovative in the business processes, such as marketing research, branding, empowerment, and human resource capability, is essential for achieving strategic innovation goals.

The factors of knowing the business and its environment in sports businesses include the team, market and macroeconomics. This result is consistent with the research findings of Bischoff (2021); Fenyves (2022); Mondali Zadeh (2019). Sports is interrelated to economy and is one of its most important pillars. There are many economic obstacles for sports businesses, one can mention the non-cooperation of banks that do not provide appropriate facilities in this area, the lack of suitable solutions for foreign investors in the sports business sector, and even the imposed sanctions have also had an effect on sports businesses. These issues should be evaluated and steps should be taken to solve them with proper planning. Supportive laws can be useful in the mentioned fields, and if the government or related bodies can provide the necessary support, the domestic sports production sector will also have the necessary desire to continue working.

The management of innovative processes in sports businesses included branding, empowerment and capability of human resources and market research. This result is consistent with the findings of legal studies by Altuntaş et al. (2013), Ratten (2016); Ratten and Thompson (2020). Branding strategies, empowerment approach, and market research were some of the strategies that were identified. By studying and checking, you can identify the necessary strategies and take steps according to these strategies. Formulating a coherent strategy for the development of innovation in sports businesses that have been expertized and reviewed by experts is a necessary and obligatory matter that the authorities should pay due attention to. In order to empower employees and officials, measures such as holding training courses should be held so that these people can receive the necessary training. Also, courses should be held for educated and interested people to participate in them. Paying attention to the branding issue should be on the agenda of the officials. It should be done in such a way that various brands are created in the sports business. A trusted brand cannot be achieved until the copyright law is respected, and also the lack of copyright law has made investors take less risk and invest in this field. It is necessary to set strict rules and implement them so that sports businesses have the necessary prosperity. Government support can be mentioned in support of production, allocation of subsidies to production, and creation of banking facilities.

Institutional factors were concluded from other factors that affect strategic innovation. Among the institutional elements of culture, institutions, and laws were mentioned. Institutions are written and unwritten rules and norms that organize people's lives and therefore affect people's well-being (Hoskisson et al., 2013; Scott, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). The risk of development of innovation and innovative businesses changes with the improvement of the institutional environment and the economic and political content. These changes happen locally, nationally, regionally, and globally in the shadow of technological changes, social changes, and other human characteristics (Iran's Global Entrepreneurship Observatory, 2013). Institutional indicators in all GEM member countries are calculated based on indicators such as financial support, public policy, laws, and government programs. It seems that institutional factors such as the ruling values of the society towards sports, rules, and regulations, and the ability of institutions as external factors or institutional environment influence the innovation and innovative performance of businesses.

In the general conclusion of the effective factors in strategic innovation, the innovative human force includes the presentation of innovative ideas, the recognition of innovative opportunities, and strategic thinking, which seems to be the start of a strategic innovation from the idea and attitude of people towards innovative sports opportunities (attitude leads to behavior) and the next factor is infrastructure, which includes technology, education and communication with industry and

university. In this regard, it seems that effective communication between industry and university is one of the basic pillars of the transfer and development of technology and technology. In addition, it seems that sports and innovation are not formed in a vacuum and are related to the surrounding environment.

Factors such as strategic thinking along with the existence of innovative opportunities and programs and as a result the ability to present innovative ideas, along with the existence of innovation infrastructure, the existence of an innovative culture in the society, laws, and other environmental factors can create the ground for the movement of business and provide sports activities towards strategic innovation. Therefore, the interrelation of these factors identified in the research study demonstrates a comprehensive framework for understanding strategic innovation in sports businesses. By acknowledging and leveraging these interrelated factors, sports businesses can enhance their ability to adapt to dynamic market conditions, foster a culture of innovation, and achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Managerial Implication

Innovative ideas are one of the factors identified in the improvement of sports business strategies, therefore, providing the necessary background and platforms for presenting innovative ideas, and appropriate freedom of action to creative people should be given to come up with these ideas that will cause a change in the sports business environment.

Strategic thinking was one of the items identified in the first question, which is suggested to be considered in drawing goals for sports businesses in order to create a strategy for the future. It seems that the financial infrastructure should be used to design the strategic model of sports businesses in order to create suitable innovation infrastructures for sports businesses and improve the sports business environment.

Customer culture was concluded as the factor in improving sports business strategies, so it is suggested to present new ideas to customers to keep them in sports businesses, and also emphasize keeping current customers to stabilize sports businesses.

Technology is another identified effective factor, it is suggested to provide the necessary platforms for the growth of science and technology parks in sports businesses, and the use of new technologies in sports businesses is also effective.

Education is always one of the appropriate strategies for progress, therefore, it is suggested that sports business managers hold empowerment courses for their employees and groups. In addition, providing the necessary platforms for the approval and implementation of copyright law in the field of innovation in the sports industry is recommended.

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