

## Evaluating and comparing the effectiveness of sport sponsorship among the selective teams of the football premier league of Iran

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of sport sponsorship among the selective teams of Iranian football premier league. All fans of three teams in football premier league were selected as a population size. By using a formula, 216 individuals for Esteghlal, 245 individuals for Traktor and 291 individuals for Persepolis were selected randomly. Smith's questionnaire was used to collect the data and validity of it approved by 6 professional of sport management and the reliability by Chronbach alpha coefficient and obtained 0.73. Finally, 752 questionnaires were collected and analyzed. Data were analyzed by t test, ANOVA and Scheffe. The results showed that sport sponsorship among the selective teams was effective. Furthermore, result of ANOVA showed that there is significant different between the effectiveness of sponsorship among the selective teams. It is recommended to the club managers to improve the enhancement factors of fan attendance, and they should inform the sponsors its effectiveness.

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### 1. Introduction

Many people consider that marketers are referring to buyers who know that they are trying to coax people into buying their goods. Others also think that all the propaganda activities of a company are as its marketing efforts. But the reality is that marketing is beyond of its definition than sale activities or even advertisement (11). In fact, marketing is the series of activities which is included in the case of goods and distribution that advertisement and sale are only part of it (Eshghi, 2009; Amis et al., 1999). There are different definitions for marketing such as a group of related businesses, a business phenomenon, the economic process, the exchange or transfer of ownership of products, supply and demand adjustment process and many other meanings. Each of these definitions represent a corner of the marketing activities; today, experts define the marketing as the process of satisfying human needs and requirements (Rousta, 2010). Philip cutler defines marketing as follows:

"Marketing is defined as a social and managerial process by which individuals provide and meet their needs and demands through the process of production and exchanging goods with each other" (Eshghi, 2009; Amis et al., 1999). Marketing involves a range of activities and decisions (Eshghi, 2009). A combination of marketing elements can be defined as follows: "a set of controllable marketing

variables that companies combine them in target market and create the required response in their own compositions"(Kutler, 2010).

In a general classification, they can be summarized in four groups:

1. product, 2. Price, 3. promotion, 4. distribution (Eshghi, 2009).

In today's markets, companies are seeking new methods and approaches to raise their potentiality of marketing being different than their opponents and competitors; thus, they are spending huge expenses in this regard. One of these methods is the sport financial support that companies make the in sponsorship for the related teams or sport event to reach to their ideal targets in the field of marketing (Grohs et al., 2004). The increasingly competition of markets and rising costs of traditional advertising tools has led to increased demand for sports sponsorship (Khosromanesh, 2009). Many researchers consider financial support as a communicative tool similar to advertisement, whereas financial supports act their performance combined with marketing communications. One of these differences is that the advertisements represent a clarified and direct message controlling by a sender, whereas this message is being less controlled in the field of financial supports and that communication is connected by the commercial brand and goods influencing on the audiences (Eshghi, 2009).

Experimental evidences show that the advertisements aware customers only through the aspects of commercial productions not social aspects. In other words, the advertisements do not have any emotional nature whereas the emotional response generated by an event plays a key role in the understanding of customers' message (Cingiene & Gobikas, 2006). Financial support means providing or meeting any financial and production assistances into an activity through a commercial organization in the aim of reaching to commercial targets (Seyyed Ameri, 2010). Exercise is one of the phenomena that companies and private factories support it a lot. Shunk defines the sport financial support as follows: "investment in sport entity (athlete, team, league or sport programs) to support overall organizational goals, commercial or advanced navigatory purposes (Seyyed Ameri, 2010). Team fanatics know their sponsor's productions attractive their similar productions (Grohs et al., 2004). In addition to media coverage and the fans, their emotional feelings towards the team increase the investment return (turnover) of financial supporters (Cingiene & Gobikas, 2006). In the other hand, financial support of sport through the large companies provides the success of the clubs and sponsors that both sides can benefit together (Grohs et al., 2004). Today businesses and industrial owners have found that financial support is as a powerful promotional tool for their businesses (Seyyed Ameri, 2010; 23). Financial support of sport also is the unique features of the sport economy (Shalbari et al., 2012). In fact, one of the most important elements binding the sport and economical events together is the sport financial support in the advertisement of fanatic and sponsor companies (Seyyed Ameri, 2010; Smith et al., 2008). Today, having sponsor is an integral part of income for the clubs (Grohs et al., 2004). Financial support is one of the most important sources of income in today's sports. It also benefits the owners and the goods and services that directly and indirectly contribute to the development of sport (Seyyed Ameri, 2010). One way of providing adequate funding for the particular activities like championship athletic activities is the use of funding companies and private factories (Seyyed Ameri, 2010; Nufer & Bühler, 2010). Sponsored sports have risen dramatically in the past two decades and in most other major non sport companies such as shell, coca cola and Emirates and Dafone have been considered as an important part of marketing strategy. Variety of sports organizations and entities such as individual athletes, clubs and teams, events, leagues, unions, federations and competitions may be supported due to special targets and positions (Grohs et al., 2004). Sponsored sports have attracted the attention of

domestic and foreign companies in Iran. The financial support of professional sports according to the sport in Iran is soaring. Today, most sporting events that are conducted in the country have a sponsor showing the growth of this industry as well (Eshghi, 2009); companies sponsoring on their teams are increasingly growing right now. The sport financial support is an appealing tool for companies attracting their customers' purposes (McKelvey & Grady, 2008). In the season 2008-2009, Mary Brown chain restaurants was introduced as the main sponsor of Perspolis soccer club with USD3 billion contraction. Also, Iranian furniture market in the first half of the season with 500 million and Iranian mobile market with 800 million in the second half of the season were the supporters of Esteghlal soccer team; other teams in the premier league were not exception in this regard, for example, Iran Khodro factory was the sponsor of Qazvin Peykan football club with 4 billion in the same season (2008- 2009) (Eshghi, 2009; Grohs et al., 2004). Sponsors hope to raise the awareness of their customers through the investment in sport and hence they make a special value for their brands. Given that the agreement between the parties is unpredictable, so the risk of investing in sport is very height; for example, there is no any guarantee for the high rate of selling or the high rate of selling or the high perception of the customers (Seyyed Ameri, 2010). Due to the significant growth of sport sponsorship, the effectiveness of financial support is very important for the sport marketers and sponsors. Today, most organizations are looking to measure the effectiveness of their marketing activities and be able to make better decisions on it. Companies spending huge amount of money are seeking their investments back but how to evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing activities has become an issue. In spite of companies' tendency towards sport financial support reaching to their goals, the impacts of these activities and their effectiveness have been less considered in this regard (Grohs et al., 2004). Many definitions have been proposed for effectiveness: the rate of reaching to organizational goals (Etzione), the degree of supplying the requirements or criteria evaluation of individuals outside the organization (Pfeffer and Salansyk; Hamidi, 2003). The effectiveness of sponsor to devoted goals depends to financial sponsor sponsoree. Hans and Skatoien (1995) have identified four levels of sponsorship effectiveness:

1. Being exposed to,
2. Attention,
3. Recognition,
4. Purchasing behavior (Shalbari et al., 2012).

Being exposed refers to the number of measurements that is being displayed by an organization or a commercial brand; for example,

exposed to the TV viewers will be calculated by multiplying the number of seconds. The second level of effectiveness is that how people pay attention to the brand or organization. The attention can be measured by the member of target market based on changes in the retention of the same market members. The third level of assessment of the effectiveness of financial support is the measurement of the cognitive effects.

These effects can be evaluated in tests of recalling; for example, it can be asked that, which sponsor does support this event or team financially? Cognitive tests as a qualitative research are suitable for the evaluation of financial sponsor's effectiveness because they provide information that will allow researchers to pay to explain consumer behavior. Last level is the buying behavior. The most direct method to measure the effectiveness of the sponsor is the purchasing behavior (Shalbari et al., 2012). Pitts and Slater (2004) have mentioned the amount of sales as a suitable tool for measuring the effectiveness of financial support. They consider any increase of sales and purchase intentions as a sign of success of financial support (Eshghi, 2009). Usually it is difficult to measure precise amount of sales due to the financial support. A solution to this problem is to examine the purchase intentions. So, we can say that the intention of purchasing is an appropriate replacement for sales (8). Harvey (2001) in a research titled, "the measurement of financial support effects", found that financial support increases the intention of buyers; he also stated that this increase is not only due to the production features, but also financial support plays a key role in this field. Gross et al (2004) in a research titled, "the study of financial supporters effects", found that, the proportion between financial sponsors and events, the degree of displaying and the level of fans participation in the event have different impacts on the effectiveness of financial sponsors activities. Sin jin (2006) in a research titled, "the significance of financial support effectiveness among Lithuanian Basketball league financial sponsors, found that financial support has a positive impact on the sponsors of "Litous Witt" sales, whereas, this effectiveness was weak for the financial sponsors of Zalgiris. Nufer et al (2010) in a research concerning the effectiveness of financial activities from the world cup matches found that, the effectiveness was very profitable for some companies but others could not benefit a lot. They expressed, it seems that financial support is an effective communication tool. Eshghi (2009) in reviewing the effectiveness of financial support found a positive impact on the intention of fans purchasers of both Perspolis and Esteghlal football teams; The results showed that, financial support dose not influence on

purchasing intention in two Esteghlal and Perspolis football teams. Ghilaninia (2010) in examining the structure of financial support found that the awareness of fans from sponsors and their impacts on purchasing intention has a positive and direct effect; Given to the important role of financial support in the creation of income for clubs and the expected return on investment and increased sales by club sponsors have been considered as the most vital factors of the present study and the comparison of financial support effectiveness among three fanatic teams of Iranian premier football league. So, this study aimed to answer whether the activities of financial sponsors in the field of supporting football clubs are effective, and if the effectiveness of financial supports among the selected premier football league have any differences or not.

## 2. Methods

The present research is descriptive- Comparative following the applied targets; the research community was consisted of three selected premier football league teams (Esteghlal, Perspolis and Traktor). Since the number of adherents of these three teams are coveted by millions, the infinite population size was considered. The sampling method is Random- class and to determine the sample size, the sampling size formula was used for the infinite population (Bal et al., 2009).

$$n = \left( \frac{Z_{\alpha/2} \cdot \sigma}{\varepsilon} \right)^2$$

In above – mentioned formula, Z in the 95% confidence interval is 1.96; the error rate is considered 0.05. Since the variance of fans was not determined among three selected teams in the present study, 30 questionnaires among fans of each teams was analyzed in a preliminary study and these were 0.38, 0.40, and 0.43 respectively. Thus, the size of sample is 216 ones for Esteghlal, 245 ones Traktor and 291 ones for Perspolis was calculated the data collection tool of purchasing intention questionnaire is all the fans in which its reliability is 0.80 calculated by smith; after translation of questionnaire validity with surveys of 6 professor of sport management and its reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient as calculated, 0.73. After collecting the questionnaires, a total of 752 questionnaires were analyzed. First, for the study of normalized data distribution, the tilt and strain data were used in which the team of Esteghlal, 1.783 (Skewness) and -1.028 (kurtosis), Traktor, 1.183 (Skewness) and 1.28 (Kurtosis), and Perspolis, -1.113 (Skewness) and 0.713 (Kurtosis) were obtained. This data is necessary for normal distribution coefficients between – 2 and 2.

Therefore, the data distribution was normal' then, the single- sample t- test was used for assessing the effectiveness of activities sponsored by the fans were selected. To compare the effectiveness of the activities sponsored by the teams, the test of variance analysis (ANOVA) was used.

### 3. Results

The results of descriptive statistics that describe the demographic characteristics of Iran's football team is given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Results of descriptive statistics

Components	Groups	N	Percentage
Team	Perspolis	291	36
	Traktor	245	33
	Esteghlal	216	29
History of fanatic	Less than 1 year	18	2.4
	2-5	113	15
	6-10	115	15.3
	11-15	142	18.9
	Above than 15 years	363	48.3
Age	18-25	414	55
	26-35	266	35.4
	36-45	58	7.7
	Above than 46	14	1.9
Education	Under diploma	206	27.4
	Diploma	146	19.4
	B.A	171	22.7
	M.A and higher	126	16.8
Following-up All matches	Yes	677	90
	No	45	10
Total attendance in a season	1-3	315	41.9
	4-6	194	25.8
	7-10	72	9.6
	Higher than 10	169	22.5
	total	752	100

As shown in Table 1, the largest number of supporters in the sample relating to Perspolis (36%) and the lowest number is Esteghlal team (29%). In terms of age, the largest number relating to a group of 18-25 year old (55%) and the lowest rate is 46 year old (1.9%); the results show that 48.3% of the fans are higher than 15 year old. About 41.9% of these fans are present in the stadium only 1-3 times during a season. The table also shows %90 of fans follow their favorite team in all games (through media). The subject's educational level was found:

27.4% diploma (Maximum) and 13.7% under diploma (minimum). Table 2 shows the results of the single- sample t-test. This test has been carried out for assessing the effectiveness of financial supporter activities among fans of the premier football league.

**Table 2.** Results of single- sample t- test

Team	Average purchase behavior	Average difference	Standard deviation	T	Df	Sig	Lower	Upper
Perspolis	4.097	1.097	0.973	19.234	290	0.001	0.985	1.209
Traktor	4.420	1.420	0.897	24.783	244	0.001	1.307	1.532
Esteghlal	4.012	1.012	1.050	14.162	215	0.001	0.871	1.153
Total	4.178	1.78	1.248	32.758	751	0.001	1.107	1.248

Since the scale of research questionnaire was five worth, single – sample t- test, hypothetical mean value of average was considered 3 and the positive and significant difference of this hypothetical mean representing the high- level of selected teams purchasing intention from clubs financial productions (Habibpour & Safari, 2010).

Since the most direct measuring effectiveness of sponsor is the buying intention indicating the effectiveness of financial support. As shown in Table 2, the results of t- test is significant for each selected teams these results indicate the effectiveness of financial support activities in each function Iranian premier football league?

Perspolis (sig= 0.001, t=19.234), Traktor (sig= 0.001, t= 24.783) and Esteghlal (sig= 0.001, t=14162).

Also the data of fourth array in Table 2 show that all activities related to Iranian premier league are effective (sig= 0.001, t=32.758). In order to compare the effectiveness of carried financial Support for the selected football teams (Esteghlal, Perspolis and Traktor), the one- way ANOVA was used. Given to the variance homogeneity test results (Levene test), the inequality of variance assumption was rejected (statistic Leven =2.821, sig=0.06, df2= 749, df1=2), As a result of first row of Table 1, analysis of variance output was established in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Results of variance analysis test

Variable	Source of changes	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Sq	F	Sig
Buying production of financial sponsors	Within group	22.216	2	11.108	11.745	0.001
	Between group	70.8351	749	0.946		
	Total	730.567	751			

According to the results of variance analysis test, the effectiveness of financial sponsors among the three selected Iranian premier football league (Esteghlal, Perspolis and Traktor) has a significance difference. (F=11.745, sig=0.001< 0.05).



If we want to compare the mean of unequal group size, the Scheffe method is the most appropriate in this field (Spss). Because of the inequality of groups size (the number of fanatics) in this research, the Schaffe follow – up test was used to compare two teams together. The result of Scheffe test is given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Result of Scheffe test

Team 1	Team 2	Mean difference	Standard error	sig
Traktor	Esteglal	0.408	0.090	0.001
Traktor	Perspolis	0.323	0.084	0.001
Perspolis	Esteglal	0.085	0.087	0.623

According to the results in Table 4, the effectiveness of financial support activities among Traktor and Esteglal football clubs is 0.408 mean difference, (Sig=0.001) and also between two Traktor and Perspolis football teams there is significant difference with 0.323 mean difference, (Sig=0.001). In case of Traktor and Esteglal, Traktor and perspolis, the mean difference is positive representing that the effectiveness of financial support activities in Traktor football club is significantly higher than two other teams. In comparison of financial support activities between Esteglal and Persepolis, there are no observed any significant differences in these teams (Sig=0.623, mean difference= 0.085).

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of financial support activities among the fans of Iranian premier football league. The results of descriptive statistic showed that 41.9% of fans attend 1 to 3 times during a season, which is very low' because the attendance of fans increases ticket sales and in the other hand, the number of attendance in the stadiums expose the name and brand of financial sponsors to huge number of people there? (Shalbari et al., 2012). The increasing number of fans causes to increase the effectiveness of financial support activates among sport teams. These descriptive results must be an alert for all managers of clubs because financial supporters hope to increase their consumer's awareness in terms of their productions (Seyyed Ameri, 2010); however, when they feel the lack of any investment in the field of sport is going to be ineffective, they immediately reject their finance in this regard; because again, one of the most important ways of providing sport budget especially sport championship activities refers to the support of companies and private factories (Seyyed Ameri, 2010; Smith et al., 2008). Managers should examine the effective factors of fans participation to be able to increase both the rate of selling tickets as wee; as effectiveness of financial sponsors; in one hand, the descriptive results show that 90% of fans

follow their favorite team in all matches (through media). Given to the measurement of multiplying the seconds in viewers of TV relates to the degree of expose (Grohs et al., 2004), what the number of viewers gets high, the degree of expose is also increasing showing the raised effectiveness of financial support activities in this regard. The results of single- sample t- test showing the effectiveness of financial support activities in each selected and fanatic teams of Iranian football league. This finding is matched with the results of Nufer et al (2010), Eshghi (132009) and Gilanina (2010) researches.; of course this finding is also matched with the findings of Sin jin research (2006) in the Lithunian Basketball league, but the related results are not matched with Zalgiris Basketball club; the reason may refer to the differences of two football and basketball fields. Also, it may be due to the Zalgiris weak function in the basketball league. According to the present research findings, it is suggested to all managers of the clubs to aware these financial support activities effectively to all sponsors to make their sponsorship through the related activities and try to increase the expense of their contraction. Based on variance analysis test results, the effectiveness of financial support activities has a significant difference among three selected Iranian football teams. The results of Scheffe follow-up test showed that the effectiveness of financial support activates among Traktor and Esteglal and also Traktor and Perspolis is significant and in two cases the mean difference is positive indicating that the effectiveness of financial support activities in Traktor significantly is higher than two Perspolis and Esteglala football teams. These results are not matched to the finding of Eshghi (2009). Eshghi (2009) in examining the effectiveness of financial support activities among football funs found that the effectiveness of financial support on purchasing intention does not have difference in two Esteglal and Perspolis football teams. The reason for this mismatch may be the Traktor football club has not been studied in Eshghi's research (2009); it is suggested to examine a lot of football clubs to get the more precise results in this field. Traktor football club has a best position in the premier league arrangement table making the team superiorly better effectiveness of financial support activities among two other teams (Perspolis and Esteglal). (This research has been carried on the selected team fans during 2010-2011season). Although it is struggled in the present research to neutralize the research results with collecting questionnaires in different times of performance impact on a team in a special competition (win or lose in a match) and also the number of played competitions (when approaching to the end of- the season and the number of games

increasing, the fans get familiar with brands and logos of team sponsors more and more. The limitations of the research refer to the less number of clubs. It's suggested to all researchers to select the highest number of teams to overcome the present research deficiencies and try to distribute questionnaires in this regard. Also, commenting from financial supports and club managers in the field of financial support activities provide beneficial result in this regard.

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