



# Investigating the factors of lack of support from sports sponsors for Iranian women's sports

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that cause company managers not to support women's professional sports. The research method is a descriptive and analytical study that has been done in the field. The statistical population included all senior managers (CEO, CFO or sales manager) of commercial and manufacturing companies in Iran. The sampling method was cluster random. The data collection tool was a researcher-made questionnaire whose validity was confirmed by experts and its reliability ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ) was obtained. Frequency distribution table was used for statistical description of data and univariate t-test was used for inferential statistics. About 62% of managers believe that financial support in sports is very important and only about 8% of managers consider financial support unimportant. Women's professional sports sponsorship is not able to estimate the goals of companies. The results showed that sponsorship managers do not consider women's professional sports as a factor to achieve economic goals and benefits. In this regard, the government can benefit from financial protection of women's professional sports by using protective laws to change the attitude of company managers.

**Keywords:** Financial support, managers, professional sports, women, Iranian sports.

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## 1. Introduction

In Today, sport is considered as an important industry and an influential factor in the growth of the national economy and is one of the most lucrative industries in the 21st century. The sports industry, by having a stimulating factor such as major sports competitions, has made it possible to take advantage of advertising and media opportunities, which in itself has created the necessary platform for interaction between industry, trade and sports (Elahi et al., 2020). The popularity of sports and the importance of influencing athletes as leaders of thought has provided an opportunity for various institutions and companies to increase their audience through

a business exchange sponsoring sporting events or athletes (McDougall et al., 2014). The term sponsor refers to an investment, both financial and non-financial, in an activity motivated by the acquisition and acquisition of associated business potential (China et al., 2016). Most definitions of sponsorship refer to a business transaction between two parties that both benefit from this relationship (Lamont et al., 2016). Organizations that act as sponsorships each have specific goals and hope to connect with a large number of consumers through sport; however, it can be argued that a company sees sponsorship as a deal that it will abandon if it does not benefit it (Sam et al., 2019). Graton and Taylor (1985) consider sports sponsorship to be the sponsorship of a sport, sporting event, sporting

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organization, or competition by one person or company for mutual benefit or benefit to both parties to the contract (Cited by Pete et al., 2015). Hernandez, on the other hand, uses the term corporate sponsorship to define a company product, name, or logo using the image and image of various sports-related sectors (Ehsani et al., 2020). Today, businesses and industry owners have realized that financial support can be a powerful advertising tool for them. In fact, one of the most important and effective elements that has linked sports events and the economy is the issue of sports sponsorship as a promotional method for sponsoring companies (Suits, 2016). Numerous studies have been conducted to identify the motivation of sponsoring companies, citing the following business factors as important factors in the company's goal of sponsorship: Increase sales of goods and services, 2- Increase public awareness of the company logo and name, 3- Increase media attention to the company and improve advertising activities, and 4- Improve social relationships (Lamont et al., 2016). Drakwick et al. (2015), The most important factor in social relations is to improve a beneficial relationship with the government, such as enjoying the benefits that the government gives to the sports sponsor company for services or Provides company productions (Draukovich et al., 2015). Companies prioritize sports sponsorship, engagement with the government, and the use of benefits and tax breaks in their social goals (Medil, 2015). ). Sports sponsorship activities have a positive effect on creating a proper and positive image of the sponsor company in the public mind (China et al., 2016). And a key factor in advertising activities is the improvement and popularization of the company name and logo. Sponsoring companies seek to achieve these goals by being sponsored (Dietz et al., 2016). Corporate sponsorship is an influential factor for sports organizations, which is the largest sector in sports marketing (Pete et al., 2015). Investment in sports sponsorship as a communication tool has expanded rapidly over the past two decades, reaching an estimated cost of US \$ 44.8 billion in 2009, and capturing nearly 20% of the total marketing budget share. It is a matter. Many companies try to stay competitive in the market by accepting the sponsorship of teams or athletes so that they can offer more goods and services to individuals and through sports they can better identify themselves to the target market (Cobbs, 2016). As mentioned, sports advocacy is a business exchange through which significant financial resources and facilities are injected into the sports market, so that today the holding of world and Olympic competitions depends to a large extent on these resources (Sam et al., 2019). In some cases, the amount of income of athletes from

validation contracts in various goods and services has been much more than the income from its sports contracts (Walliser, 2019). It can be boldly stated that the growth of professional sports is due to the growth of financial support and sponsorship that provides funding for sports organizations (Lamont et al., 2016).

The importance of gender in the sports market can be considered in two aspects: 1) Women in the sports market can be considered a group of consumers who have special needs and wants, this can be a basis for dividing the sports market. Be, 2) Women's sports mainly include a special type of opportunities and activities different from men's sports, which provide business and income-generating opportunities for sports goods and services companies (Mecca). Dugal et al., 2014). Prominent female athletes are selected as endorsers of sporting goods due to their reputation and attention span. Lobo, the name of the basketball shoe, is chosen based on the contract with the famous basketball player Rebecca Bolo for the basketball shoes produced by Reebok. Nikki McCray is signing a \$ 1 million contract with the company to promote Phila shoes. All of this emphasizes the new opportunities that can be posed to companies and institutions producing sports goods and services through the development of the women's sports market (McDougall et al., 2014). Women's professional sports have a short history compared to men's professional sports (Chen, 2015). By creating the perception that women are largely absent from the sports scene, and by dealing with them, we see women as we read and hear about them. This downplays them and their sports efforts, and thus marginalizes women's involvement in sports (Farrell, 2021).

Women's sports, in order to get out of this situation and improve its position, it is necessary to review the programs and adopt strategies and strategies in order to create interaction. It is mostly sponsored by companies and institutions. For accurate and appropriate planning, it is necessary to know the current and desired status of sports sponsors. By identifying the gap between the status quo and the status quo in terms of sponsorship, their needs are identified (Millman, 1997). With the start of the new season of the Women's Premier League in various fields, lack of support is their main concern for being or not being in competitions (Lapiano, 2017). When it is said that women's basketball and softball teams are among the best, we all know that coaching and the ability of athletes play an important role in the success of these teams. But what we may not know is that corporate cooperation also plays an important role. There is an old proverb that says: "Money goes around the world, and in this case, sponsors have a big part to play in the success and revitalization of sports

teams" (Paul, 2017). A study on the problems of developing the women's sports market states:

1. Given that male and female spectators and women's sports are a different market. For male sports spectators, investing in women's sports is also investing in a new market, and given that research on female professional sports spectators is also very limited; Sponsors are not willing to take risks and invest in this market.
2. Lack of proper media coverage has led to stagnation and sometimes stagnation in women's sports.
3. The lack of competition among investors creates the mentality that there is no need for women in terms of diversified products, and in fact there are no advertising contracts.
4. Many companies sponsor women's sports and then leave, and investing in women's sports is short-lived and momentary (Millman, 1997).

The American Women's Football Association was the first women's professional league in the world to be founded for humanitarian purposes, but in September 2014, it declared bankruptcy. When the league officially declared bankruptcy, insufficient income was the main reason. Media statements on identifying the factors that affect the retention of the league state that they were not able to attract sponsors. Ultimately, the collapse was a bitter failure (Sterling, 2019). Although women's sports have grown significantly in recent years, the presence of fans cannot be ignored. When comparing women's sports with men's sports, we should pay attention to men's sports fans, which has been able to attract many fans, and this has led sponsorship companies to place their goods and services somewhere. Offer that has more consumers. This has led many companies to sponsor investment in men's sports to women (Millman, 1997). According to FarmStat, television coverage has a significant impact on sponsorship decisions. Hoda Research Findings (2021). It indicates that the "principle of expecting return on investment" is the most important factor in attracting investment from sports sponsors. He concludes that sponsors are persuaded to invest in sports when they are somewhat confident that they will benefit more than any other option if they invest in a particular sport. Walliser (2014). In the research, it was stated that achieving the image and increasing the awareness of brands and / or companies has traditionally been the most important sponsorship goals. (Walliser, 2019). Tomasini (2004) The most important goals of companies in sports sponsorship include media display, direct media coverage, verification and

identification of the company name and logo, raising market awareness, increasing sales opportunities, establishing relationships with others. Sponsors and community relations have been expressed (Millman, 1997). Sterlize (2019) considers the role of television shows to be very important in attracting sponsors and states that the wider the coverage of sports competitions at the national and international levels, the greater the rate of attracting sponsors (Olgeniksak and Alcher, 2015). People's attitudes towards a product can be influenced by advertising. Numerous studies have examined the attitude towards advertising through mass media such as television, internet, newspapers, etc. and have found that the attitude of consumers of goods and services of a sponsoring company through sports to create a positive view. (Barber, 2018). In a study conducted by Barber (2016) on the Women's Basketball League, he stated that one of the important reasons for the development of the basketball league and its growth in the world is the existence of a sponsorship element of companies from its league, because this league has been able to Be effective in creating a positive image of sponsoring companies in the public mind. On the other hand, the existence of appropriate media coverage and increasing media attention has provided a good ground for sports support. Tsyutsu (2016) Failure to achieve the financial goals of sporting events will prevent stakeholders from supporting sport (Siyutsu, 2016). Elahi et al. (2020) considers the uncertainty of return on investment, the lack of government protection laws, the existence of problems in the quantity and quality of television broadcasting of matches, and the lack of proper management as obstacles to the development of financial support in the football industry. . Ehsani et al. (2020) showed that companies fail to achieve their sponsorship goals, including: Increasing sales of goods and services, creating a good image of the company in the public mind, competing with other companies and expanding the sales market do not support women's sports. Most domestic and international research focuses on identifying a company's sponsorship motivation for men's professional sports, but little research has focused on companies' lack of support for women's sports. Due to the growth of women's professional sports and the numerous competitions that are held in this field, unfortunately, companies are not willing to invest in this sector, so identifying the factors that lead to lack of financial support for companies, It is necessary. Therefore, this study was established with the aim of investigating the factors that cause company managers not to support women's professional sports.

## 2. Methodology

The method of the present research is descriptive and descriptive and analytical study and is field in terms of data collection. The statistical population of the present study consists of senior managers (CEO, CFO or sales manager) of manufacturing companies operating in Iran. The Civil Registry Office was inquired to determine the number of companies. The total number of companies operating in the country is 170,000, which was determined based on the latest statistics from the Department of Industries and Mines and the Real Estate Registry. Then, to select large companies, companies were divided based on the number of employees and the amount of fixed capital of the company and companies whose number of employees was more than 70 or the fixed capital of the company was more than seven billion Tomans, as the statistical population. Were. Based on this, 45 companies formed the statistical community; Due to the limited statistical population, the whole population was examined and sampling was not performed. Finally, out of 45 questionnaires distributed among senior managers of companies, 39 questionnaires were completed and returned. Took. The tool for measuring the variables was a

researcher-made questionnaire that was used with reliability ( $\alpha / 0.91$ ). To determine the validity of the questionnaire, content validity was used, which was determined by several professors of management and planning. In the present study, descriptive statistics of frequency, frequency percentage and mean were used. Univariate t-test was used for inferential analysis of the obtained data and testing of hypotheses. In order to inferentially analyze the obtained data, for this reason, to confirm or reject the opinions of individuals about the effect of various factors, univariate t-test was used, so that the mean obtained from the sample group with a hypothetical mean (2.5) taken from The spectrum of 5 questionnaire options was (1 to 4) to be compared at the significance level ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

### 3. Research Findings:

In expressing the research findings, first descriptive tables refer to the demographic characteristics of managers and then the results of inferential statistics are presented.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of company managers

Demographic characteristics	Scale	Abundance	Frequency
Sunni distribution	25to 35 years	11	28.2
	36to 45 years	15	38.5
	46years and up	13	33.3
The level of education of managers	Above diploma and below	9	23.1
	Bachelor	26	66.7
	Masters up	4	10.3
Years of service of managers	5to 10 years	21	53.8
	11to 15 years	12	30.8
	16years and up	6	15.4

As can be seen from Table 1, 38.5% of managers are between 36 and 45 years old. Education rate 66.7% of managers have a bachelor's degree.

**Table 2.** A survey of managers' views on sports sponsorship

The importance of financial support for sports	Abundance	Frequency
is very important	24	61%/5
Sometimes it's important	6	15%/4
it is not really important	2	5%/1
it is not important at all	3	7%/7
I do not know	4	10%/3

As shown in Table 2, about 62% of managers believe that sponsorship is very important in sports, and only about 8% of managers consider sponsorship to be insignificant.

In order to show the goals of supporting sponsoring companies and the percentage of achieving these goals in case of supporting

women's professional sports, the results of the questionnaire are given separately in Tables 3 to 7.

**Table 3.** t-test, comparing the average rate of increase in sales of goods and services of the company with the financial support of women's sports

Invoice under review	average level	Average	SD	SE	T	The significance level
Increase sales of goods and services	2.5	1.87	0.65	0.10	-5.97	0/000
Achieve the desired market	2.5	1.69	0.80	0.12	-6.30	0/000
Expand the sales market	2.5	1.69	0.73	0.11	-6.9	0/000
Total factors related to increasing sales of goods and services	2.5	1.75	0.46	0.07	10.07	0/000

( $P \leq 0.05$  / 0)

As can be seen in Table 3, it can be inferred from the statistical results of t-test that according to the mean (1.75) which is less than the average level (2.5) and the level of significance ( $P / 0 / 05$ ), the goals of increasing sales of goods and services through sports sponsorship are not achieved. Also,

not all cases related to the goals of increasing sales of goods and services from the perspective of managers can be achieved.

**Table 4.** t test, comparing the average achievement of raising public awareness of the company with financial support for women's sports

Invoice under review	average level	Average	SD	SE	T	The significance level
Raise public awareness of the company	2.5	2/08	1/06	0/17	-2/49	0/016
Changing the way people think and perceive the company	2.5	2/13	0/92	0/14	-2/51	0/017
Create the right image of participation in the public mind	2.5	2/21	0/92	0/14	-1/99	0/041
Total factors related to increasing public awareness of the company	2.5	2/14	0/84	0/13	-2/67	0/011

( $P \leq 0.05$  / 0)

From Table 4, it is inferred that, considering the mean (2.14) which is less than the mean level (2.5) and the significance level ( $P \leq 0.05$ ), it is stated that the goal Raising public awareness of the company is not achieved through the financial support of

women's professional sports. Also, not all cases related to raising public awareness of the sponsoring company can be realized.

**Table 5.** t test, comparing the average achievement of the goals of increasing the company's relationship with the government with the financial support of women's sports

Invoice under review	average level	Average	SD	SE	T	The significance level
Better communication with the government	2.5	2	0/76	0/12	-4/10	0/000
Take advantage of tax benefits and exemptions	2.5	1/74	0/81	0/13	-5/77	0/000
Creating the context and opportunity for long-term	2.5	2/52	0/95	0/15	0/11	0/907

cooperation with the government						
The sum of factors related to increasing the company's relationship with the government	2.5	2/09	0/50	0/08	-5/07	0/0000

( $P \leq 0.05 / 0$ )

Based on the findings of Table 5, it can be inferred from the statistical results of t-test that according to the mean (2.09) which is less than the average level (2.5) and the level of significance ( $P \leq 0.05$ ), the goal of increasing the company's relationship with the government is not achieved through financial support for sports. As can be seen from the managers' point of view, the company can

provide cooperation between the government and the company in the long run by financially supporting women's sports. On the other hand, other factors related to increasing the company's relationship with the government are not realized.

**Table 6.** t test, comparing the average rate of achievement of the company's advertising success goals with financial support for women's sports

Invoice under review	average level	Average	SD	SE	t	The significance level
Increasing mass media attention	2.5	1/77	0/81	0/13	-5/63	0/000
Business Advertising Successes	2.5	1/95	0/72	0/11	-4/75	0/000
Increase advertising opportunities	2.5	2/05	0/88	0/14	-3/15	0/003
The sum of factors related to the company's advertising success	2.5	1/92	0/64	0/10	-5/57	0/000

( $P \leq 0.05 / 0$ )

From the findings of Table 6, according to the statistical results of t-test, it is inferred that according to the mean (1.92) which is less than the average level (2.5) and the level of significance ( $P \leq 0.05$ ), the goals of the company's advertising success are not achieved with the company's

financial support of women's professional sports. Also, not all cases related to advertising goals can be achieved from the managers' point of view.

**Table 7.** T-test, comparison of the average rate of achieving the goals of improving the company's competition with other competitors with financial support for women's sports

Invoice under review	average level	Average	SD	SE	t	The significance level
Attract new customers	2.5	1/97	0/84	0/13	-3/89	0/000
Compete with other companies	2.5	1/67	0/62	0/09	-8/37	0/000
Gain a nominal reputation	2.5	1/92	0/80	0/12	-4/46	0/000
Total factors related to improving the company's competition with other competitors	2.5	1/85	0/62	0/09	-6/49	0/000

( $P \leq 0.05 / 0$ )

As can be seen in Table 7, it can be inferred from the statistical results of t-test that according to the mean (1.85) which is less than the average level

(2.5) and according to the level of significance ( $P \leq 0.05$ ), the goals of improving the company's competition with other competing companies are

not achieved with the financial support of women's sports. Also, not all cases related to the goals of competition with other companies can be achieved from the perspective of managers.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study is to examine the views of managers of private and public companies about the lack of support for women's professional sports in the west of the country. To this end, the views of managers of private and public companies on the failure to achieve the goals of financial support for women's professional sports were examined. The results showed that managers consider sports sponsorship important, but due to the lack of achievement and realization of financial sponsorship goals, in the opinion of senior executives of companies, sponsorship of women's professional sports is not a good tool for marketing and profitability. The results of the present study showed that the goals of increasing sales of goods and services are not possible from the perspective of company managers, in which weakness in achieving the desired market and expanding the sales market is the first priority and then increase sales of goods and services. They are in the next priority, which will not be achieved. In this regard, the findings of the present study are consistent with Ehsani's findings that he stated in his research that company managers cited the failure to achieve financial goals as one of the reasons for not supporting women's championship sports. But it is inconsistent with the findings of Tusiutsu (2016). Tosiutsu's findings show that the company has been able to achieve its financial goals with the financial support of the Women's Olympics. The differences observed in the results of the mentioned studies can be due to the differences in the society and statistical sample, cultural differences, social differences, etc. China et al. (2016) believe that one of the important goals of companies to financially support sports is to achieve the desired market and expand the sales market. The results of the present study also confirm that one of the reasons for the lack of financial support for companies in women's sports, they believe that financial support for women's professional sports in the sale of goods and services to change. It is not possible. Another purpose of financial support for sports is to raise public awareness of the company name and their products. The results of the present study showed that from the perspective of company managers, financial support does not have the ability to change the way people think and perceive the company. These results are consistent with the findings of Olgeniksak and Alcher (2015), China et al. (2016), Walliser (2014), and Di. Dietz et al. (2016) are inconsistent. This difference could be

due to cultural factors and the spread of sports through the media. But it is consistent with the results of Ehsan's research, which showed that company managers do not consider women's professional sports to be effective in changing people's attitudes toward the company. In connection with solving this problem, women sports professionals can appreciate the companies that support the media and introduce them so that the company can achieve its goal of raising public awareness of the company. According to company managers, financial support for sports is not effective in creating a positive image of the company and its products. The results of the study were not consistent with the findings of Barber (2016). Perhaps the reason for this difference is the extensive media coverage and coverage of basketball league games on television, the support of the press and newspapers, and the global and Asian competitions, which has led company executives to turn to the Women's League to Achieve their goals and in this way the sponsoring company can create a positive role for itself and its activities in the public mind. Failure to achieve the goal of changing the mindset of the people can be attributed to short-term and temporary investment. However, women's sports, like other ongoing investments, require annual contracts and commitments to be able to play their part in achieving these goals. Numerous studies have highlighted the role of government in attracting corporate financial support (Draukovich et al., 2015; Medil, 2015). What is more effective in the role of government is the application of protection and tax laws in the long run. The results of the present study showed that company managers believe that by supporting women's sports, they can provide the ground for cooperation with the government and create opportunities for long-term cooperation, and this result is consistent with the results of Waliser (2014). In general, the role of supporting women's sports in establishing better relations with the government is underestimated. This result is inconsistent with the results of Medil (2015). The reason for the observed difference may be due to differences in the conditions of the protection laws in government laws. The available results are consistent with the results of Elahi et al. (2020), who consider the lack of government-sponsored laws as an obstacle to the development of financial support revenue in the football industry. Lack of media coverage has led managers of their advertising goals to fail to financially support women's sports. According to the results, senior managers consider advertising in women's sports ineffective and do not consider it cost-effective. In this regard, Sterilize (2019), Barber (2016) and Elahi et al. (1396) consider the role of media coverage and advertising in attracting

sponsors very important and state that every TV and satellite show Sports competitions at the national and international levels are wider, the number of sponsors will be more. In our country, due to the existing cultural factors, it is possible to create other different methods such as An internet news site to tell the news of women's sports, introduce popular and heroic female athletes through the press, television, radio, satellite and television broadcasts of sports that can be filmed, such as horseback riding, shooting, martial arts, etc. He also used the radio broadcast of sports that could not be filmed, such as swimming, basketball, volleyball, and so on. The results of the present study were consistent with the results of Ehsani (2020) but did not agree with the findings of Lapiano (2017), Sam et al. (2019), Medil (2015), which could be due to differences in variables, statistical sample, cultural characteristics and ... be. Finally, the company engages in financial support when it is profitable for it An internet news site to tell the news of women's sports, introduce popular and heroic female athletes through the press, television, radio, satellite and television broadcasts of sports that can be filmed, such as horseback riding, shooting, martial arts, etc. He also used the radio broadcast of sports that could not be filmed, such as swimming, basketball, volleyball, and so on. The results of the present study were consistent with the results of Ehsani (2020) but did not agree with the findings of Lapiano (2017), Sam et al. (2019), Medil (2015), which could be due to differences in variables, statistical sample, cultural characteristics and ... be. Finally, the company engages in financial support when it is profitable for it Come (according to the principle of expectation and profit of Hoda) and if this activity, which is costly for the company, does not create an advantage, it will cause the company to withdraw from sponsorship. A company seeks to provide a good ground for improving competition with other competitors that provide similar goods or services, and will leave the loss-making activity. From the perspective of company managers, financial support for women's sports as a desirable tool to help the company compete effectively with other competing companies can not be useful. The results of the present study are consistent with the results of Lapiano (2019) and Ehsani (2020). This research has been conducted in the western provinces of the country (Kermanshah, Kurdistan, Ilam, Hamedan) and at the level of private and public manufacturing companies in different regions. Therefore, the results of this study need to be used with caution for other areas. On the other hand, the participants' answers to the questionnaire questions are influenced by the geographical areas and the level of culture of this area, so it is recommended that this issue be

considered in applying the results and findings of this study. According to the results, in general, it can be understood that the reason why companies do not support women's sports from the perspective of senior managers is that none of the companies' goals are achieved through the company's financial support for women's sports. According to managers, this lack of financial support is one of the main reasons for their lack of support for women's professional sports.

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