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## THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN LOYALTY TO NATIONAL SPORTS BRAND

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of the study was the role of mass media in national sports brand loyalty. This study was a descriptive traversal. The statistical Sample was selected of 100 managers and experts familiar with the field of sports science and sports brands. The researcher made questionnaire For Collected Data. Data were analyzed with coefficient analysis of variance and Friedman's test ( $P \leq 0.05$ ). It was found that there is no meaningful relationship between the effective media factors and mass media and only 11% variability in national sports brand loyalty was observed by four independent variables. Also, comparison of the ranks revealed that the highest rank belonged to national sports brand loyalty teaching, while the lowest rank was assigned to information communication and introduction of national sports brands. Also, among the mass media, the highest rank was related to television and newspapers and magazines had the lowest rank. Different media have shown a weak performance in terms of the four factors of culture building, information communication, national sports brand loyalty teaching, and social contribution. None of the mass media including television, radio, magazines and newspapers have efficiently played their essential role in enhancing the people loyalty to national sports brand.*

### **Keywords**

*Culture building, Information communication, loyalty mass media, National Brand, social contribution.*

### **Introduction**

At the beginning of third millennium, the sports enter a new era. The sport is a part of today's society and gets more important every day. Today, it is one of the most important economic issues of communities (1). In this industry, more than 4,500 companies are active in the field of sports marketing in United States and about 7.3 billion dollars are annually spent on research on marketing and attracting sponsors for sporting events (2). However, 60% of America marketing managers consider the communication as one of the most important factors influencing marketing strategies and believe that its use may affect the target market, attracting of customers, and promoting the position of company and product (3). The large sports products companies such as Adidas, Nike, and Reebok which are large manufacturers of sporting goods in the world and the Iranian sports products manufacturers such as Majid, Dayi, Shekari, Jouraban, and Tourbafan act as organized and coordinated and try accurately at all design, production and distribution, promotion, and customer relationship stages to be successful in business (4). The valid, differentiated, broad, and attractive national brand is the best thing which may be given to exporters by country officials; for example, the power and value which is given by phrase "Made in Japan" to electronic products and the attractiveness which is given by phrase "Made in Italy" to Italian products. Today, the brand-based exports are the most powerful way to create and maintain national reputation. However, it may be concluded that the people are the most important element in nation branding. The national brand is a concept which includes a large range of people activities such as exports,

foreign investment, culture and cultural heritage, people, governance, and tourism. The national brand is a value which reflects the knowledge, understanding, and whole experience of stakeholders and other related factors of a country in external environment. The increased national brand awareness helps to increase the probability of easily remembering brand name in the field of similar products. The increased awareness of national brand means the increased recognition and recall of national brand in minds of target market customers. The product quality and the value of a product for a customer help the customers to remind national brand; the customer may easily differentiate national brand and products from competitors. In fact, the brand awareness indicates the information nodes of a brand in memory of customers. The Logos or symbols, national brand name, and how to use marketing communications all effect on promotion of brand awareness. Today, the organization's brand is the main asset of most organizations. In past decades, the value of a company was measured in terms of its property, tangible assets, factories, and equipment. Today, however, the economics and management researchers conclude that the value of a company is located outside of it; i.e. in the minds of potential buyers. The price of a product measures its monetary value, but the brand introduces the product and reveals its distinctive aspects (5). When the consumers seek a brand to meet their needs in their daily lives, they look for a name which may satisfy them (6). The relationship between brand and customers is proposed as brand loyalty and is one of the important research topics in brand management (7). Today, we live in an era in which the demands of customers of mer-

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chants, companies, and (manufacturing, services, etc.) organizations is higher than any other era. There is no (production, service, and etc.) business which may survive without satisfied customers, unless it will be a governmental monopolized company (8). More importantly, the demands and expectations of consumers increase every day and this trend will be growing. So, the (production, marketing, etc.) companies are required to achieve strategies which will be beyond the demands and expectations of consumers. Accordingly, the loyalty and trust to (i.e. products, services, etc.) company on the basis of mutually beneficial long-term relationship (between producers and consumers) should be replaced by continuous satisfaction of customers. The brands which determine and discriminate their identity and goals and provide friendly and clear features may communicate usefully with their customers and win their heart, mind, and everyday life. In addition, the customer loyalty has competitive advantages in brand market. In product markets, the customers which are loyal to brands may ensure a company's survival or destruction. In today's world, the competitive advantage is not achieved only by relying on functional features of products and services; in present era, the brand is the most important differentiating factor of a business of competitors. The strategic and important role of brand equity in gaining competitive advantage and strategic management decisions is one of the reasons of this reputation (9). When the brand equity is accurately measured, it will be an appropriate criterion to evaluate long-term effects of marketing decisions (10). The loyalty to national brand is a deep commitment to re-purchase or re-patronize consistently a preferred product or service in future. The marketing aims to obtain customer satisfaction and the identification of needs, desires, tastes, attitudes, interests, abilities, and limitations of customers may realize this goal (11). The strong correlation between customer satisfaction and profitability is confirmed in many studies. So, the companies should have a clear understanding of customer needs and values to provide valuable goods and services to them, satisfy them, and finally make them loyal to themselves (12). The research shows that meeting the needs and desires of potential customers may lead to their commitment and loyalty (13). Among the various tools for development of sports, the media is one of the most important tools. As a tool, the mass media transmits sports news to audiences, attracts large population to sports, and impact directly or indirectly on achieving many sports development goals. In fact, the media is a part of communication process. The mass media includes a set of communication tools which generally have one-way relationship. The mainstream media like TV and radio are among the most important mass media. According to John Locke, the print media are another category of media which have still retained their position as fourth pillar of democracy. Today, due to increasing use of Internet, the internet media have achieved a special place. The media such as News sites allow audience to interact and this makes possible the identification of real needs of audience by these media owners. The media is the third

player in advertisement world which is used by advertiser. The media includes communication channels which transfer messages from advertiser to audience. The representative of a media tries to convince the companies that his/her media is the best way to transfer the advertisement message to audiences. For development of sports, the communication must be such that it will attract more people to sport and improve public awareness of positive functions of sport. The media should present the advertising message in such a way that it will comply with creative efforts and the message should be consistent with media (14). The television seems to be more effective than other media in creating a mood or positive feeling in audiences and the print media seems to be more suitable to provide accurate and detailed information (15). According to past research, there is significant positive relationship between customer loyalty and strengthening of national brand (16) and a strong relationship between brand awareness and brand association and brand loyalty among customers; the increased loyalty positively impacts on company brand equity (17). Also, it is confirmed that there is a positive relationship between brand image and awareness and present and future purchase of customers (18). The planners, officials, and managers should believe that if the mass and communication media will be used properly, they may be an important factor in development of sports. According to public relation researchers, today, the social media is a strategic tool to develop brands in industries. It is a cost-effective medium which allows extensive communication and interaction with consumers. For this reason, in recent years, the companies have considered social media to attract customers. The interaction between sports national brand and media has provided many challenges for sports brands managers and experts and media managers and experts. Undoubtedly, all these groups aim to develop sport and sport's national brands. There is a significant relationship between brand name, price, promotion, quality of services and products, production method, and store environment and loyalty to sports brand clothes brands (19). The researchers state that the brand equity is a communicative mediator between brand loyalty and brand reputation and management. In both samples, there is a significant relationship between brand loyalty, patriotism, and success (20). Considering literature on media and brand loyalty in sports industry, it should be noted that the conducted research have not obtained same results. According to needs of industries and countries, a series of factors have been evaluated; this limitation is more pronounced in developing countries than western countries. The lack of research in this area is more prominent in Iran. Therefore, it is necessary to know that how media influence on customer loyalty to sports national brands and how they act to obtain loyalty to national brand. Although many years have passed from sports brands flourishing in Western countries, including America, this issue has remained unknown in developing countries, especially Iran; this is more evident in sport manufacturing industry (Iranian sports brand). Most studies of media and national brand

have been conducted in western and developed countries, while the national brand in developing countries suffers from lack of academic literature and science compared with developed countries (21). Considering few studies which have been conducted in developing countries and have focused on failure, implementation, and role of media in national sports brand loyalty, there is still a need to conduct study in this area (22). The study of impact of media on national sports brand loyalty is a method which may minimize failure of branding projects (23). Therefore, the literature of media and its role in national sports brand loyalty need more scientific and practical cooperation. In line with other developed countries in studying media impact on customer loyalty to sports national brand, this study aims to investigate the effect of media on sports national brand loyalty to provide guidelines and recommendations to help industry managers in manufacturing field of sports industry in Iran. Also, this study aims to answer these questions: how a specific strategic decision of media may impact on brand? How the media may proceed in line with strategic objectives of national brand? What tactical plans should be adopted to reach the desired place? It is hoped that the results of this study help to organize customer-oriented activities, perform branding in manufacturing section of Iran's sports industry, and enable sports managers to use modern methods, obtain more profits, attract more people to invest and work in sports section, increase competition in this area, and encourage manufacturers to improve the quality of their products to gain market such that the import of products from other countries will not be needed and the sports in Iran, like many developing countries, will be a productive and profitable factor.

### Methodology

This was descriptive correlation survey study. The population consisted of sports experts and managers in Isfahan in 2016 (N= 100). Due to limited number of population, all of these sport managers and experts which were familiar with sports brand were selected as sample. A researcher made questionnaire was used to evaluate the media's role in developing and promoting sports national brand. This questionnaire had two sections: first part included demographic characteristics and second part contained research questions. The second section consisted of 55 questions about the role of mass media in promoting national brand of sports and used 5-point Likert scale. The culture building, information, loyalty, and social participation factors were evaluated by 12 (1 to 12), 15 (13 to 27), 13 (28 to 40), and 15 (41 to 55) questions, respectively. Using validity formula and factor analysis, the validity of questionnaires was determined by 10 brand and sport management experts to be 0.86. Then, to determine the reliability, the questionnaires were distributed among 30 experts and managers; the coefficient of reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha and determined to be  $\alpha = 0.84$ . Using SPSS (version 22), the descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential (Pearson correlation coefficient, analysis

of variance, and Friedman test) statistics were used to analyze the data at error level of 0.05.

### Findings

The descriptive findings show that of 100 participants, 36 were women and 64 were men. The work experience of %42.8 of participants was 10 to 15 years and %47.4 participants had a master's degree. The mean and standard deviation of culture building for using sports national brands, information and introducing a variety of national brands, training brand loyalty, and social participation were (2.06) and (SD=  $\pm 0.83$ ), (1.67) and (SD=  $\pm 0.76$ ), (2.40) and (SD=  $\pm 0.71$ ), and (2.34) and (SD=  $\pm 0.77$ ), respectively.

The results of correlation test showed that there is no significant and positive correlation between affective factors of media (culture building, information, loyalty training, and community participation) and mass media (table 1).

According to table 2, there is no significant and positive correlation between effective factors of media and media types (table 2, 3).

According to table 4, the multiple correlation coefficient for media factors affecting national brand loyalty and dependent variable is  $R = 0.656$  and the coefficient of determination is 0.11. This means that %11 of variance in national brand loyalty is significantly explained by 3 independent variables (table 4).

Using Enter method, a significant model was obtained.

The adjusted R squared and  $p < 0.005$  in this model explain 0.416 percent of model variance. These three independent variables explain only 11 percent of effect on brand loyalty. So, this fact should be noted that only 11 percent of loyalty is significantly explained by these three variables and 89 percent of variance in loyalty is still unexplained (table 5).

The Friedman test was used to compare mean scores of media factors affecting national brand loyalty and the results showed that among these factors, the training of loyalty to sport national brands is the highest priority (2.43/2) and the information and introduction of various sports national brand is the lowest priority (1.96) (Table 6).

Among media, the TV is the first priority (1.01) and the newspapers and magazines is the last priority (0.76) (table 7).

### Discussion and conclusion

The results of inferential analysis of data in table 1 show that there is no significant and positive relationship between media effective factors (culture building, information, education of loyalty, social participation) and mass media. It is also observed that the multiple correlation coefficients for relationship between media factors affecting national brand loyalty and dependent variable is 0.656 and the coefficient of determination is 0.11; this means that %11 of variance in national brand loyalty is significantly explained by four independent variables. The

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three media together create only %11 of variance in national sports brand loyalty; this is a very low level. So, this fact should be noted that only 11 percent of loyalty is significantly explained by these four variables and 89 percent of variance in loyalty is still unexplained. In other words, there are other variables which are important for brand loyalty, but are not considered in this study. The high priority of training loyalty to national brands which is given by media is due to this fact that in recent years, the media have tried to encourage people to buy Iranian goods and support economical resistance. However, according to most scholars, no training will have positive impact without culture building. The mere focus on training of loyalty will not be a good method, unless with culture building and proper information. The information which was in third place is one of the basic principles of media impact on national brand loyalty. If people do not have enough information about the value of national brand, they will not be loyal to it. The provision of information about sports national brand types is an essential role of media and the main need of customer for loyalty to brand. According to findings, it may be said that the culture building to use sports national brands is an infrastructure which is needed to encourage people to be loyal to a particular brand of goods and services. The findings showed that the mass media has played an insignificant role in culture building of brands, especially sports brands. The culture building for sports brand consumption may help to flourish national sports brands. This findings is consistent with findings of Mousavi et al. (2014), Javadein et al. (2007), Heidarzadeh et al. (2009), Soltan Husseini et al. (2010), Alizadeh (2010), and Sajadi et al (2013) (24,17, 25, 26, 27, 28). Also, the information of using national sports brands is an essential part to encourage people to be loyal to a particular brand of goods and services. According to findings, the mass media have paid less attention to brand, especially sports brands. Also, the findings showed that the training of being loyal to national sports brands is determined to be first priority by media. This is an effective factor, but the mere training of goods consumption and neglecting the culture building and informing is doomed to fail. If the culture and foundation of brand loyalty is not strengthened and the information of sport-specific goods and brands is not provided by media, the media may not have a significant impact on sports brand loyalty. This is consistent with findings of Mousavi et al. (2014), Moharramzadeh et al. (2013), Mira et al (2012), and Soltan Husseini et al (2011) (24,16, 29, 26).

According to findings, it was concluded that the social participation is determined to be second priority by media. This is one of the basic and infrastructure factors, but it may be seen that there is no positive and significant relationship between media and social participation of people to support brand, especially sports national brand. In his study, Home (2005) found that the mass media pay attention to social participation in sport to provide content in order to attract audiences (30). The increasing economic pressures on mass media, especially television and the

economic benefits of sports participation against other television programs (such as display, documentation etc.) caused they consider sport as a low-cost, attractive, consistent, and spectator-oriented thing. The social participation in sports was considered as an economic community in political economy of media and the sports developed from local to international areas (Home, 2005) (30). The findings of this study showed that the media's social factor and social participation have a significant impact on economic development of a country and certainly may have a significant impact on development of sport. This is not consistent with findings of present study.

According to findings, I may be said that there is no significant and positive correlation between customer loyalty and strengthening of loyalty to sports national brand by media; this indicates that if the customer awareness and information of national brand products attributes will be more, the products will met the needs and demands of customers, and the customers perceive that their desired brand provides healthy, high quality, and cost-effective products, the customers will adopt the brand with knowledge and positive attitude. Therefore, the consumer knowledge helps to reduce the complexity of information and brand's suspicions and this process will ultimately lead to brand loyalty. This is important because it leads to specific behaviors such as increased purchase volume, expressing advantages of company, and recommending products to friends and relatives. In this way, they show that they are committed to company. Therefore, the use of media may transform customers into brand loyal. Therefore, the media participation will be a key issue. Considering the implicit changes and this fact that people should be trained to have a sports national brand loyalty, they senior management and media cooperation should be considered. These findings show that the duties of senior management to strengthen the brand include creating a suitable environment for doing business, using progressive social and economic policies, responsibility and commitment towards brand, creating a safe and secure environment, and effective performance. According to findings, the media should try to shape, direct, and establish an appropriate perception of brand in mind of customer. In this regard, the factors which increase brand loyalty should be known and strengthen to achieve customer loyalty and brand strengthening. Finally, it may be concluded that the upgrade of these components increases customer loyalty to brand and this loyalty may have many benefits including reduced cost of attracting new customers, reduced sensitivity of customers to changes and prices, increased barriers for entry of new competitors, and increased revenue growth. One of the ways to create loyalty in customers is that the media should extend their focus beyond marketing strategies to customer satisfaction to develop brand equity and trust among customers. The creation of a database by brand owner which identifies the various needs of different customers may play an effective role in strengthening sports brand loyalty. This is consistent with findings of Mira et al. (2012) and Kashkar et al. (2012) (29, 31).

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Table 1: Correlation between effective factors of media and mass media

	Television	Radio	Newspapers and magazines	Culture building	Information	Training of loyalty	social participation
Television	1						
Radio	0.07	1					
Newspapers and magazines	0.08	0.09	1				
Culture building	0.06	0.04	0.04	1			
Information	0.03	0.01	0.09	0.02	1		
Training of loyalty	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.07	1	
social participation	0.02	0.03	0.06	0.02	0.08	0.06	1

Table 2: Correlation between impact of media and media types

Components of media influence	Type of correlation coefficient	r	Sig
Culture building	Pearson	0.36	0.43
Information	Pearson	0.49	0.2
Training of loyalty	Pearson	0.46	0.67
Social participation	Pearson	0.45	0.56

Table 3: ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig
Correlation	54.28	2	10.82	29.01	0.001
Remaining	71.64	192	0.37		
Total	12.77	197			

Table 4: Adjusted R squared value

Model	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination	R-square
1	0.65	0.11	0.41

Table 5: standardized and non-standardized regression coefficients of variables

	Beta	SE B	$\beta$	Sig
Culture building	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.36
Information	0.008	0.32	0.01	0.8
Training of loyalty	-0.11	0.29	-0.05	0.09
Social participation	0.08	0.34	-0.09	0.06

Table 6: Results of Friedman test

Media influential factors on loyalty	Mean of ranking	Priority	Test significance
Culture of use (consumption) sports national brands	2.11	3	Total number
Information and introduction of various sports national brand	1.96	4	

Training of loyalty to sports national brands	2.43	1	$X^2$	73.88
Social participation	2.33	2		

Table 7: Results of Friedman test

Mass media	Mean of ranking	Priority	Test significance	
Television	1.01	1	Total	100
Radio	0.96	2	number	
Newspapers and magazines	0.76	3	$X^2$	73.88