



Investigating the Obstacles Faced by Physical Education Students in Utilizing Advertising to Propel the Growth of Emerging Sports Startups

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ABSTRACT

Sport startups are a specific form of new business venture that enters the market in a fast manner. There has been more emphasis on sport startups due to the need to capitalize on innovations particularly digital types in the global business environment. This study examines the challenges physical education students face in using advertising to foster the growth of emerging sports startups. Using triangulation, we collected data through mixed methods, resulting in valid responses. These findings indicate significant financial barriers, such as high start-up costs and insufficient initial capital, that limit students' ability to invest in their businesses. Additionally, a lack of understanding of sports marketing principles and the rapid pace of advertising technology evolution hinder effective promotional efforts. Social and cultural barriers, including low community awareness and trust in new entrepreneurial ventures, further limit market access for sports startups. The intense competition with established brands requires high levels of innovation and creativity, areas in which students often lack experience and skills. These findings emphasize the need for comprehensive support systems, such as financial aid, improved educational programs, and mentorship, to provide physical education students with the necessary tools to successfully navigate the competitive sports business landscape. This research provides valuable insights to improve the growth and success of sports startups using advertising.

Introduction

Presently, the sports industry is acknowledged as a thriving global sector (Wallis et al., 2020), brimming with entrepreneurial prospects at its core (Kellett & Russell, 2009). Fostering this industry's growth entails a dedicated focus on emerging businesses, particularly startups, to leverage their potential across various facets of sports (Taghavi rafsanjani et al., 2023). In the contemporary global economic landscape, startups wield significant influence (Rasouli & Azadi, 2022), with particular emphasis on the challenges and effective approaches crucial for the growth, development, and triumph of startups, notably those in the sports domain, given their fledgling status.

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Consequently, there's widespread scholarly interest in elucidating the factors influencing the success or failure of such startups (Pirjamadi et al., 2022).

Startups are the driving engine of society's economy, and the role of governments in the development of startup businesses is one of their overt and hidden tasks, which has a significant impact on society's growth (Taghavi rafsanjani et al., 2023). Heo et al. (2017) determined that government support plays an important role in the development process of startups. Startups can improve their brand through cyberspace and generate more traffic on their website by using cyberspace advertising (Rasouli & Azadi, 2022). Therefore, sports startups are models of agility in the way of launching new businesses and are the main engine of creating employment and increasing the country's gross domestic product (Ratten, 2020).

In the meantime, entrepreneurship has emerged as a pivotal force driving employment, economic growth, stability, prosperity, and advancement (Gieure et al., 2019) serving as the trailblazers of business achievement within society (Golmohammadi-Zangabad & Barghi Moghaddam, 2020). It is widely recognized as a significant mechanism for fostering inclusive and sustainable development through the creation of jobs, innovation, competitiveness, and societal well-being (Herman, 2019). Understanding the motivations behind entrepreneurial endeavors has been a subject of research for many decades (Herman, 2019), prompting increased attention from governments and universities in fostering entrepreneurial initiatives (Vodă & Florea, 2019). In recent years, the integration of new digital technologies such as mobile and cloud computing, social media, 3D printing, and data analytics has revolutionized business management practices, reducing levels of uncertainty (Rana et al., 2019). As global competition in this field increases, sports entrepreneurs should also use their efforts to discover opportunities and gain more competitive advantages (Lippitz, 2007). To establish strategic entrepreneurship in sports businesses, entrepreneurs need a favorable business environment to be able to identify opportunities and turn them into innovations and create successful competitive advantages (Azimi Delarestaghi et al., 2019). Currently, in many industries, innovation has become the most important driver for achieving competitive advantage (Golmohammadi & Barghi Moghadam, 2021).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, governments have turned to the startups of university students (Mirzazadeh et al., 2021). Overall, physical education students bring a unique blend of practical experience, theoretical knowledge, and passion for sports, making them valuable assets for startups seeking to innovate and thrive in the sports industry. In a competitive landscape, understanding customers' desires and opinions is crucial for businesses. Utilizing this insight, businesses can broaden their commercial and advertising objectives, leading to enhanced competitiveness, brand awareness, and overall business success (Yurtsizoğlu & Golmohammadi, 2023). Startup business owners are usually successful in identifying opportunities, but less successful in developing competitive advantages appropriate to those opportunities. In contrast, stable businesses are often relatively successful in establishing competitive advantages, but less successful in recognizing new opportunities (Azimi Delarestaghi et al., 2019).

In this regard, Pirjamadi et al. (2022) showed in their findings that factors such as innovation, expert human capital, organizational and individual factors as well as structural and governmental infrastructures play a fundamental role. Also, entrepreneurship centers and sports startups within the federations are known as intervening factors in the growth of startup businesses in the sports sector in Iran. They can contribute greatly to the development of sports, job creation and sustainable economic growth of the country, especially during the embargo period. According to a study conducted by Golmohammadi and Barghi Moghadam (2021), they found that in order to create innovation, it is necessary for university managers and professors to draw the attention of their academics to the development and creation of new solutions, processes and products. In their research, Talebi et al. (2023) introduced four managerial, commercial, environmental and technical factors as factors influencing the formation of sports startups. Sharma and Goyal (2019) also found out after their investigations that technical and technological aspects have caused the development process of startups to be formed quickly. Tzabbar and Margolis (2017), while examining the development process of startups, determined that human issues cause sufficient knowledge and appropriate skills to be formed in the development process of startups. Also, in this regard, Ferraro

and Di Francesco (2016) found in their study that geographical, technological and economic aspects are important in the development of sports startups, and software platforms are the most common technology, followed by applications and wearables. Virtual space, as one of the most effective and influential communication tools, plays an important role in the relationships between business owners and many customers and audiences (Algharabat et al., 2017; Aral et al., 2013).

This research examines the challenges that physical education student's face in using advertising to develop new sports businesses. New sports businesses, as an important part of sports culture, play a very effective role in the development of this industry and creating job opportunities. However, achieving success in this field comes with challenges, particularly in advertising and marketing. The existing literature lacks comprehensive insights into the challenges faced by physical education students specifically in utilizing advertising to propel the growth of sports startups. Although studies recognize the importance of advertising in attracting customers, building brand recognition, and boosting sales for startups, there is limited research that delves into the specific obstacles encountered by physical education students in this domain. Physical education students, as the future leaders of this industry, play a crucial role in identifying challenges and providing solutions to overcome them. This research, as a comprehensive and analytical study, seeks a deeper understanding of the issues. The significance of this research is the prominent role of advertising in the growth and development of new sports businesses, because advertising plays a very important role in attracting customers, creating brand recognition, and promoting sales. In addition, this research can help physical education students to identify and present the best solutions and strategies for startup sports businesses, which will ultimately lead to the development of this industry and the increase of related job opportunities.

Despite global recognition of advertising as a critical tool for business growth, the context in Iran presents unique challenges for emerging sports startups. Socio-economic landscape, cultural factors and regulatory environment can create a series of obstacles for new businesses, especially in the sports industry. Physical education students who are poised to be future leaders and entrepreneurs in the field face additional challenges due to these unique circumstances. They have to overcome not only the general obstacles of startup advertising, but also the specific obstacles created. Therefore, this research, focusing on the experiences of physical education students, seeks to contribute to valuable knowledge that can provide effective advertising strategies and ultimately lead to the growth of sports startups and increase employment in the sports industry. The research question has been formulated as follows, based on the presented materials, in the framework of the study:

RQ: What are the specific challenges and obstacles encountered by physical education students in leveraging advertising to advance emerging sports startups?

Methodology

The study employs a purposeful approach utilizing within-group triangulation to gather insights from physical education students on the influence of advertising on emerging sports startups. Triangulation in research refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative and quantitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. This approach aims to overcome the biases and limitations inherent in using a single method (Pashaie et al., 2023). By combining multiple methods, the study minimizes misinterpretation and enhances the validity of the findings (Abbaszadeh et al., 2012; Abbaszadeh & Hosseinpour, 2011). Using both closed (quantitative) and open-ended (qualitative) questions allows for a deeper exploration of the students' perspectives, providing a fuller picture of the challenges. Each method has its weaknesses, but triangulation compensates for these by cross-verifying data from multiple sources (Nickel et al., 1995).

The research involved distributing questionnaires to 205 students using simple random sampling. Our aim was to familiarize students with the research topic and elicit deeper responses to the main research questions by initially presenting standard quantitative questions. These questions were designed to introduce the research framework and encourage students to express more open and reflective views. The quantitative section of the questionnaire featured 28 items across four main constructs: digital transformation with four items (AlNuaimi et al., 2022), startup business with

eight items and sustainability of startup businesses with five items (Nowrozi, 2019), and entrepreneurship in sports with eleven items (Khodayari & Tojari, 2006).

The qualitative section asked participants to share their views on the challenges and obstacles of using advertisements for sports startups and to provide suggestions for improvement. Out of the 205 questionnaires distributed, 55 responses to the open-ended question were received. After removing 5 incomplete or repetitive responses, 50 valid responses remained, providing a substantial qualitative dataset. The qualitative data were meticulously coded and thematically analyzed, providing deeper insights that validated and complemented the quantitative findings. According to Boddy (2016), 50 interviews constitute a large sample for a qualitative study. These responses were sufficient to identify key themes and challenges, ensuring the richness and depth of the qualitative data. Triangulation does not require every participant to engage in every part of the study; the goal is to gather enough qualitative and quantitative data to support robust findings (Olsen, 2004).

The study achieved a response rate of approximately 24% (50 out of 205) for the open-ended question, which is within a reasonable range for such studies, especially considering the voluntary nature of responding to open-ended questions. Additionally, internal consistency measures (Cronbach's Alpha) were calculated for each scale or subscale in the questionnaire, with values as follows: digital transformation ($\alpha = 0.84$), starting a new business ($\alpha = 0.91$), startup business sustainability ($\alpha = 0.78$), and entrepreneurship in sports ($\alpha = 0.93$). These alpha values, with most above 0.80, demonstrate high reliability and consistency of the measurement instruments.

Data collection spanned two months (April-May 2024) and was conducted via virtual platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, and email. The qualitative data underwent meticulous scrutiny, with typographical errors corrected before analysis. Comparative analysis was conducted to identify patterns and consensus among the data. Textual data were coded and categorized into three levels: concepts, subcategory, and category, ensuring alignment with the research focus and validation through expert feedback.

Results

Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Following the completion of data filtering, 50 students responded to our research inquiry. The socio-demographic characteristics of the population under study are delineated in Table 1:

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Participants (n = 50)	
	n	(%)
Gender		
Men	32	64
Women	18	36
Age		
≤ 20	9	18
20-25	28	56
25-30	3	6
30-35	5	10
≥ 35	5	10
Education		
Students with a Bachelor's degree and beyond	38	76
Master's degree students	10	20
Doctorate degree students	2	4
Work Experiences (related with sport)		
Experience in sports-related businesses	34	68
No experience in sports-related businesses	16	32

The majority of participants were men (64%), while women constituted 36% of the sample. The largest age group was 20-25 years old, comprising 56% of the participants. Most participants (76%) were students with a Bachelor's degree and beyond, followed by Master's degree students (20%) and Doctorate degree students (4%). A significant portion of participants (68%) had

experience in sports-related businesses, indicating a level of involvement or familiarity with the sports industry. However, 32% had no such experience.

From the total answers given to our research question, after removing repeated concepts (15 primary concepts), 70 primary concepts were obtained, of which 13 subcategories include (financial constraints, startup costs, social and cultural challenges, a sedentary and inactive lifestyle, non-specialized individuals, lack of experience in business, challenges of virtual space, competing with big brands, innovation and creativity, advertising challenges, inadequate understanding of sports marketing principles, content marketing, rapid changes in advertising methods), and finally, it was divided into 4 categories (financial challenges, social and cultural hurdles, competition and innovation, marketing and advertising challenges) (refer to Table 2 for more information).

Table 2. Categorization and concepts of utilizing advertising for advancing sports startups.

Concepts	Subcategory	Category
Lack of attention to the economic aspects of this field	Financial constraints	Financial Challenges
Existence of taxes and other service charges		
Inflation and complexity of business regulations		
Lack of financial ability to provide capital		
Lack of fixed salary for students		
Lack of sponsors for elite athletes		
The incompleteness of the financing chain of innovative plans and startup companies		
Existence of taxes and other service charges		
Lack of legal frameworks for venture capital investment		
The cost of starting a business	Startup costs	Financial Challenges
Inadequate funds for establishing sports business infrastructures		
Lack of initial capital to start a business		
Lack of community awareness about the activities of new entrepreneurs.	Social and cultural challenges	Social and Cultural Hurdles
Lack of public trust in the space of such businesses.		
Lack of recognition and support for sports startups.		
Lack of sustained innovations to sustain and revive the growth cycle of sports startups.		
Bad and unhealthy lifestyle.	A sedentary and inactive lifestyle	Social and Cultural Hurdles
Immobility and lack of physical activity of people.		
Non-specialists progressing due to initial capital availability	Non-specialized individuals	Competition and Innovation
Non-specialists progressing in discussed areas due to connections		
Shortage of skilled individuals in business startups		
Job opportunities are limited for inexperienced and low-experience individuals.	Lack of experience in business	Competition and Innovation
Insufficient experience in business, marketing, and management.		
Lack of adequate experience in advertising and marketing.		
Cyberspace.	Challenges of virtual space	Competition and Innovation
Collaboration with reputable professors of sports science in cyberspace.		
Activity in channels and attracting followers.		
Converting actual customers into potential customers in the virtual space.		
Competitiveness of the business arena.	Competing with big brands	Competition and Innovation
Intense competition between competitors.		
Allocating the right space for the continued growth of sports startups.		
Presence of well-known sports brands.		
Understanding the audience.		

Being willing to take risks.		
Having visual appeal for people.	Innovation and creativity	Competition and Innovation
Organizing specialized plans with successful entrepreneurs and new startups.		
Holding relevant seminars in the field of activity.		
Innovation.		
Creativity in idea generation.		
Having a clean and distinct aspect compared to other competitors.		
Effective advertising to increase students' awareness in the sports field.	Advertising challenges	Marketing and Advertising Challenges
Advertising among friends and acquaintances.		
The practical and widespread nature of the advertised products.		
Advertisements on television networks.		
Advertisements on social networks.		
Utilizing the presence of individuals with sports backgrounds in advertisements.		
Classified advertisements.		
Lack of extensive advertising to support the continuation of startup activities.		
Awareness of the accuracy of advertisements.		
Digital advertising.		
Advertising suitable products under the shadow of inferior imports.		
High cost of advertising.		
Lack of success in advertising.		
More attention to advertising in virtual space.		
Face-to-face advertising and social awareness.		
Endorsements.		
Environmental advertising.		
Lack of sufficient knowledge on the subject in order to create a business.	Inadequate understanding of sports marketing principles	Marketing and Advertising Challenges
Teaching and learning practical skills in the field of sports marketing.		
Lack of guidance on the way to start a business.		
Collaboration with investors and existing brands.	Content marketing	Marketing and Advertising Challenges
Building relationships with coaches and veterans in the sports field.		
Sports Market growth.		
Utilizing referral marketing.		
Product lifecycle.		
Creating a good business and effective marketing.		
Rapid advancement of new technologies and changes in advertising methods.	Rapid changes in advertising methods	Marketing and Advertising Challenges
Utilizing artificial intelligence in digital marketing and advertising.		
Creating websites for sports clubs.		
Employing communication technology in advertising.		

According to the findings of the research, financial limitations are one of the important obstacles in the advertising attitude towards sports businesses, which limit the students of physical education and sports sciences to invest in the relevant fields and prevent their growth in that field. Sports businesses face a variety of promotional challenges, and an inadequate understanding of sports marketing principles can hamper promotional efforts. Social and cultural barriers create challenges for sports businesses, as consumer behaviors and preferences vary across populations and groups. Useful and affordable advertising in startup sports businesses often strive to reach higher positions and a better position among competitors, and fostering a culture of innovation and creativity is very important and vital for sports businesses that aim to progress in the fiercely competitive market.

Based on the results mentioned in Table 2, the final research model is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Barriers faced by physical education students in using advertising to grow emerging sports startups

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the multifaceted challenges faced by physical education students in utilizing advertising to propel the growth of emerging sports startups. Understanding and addressing these barriers are essential for devising effective strategies to support the success and sustainability of sports entrepreneurship initiatives among students. These barriers are categorized into four main categories: financial challenges, social and cultural hurdles, competition and innovation, and marketing and advertising challenges:

1. Financial Challenges: This category encompasses obstacles related to financial constraints and startup costs. Examples include the lack of attention to economic aspects, inadequate funds for infrastructure, and the absence of fixed salaries for students. Additionally, the incomplete financing chain for innovative plans and startups contributes to the financial challenges faced by students.

2. Social and Cultural Hurdles: Social and cultural factors play a significant role in restraining the growth of sports startups. Challenges in this category include a lack of community awareness of new entrepreneurial ventures, low public trust in such businesses, and insufficient sustainable innovation to support the growth of startups.

3. Competition and Innovation: Intense competition with established brands and the need for innovation in this category are highlighted. The entry of non-specialists into the market creates challenges due to the availability of initial capital, along with the lack of skilled people in startups. In addition, competing with big brands, fostering innovation and creativity, and navigating the challenges of virtual spaces are major areas of concern.

4. Marketing and Advertising Challenges: This category focuses on obstacles related to advertising effectiveness and marketing principles. Challenges include ineffective advertising methods, insufficient understanding of sports marketing principles, and rapid changes in advertising methods due to advancements in technology. Other challenges include content marketing strategies and the high cost associated with advertising.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study illuminate several critical challenges faced by physical education students in leveraging advertising to advance emerging sports startups. Financial constraints, such as high startup costs and insufficient initial capital, emerge as significant barriers. These financial hurdles impede students' ability to invest adequately in their ventures, limiting their capacity to launch and sustain competitive businesses. This finding aligns with existing literature which emphasizes the financial challenges that startups commonly encounter, particularly in the nascent stages of development (Rasouli & Azadi, 2022; Taghavi rafsanjani et al., 2023). Overcoming these obstacles requires innovative solutions and the allocation of financial resources needed for physical education

and sports science students, based on which they can provide targeted and detailed plans for their fledgling sports business. Najafi and Safa (2014), in their study, highlighted the lack of financial resources for investment as a prominent challenge hindering the expansion of home-based businesses.

Another crucial barrier identified is the inadequate understanding of sports marketing principles among students. This gap in knowledge hinders their ability to create effective advertising strategies, which are essential for attracting customers, building brand recognition, and driving sales. The rapid evolution of advertising methods, particularly with the advent of digital technologies, exacerbates this challenge, as students must continuously adapt to new tools and platforms (Rana, 2022). This underscores the need for enhanced educational curricula that integrate practical training in contemporary marketing techniques, including digital marketing and social media strategies.

Social and cultural hurdles also play a significant role in impeding the growth of sports startups. The lack of community awareness and trust in new entrepreneurial ventures limits the market reach and acceptance of these startups. This challenge is compounded by the prevailing sedentary lifestyle and cultural attitudes towards physical activity, which can affect the consumer base for sports-related businesses. Efforts to foster a more supportive environment for sports entrepreneurship should therefore include initiatives to raise public awareness and build trust in the capabilities and benefits of sports startups.

The competitive landscape further intensifies the challenges faced by student entrepreneurs. Competing with well-established brands requires a high degree of innovation and creativity, attributes that are crucial for distinguishing new ventures in a crowded market (Azimi Delarestaghi et al., 2019; Lippitz, 2007). According to the study of Golmohammadi-Zangabad and Barghi Moghaddam (2020), innovation in classrooms has a positive effect on the competence of independent startup businesses. However, the study highlights that students often lack sufficient experience and skills in business management and marketing, which are vital for fostering innovation and achieving a competitive edge. This gap indicates a need for targeted support, such as mentorship programs and workshops, to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the competitive dynamics of the sports industry effectively.

Some important points can be mentioned from the consequences of this research. The findings of this study highlight significant obstacles faced by physical education students in utilizing advertising to foster the growth of emerging sports startups. First, the results show that financial constraints are one of the main obstacles in the advertising attitude toward sports businesses, which makes students of physical education and sports science fall behind in investing in these fields and limits their growth. Financial challenges, including high startup costs and insufficient capital, present substantial barriers, limiting students' ability to invest and scale their businesses. Secondly, insufficient understanding of the principles of sports marketing can undermine advertising efforts, and there is a need for more training and awareness from students and sports entrepreneurs in this field. Additionally, the lack of understanding and practical knowledge of sports marketing principles hinders effective promotional efforts. Thirdly, it is necessary to create a culture of innovation and creativity that can help develop the process of innovation and ideation in sports businesses and support them as main players in competitive markets. Finally, the development of effective advertising strategies and optimization of advertising can help the continuous growth and development of sports businesses and provide the right infrastructure to attract customers and promote the brand. Moreover, competition from established brands and the rapid evolution of advertising technologies necessitate innovative and creative approaches, which students may find challenging to implement without proper support and resources.

These insights underscore the need for comprehensive support systems to aid physical education students in overcoming these barriers. Universities, industry stakeholders, and government bodies should collaborate to provide financial assistance, educational programs, and mentorship opportunities focused on sports marketing and entrepreneurship. Emphasizing the development of

practical skills and innovative thinking will equip students to better navigate the competitive sports business landscape. Future research should explore similar challenges in other regions and conduct longitudinal studies to track the progress of sports startups over time, providing deeper insight into the long-term effectiveness of various support measures and the evolving challenges faced by entrepreneurs.

In conclusion, the study's findings highlight the multifaceted challenges faced by physical education students in using advertising to propel the growth of sports startups. Addressing these barriers requires a comprehensive approach involving financial support, enhanced educational frameworks, public awareness campaigns, and mentorship. By tackling these issues holistically, stakeholders can significantly enhance the potential for success among emerging sports entrepreneurs, ultimately contributing to the growth and dynamism of the sports industry. This research provides valuable insights that can guide policy and educational reform aimed at nurturing the next generation of sports business leaders and enhancing their promotional strategies.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines: Ethical points have been observed.

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Authors' contribution: All authors have contributed to the design and implementation of this study.

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