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Journal of New Studies in Sport Management

Online ISSN: 2717 - 4069

Homepage: <https://jnssm.uk.ac.ir>



Iranian Scientific  
Association of  
Sport Management

## Identifying Effective Drivers in the Future of Sports Businesses in Khorasan Razavi Province

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article type:

Original article

#### Article history:

Received: 2 March 2022

Received in revised form: 13

May 2022

Accepted: 16 May 2022

Publish online: 10 September

2022

#### Keywords:

Business

Futurology

Khorasan Razavi

Propulsion

Sports

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify effective drivers in the future of sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province. The participants included experts in management, marketing and sports businesses. The interviews were conducted by snowball method and continued until the theoretical consensus, and finally after 18 interviews we reached the theoretical consensus. For statistical analysis SPSS software and Mick Mac software were used. The results of cross-impact analysis based on MDI and MII matrices showed that supportive drivers, marketing drivers, as well as drivers of creativity and innovation play an important role in improving system relationships. In addition, the three groups of propellants having the highest and the least impact included economic divers (educational divers), and customer-oriented divers respectively. On the other hand, propellants such as; Cultural drivers, communication drivers, and managerial drivers are more influenced than being influential. Finally, it was the propulsion of manpower that lacks a key and important role in the formation of sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province, but they should not be forgotten completely. It is suggested that in order to develop more sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province, these items should be on the agenda to achieve a bright future in sports in the province.

## Introduction

Sport is a multi-billion dollar industry worldwide and is the dominant and defining force in the lives of millions of people around the world (Kurtzman, 2005). In recent years, sports businesses have grown significantly and gained economic importance (Gaffney, 2010; Smith & Stewart, 2010; Tichaawa & Swart, 2010). Among businesses, sports businesses have become very important in

**How to Cite:** Sahebkarani, M. A., Khoshbakhti, J., Kariminejad, R. (2022). Identifying Effective Drivers in the Future of Sports Businesses in Khorasan Razavi Province. *Journal of New Studies in Sport Management*, 3(3), 509 -520. DOI: 10.22103/JNSSM.2022.19113.1067



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DOI: 10.22103/JNSSM.2022.19113.1067



developed countries and also bring high income (aall, '' aannny, a aaylf., 7777). In this regard, in 2010, Nike, the world's most valuable sports brand was valued at approximately \$ 10.7 billion. The American company is still a leader in the sports business and has increased the economic value of its brand to \$ 27 billion. The sports business industry is made up of different sectors. Sports businesses have effectively expanded their focus from sports production to exchanges between producers and consumers (6) (Westerbeke, 2011). Numerous researchers in this field have stated that one of the effective factors in the development of sports businesses is the cultural factor (Gammelsæter, 2021; Smith & Stewart, 2010). With these features in mind, as well as the growing business landscape, especially in the sports sector, the researchers identified gaps that reflect a deeper understanding of the issue of sport and show that this sector It has grown faster than other businesses and there are other factors involved in this growth that have been neglected (Hritz & Ross, 2010).

Hence, there are articles on sports businesses; Ghasemi et al. (2020) reported 8 general factors related to sports businesses as follows; government policies, legal protections, cultural enrichment, personal aspects, religious issues, skilled manpower, effective training, and management practices (Ghasemi, Khoshnam, Far, & Mohammadzadeh, 2020). Their results showed that the research model has a good fit. On the other hand, Brakhas et al. (2021) conducted a study entitled "Business management in crisis: factors, challenges, and strategies (A study of the sports industry during COVID-19 recession)". Their results showed that managing the sports business during crises and recessions requires the application of change and innovation strategies along with technology-based ecological networks (Brakhas, Boroumand, Dastoom, & Bozorgpour, 2021). Abdolmaleki (2020) in a study titled "The experience of e-sports businesses through the mediation of e-word of mouth and environmental factors related to e-clubs both directly and indirectly through the moderating role of e-word of mouth have a role in the customer service experience. But ergonomics only affects service experience through the mediation of e-word of mouth. E-word of mouth also plays a role in the customer service experience (Abdolmaleki, 2020). Izadfar et al. (2020) conducted a study entitled "The business model of sports academies with an emphasis on value proposition and customer segments ". The results showed that the customer segments in terms of importance include athletes (beginners to champions), coaches and referees, and ordinary people. On the other hand, internationally, various studies have been conducted on this issue (Izadfar, Sharififar, & Mohammadkazemi, 2020). Lv, Wang et al. (2022) conducted a study entitled "Construction of business innovation model for sports industry using a deep learning algorithm". The results showed that The rapid development of Internet technology has provided a common interface for various sports companies to use the Internet as a platform to develop business and communication models to advance their goals for the sports industry (Lv, Wang, & Ma, 2022). Ziyadullaev et al. (2022) conducted a study entitled "Creation of a model of development of sports marketing in modernization of sports management system in Uzbekistan". The results showed that for the development of sports businesses, a platform must be provided with customer orientation and support that is prioritized through customer relationship. Therefore, performing tasks such as organizing sports productions and organizing events, including managing digital electronic services, resources Necessary financial, providing information services, organizing sports performances, providing various basic and additional services, coordinating the activities of athletes, coaches with services. Personnel, organizing the flow of athletes and coaches can help accelerate the development of sports businesses (Ziyadullaev, 2022). Arumugam (2020) conducted a study entitled "Coach Participation in the sport and business industry". The results showed that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected the global economic situation while all businesses and industries face many challenges and are economically vulnerable. However, the trade and sports industries have not fallen significantly. These two industries are recovering and continue manufacturing the same equipment to be sold. Sports coaches also play an important role in the development of the sports industry and business (Arumugam, 2020). As part of the entertainment business, sport has great potential for investment and job creation. Although the environmental conditions in Iran may be somewhat different due to economic problems and the lack of opportunities for progress in this area, which will create obstacles in the development path that the general path is not very feasible, but Iranians can still go to the paths. Think of another applicable.

Studies conducted on sports business show that many researchers recognize the high value and importance of the sports industry because sports business may lead to economic growth and prosperity (Hall et al., 2017). Khorasan Razavi province is one of the suitable platforms in Iran due to its geographical location and also many people who enter this province as religious tourism, which has the potential to play a significant role in providing sports businesses. Provide desirable services to accommodate more tourists. Therefore, it has become important to study the future of sports business in the Khorasan Razavi province as highlighting the future can be an important tool for sports business owners, Managers policymakers, and stakeholders of the university and national sports industry. It is also important to persuade them to respond appropriately to the development of the national sports business due to an uncertain future. As a result, considering the increased attention of Khorasan Razavi province to this important issue, as well as taking into account the need of society for the employment and development of entrepreneurial businesses and the great opportunities of the sports industry in business creation, the following question is going to be responded in the present study: What factors can be effective in the future businesses of Khorasan Razavi province?

## Methodology

The present study was applied and qualitative in its essence and purpose using futurology and exploratory-analytical approaches. Moreover, the data were gathered through library research and analyzing the related documents. The statistical population included experts in management, marketing and sports businesses (university professors, sports start-up activists, PhD students who researched in this field, their subject was sports business, and special and selected members and teachers of the Employment and Entrepreneurship Working Group). The interviews were conducted by snowball method and continued until the theoretical consensus or finally after 18 interviews we reached the theoretical consensus (Several interviews were conducted virtually due to corona restrictions in Khorasan Razavi Province).

To collect indicators (drivers) and primary factors affecting sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province, the existing documents were reviewed and in-depth interviews were done in the form of open and semi-structured questions with sports experts from Khorasan Razavi province. After reviewing in-depth interviews, the effective factors in the development of sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province were extracted and approved by the interviewee. Regarding the variables, a Delphi questionnaire was developed and distributed among the sports experts who were different from the previous stage experts. To confirm the final items, following three stages of rejection or confirmation of items by experts through the Delphi method, a relative consensus was reached. The result of this consensus was the main variables that have been identified and finally, the quantitative data used in this study was prepared numerically by assessing Delphi questionnaires. After collecting the indicators and variables, the interaction matrix was categorized into two stages with indicators in their rows and columns. The final questionnaire was redistributed to sports experts to be completed (through Delphi method) (15 people). Finally, Mick Mac was used to analyzing the indicators and variables in the final questionnaire. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed in Excel and Mic Mac software.

## Results

The results of Table (1) showed that the variable with the highest frequency was age (36-45 years). Also, the highest frequency of gender is related to men (13 people), the highest frequency of marital status is related to married people (11 people) and the highest frequency of education status is related to master's degree (7 people).

**Table 1.** Data related to Examined Sample

N	Variables	Criteria	Frequency
1	Age	25-35	3
		36-45	6
		46-55	5
		56-65	4
2	Gender	Male	13
		Female	5
3	Marital status	Single	7
		Married	11
4	Academic degree	BA	6
		MA	7
		PhD	5
Total			18

To identify the effective drivers in the future of sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province, 91 indicators were identified through research and in-depth interviews distributed among the research experts. 19 out of 91 indicators were finally removed and 73 indicators were given to experts for re-examination. Finally, key factors were adjusted in 10 sections and 73 key indices with a 10 × 10 matrix width based on cross-impacts.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of Effective Factors in Sports Businesses in Khorasan Razavi Province

N	Indicator	Driver
1	Being able and expert in management	Management drivers
	Making use of expert consultants and marketers	
	Using the opportunities properly	
	Responding to new economic ideas and models rapidly (organization and employees)	
	Regulating in such a way that obedience leads to competitive advantage	
	Taking the right business strategy	
2	Taking an efficient business model	Manpower drivers
	Introducing the ecosystem of entrepreneurship and employment in sports to students and graduates	
	Benefiting from expert and efficient human resources	
	Licensing of professional jobs in sports with priority given to sports science graduates	
	Increasing the self-confidence of sports businesses	
	Benefiting from self-motivated, active employees who try to both teach and learn	
3	Making use of teamwork skills	Marketing drivers
	Being skilled to use modern technologies	
	Doing active marketing	
	Checking the audience's access with new methods	
	Taking appropriate marketing strategies	
	Being able to influence the new markets	
4	Doing internet advertising	Customer-orientation drivers
	Being able to do marketing for the valuable products and services	
	Identifying new markets for sports businesses in the society	
	Branding local examples	
	Paying attention to new customer needs	
	Providing customers' training and services up-to-date	
5	Taking advantage of dealerships and retailers	Supportive drivers
	Considering product quality	
	Increasing the variety of services and sports goods	
	Respecting customers in sports businesses	
	Allocating subsidies to investors for the construction of sports facilities	
	Supporting land allocation and facilities	
5	Supporting professionals, innovators, and researchers	Supportive drivers
	Promoting entrepreneurship and creating a suitable environment	

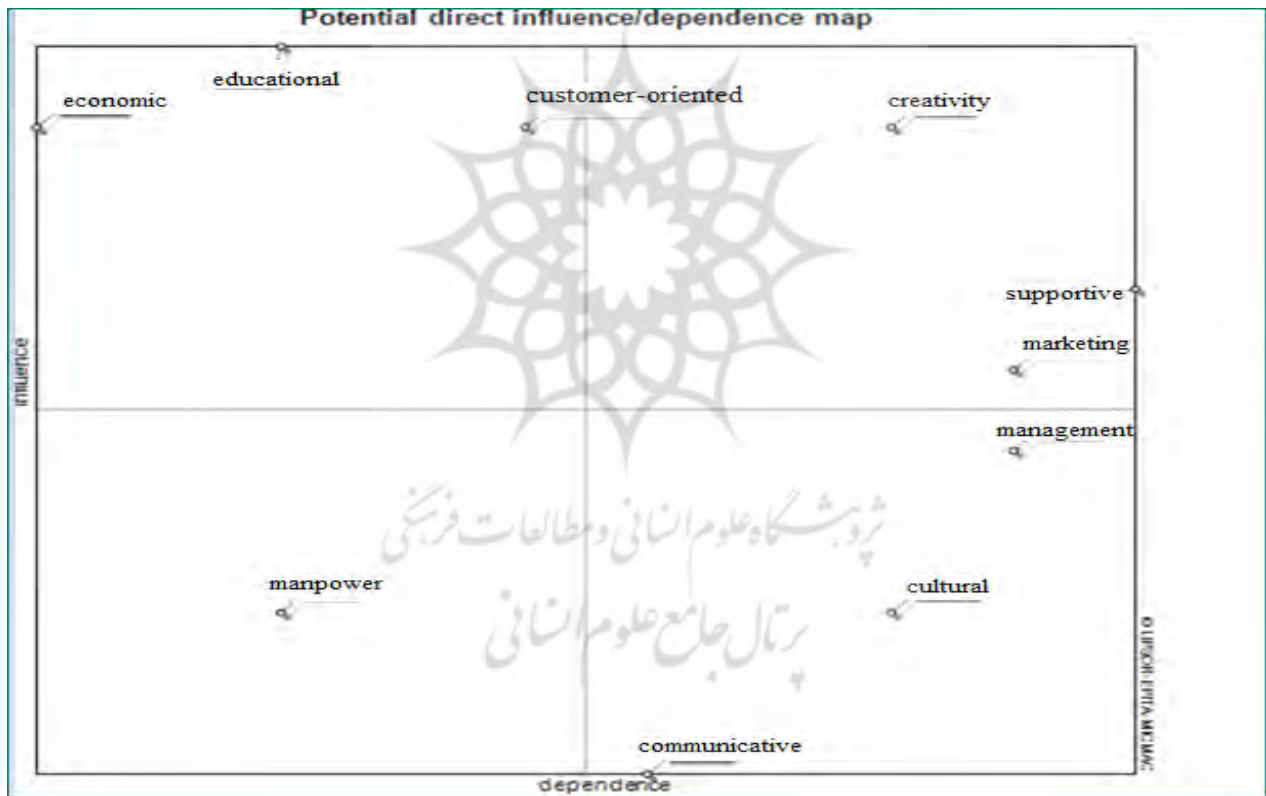
	Reducing the interest rate facilities	
	Preventing the import of smuggled sports goods	
	supporting and encouraging the officials to have a positive attitude toward sports businesses	
	Increasing government support for advertising sports businesses	
	Legislating laws to protect active sports businesses	
	Eliminating restrictive rules for sports businesses	
	Removing negative factors and pressures to promote the wrong principles in sports businesses	
	Paying attention to social problems and solving problems in the goals of sports businesses	
	Rewarding innovative activities and ideas in the sports business	
	Making communication with institutions and organizations	
	Making appropriate communicative infrastructure (access to transportation facilities, etc.)	
6	Establishing the evaluation committees and monitoring the good activities of sports businesses	Communicative drivers
	Being able to communicate and convey thoughts and feelings to others and other employees	
	Accessing the World Wide Web as a source of knowledge	
	Valuing the role of sports in society	
7	Spreading the culture of honesty in sports businesses	Cultural drivers
	Promoting the culture of citizenship behavior of sports businesses	
	Improving the culture of customer loyalty in sports businesses	
	Optimizing product pricing to mitigate the impact of tariffs	
8	Allocating subsidies to entrepreneurs and investors	Economic drivers
	Considering economic issues such as the purchasing power of the people	
	Stabilizing the country's foreign exchange market	
	Holding training courses in workshops and seminars	
	Providing training in access to information, marketing, new technologies, entrepreneurial skills, and business network development	
9	Holding training and extension courses in sports businesses	Educational drivers
	Creating scientific content regarding Islamic businesses in sports	
	Updating the existing training in sports businesses	
	Benefiting from innovation power	
	Supporting domestic patent	
	Being able to participate in information technology systems	
	Innovating the product	
	Producing and providing creative and innovative products and services of the organization to achieve competitive advantage	
10	Making rapid innovation in providing products and services to customers and beneficent employees	Creativity and innovation drivers
	Emphasizing on continuous learning of employees to achieve sustainable competitive advantage	
	Paying attention to creativity and innovation as a value	

By analyzing the key indicators and required data, the dimensions of the 10×10 matrix with Mic Mac, and the cross-section analysis method, the filling degree of matrix was 79%. Out of 79 measurable matrix relationships, 23 relationships showed three cross-impacts, (empowering role), 37 relationships showed two cross-impacts (strengthening role), 19 relationships showed one cross-impact, meaning they have a higher impact on other indicators (effective), 21 relationships of cross-impacts showed neither affected nor been affected by each other (ineffective) (Table 3).

**Table 3.** MDI matrix

Matrix Dimensions	Ineffective	Effective	Strengthening	Empowering	Filling degree	total
10*10	2	21	19	37	79	79

The results of cross-impact analysis based on MDI and MII matrices show that supportive drivers, marketing drivers, and creativity and innovation drivers play an important role in improving system relationships. These drivers are the most important and influential indicators in sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province and the future of sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province depends on the development of the mentioned drivers. In addition, as can be seen from the scatter pattern of the variables, the three groups of drivers that have the highest impact and the lowest impact are in the northwestern region of Figure 1. These drivers include; economic drivers, educational drivers, and customer-oriented drivers. Considering the conditions of the sports business, it is necessary to pay attention to these indicators. On the other hand, drivers such as; cultural drivers, communicative drivers, and management drivers are more influenced than being influential. These three drivers are somehow affected by the relationships between other key drivers and indicators. Finally, the manpower drivers in the southwestern part of Figure 1, did not play an important role in the formation of the spatial organization of sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province, but they should not be completely neglected.

**Figure 1.** Potential Direct Influence/Dependence Map

Figures 2 and 3 show the potentials of indirect influence diagrams and direct influence maps.

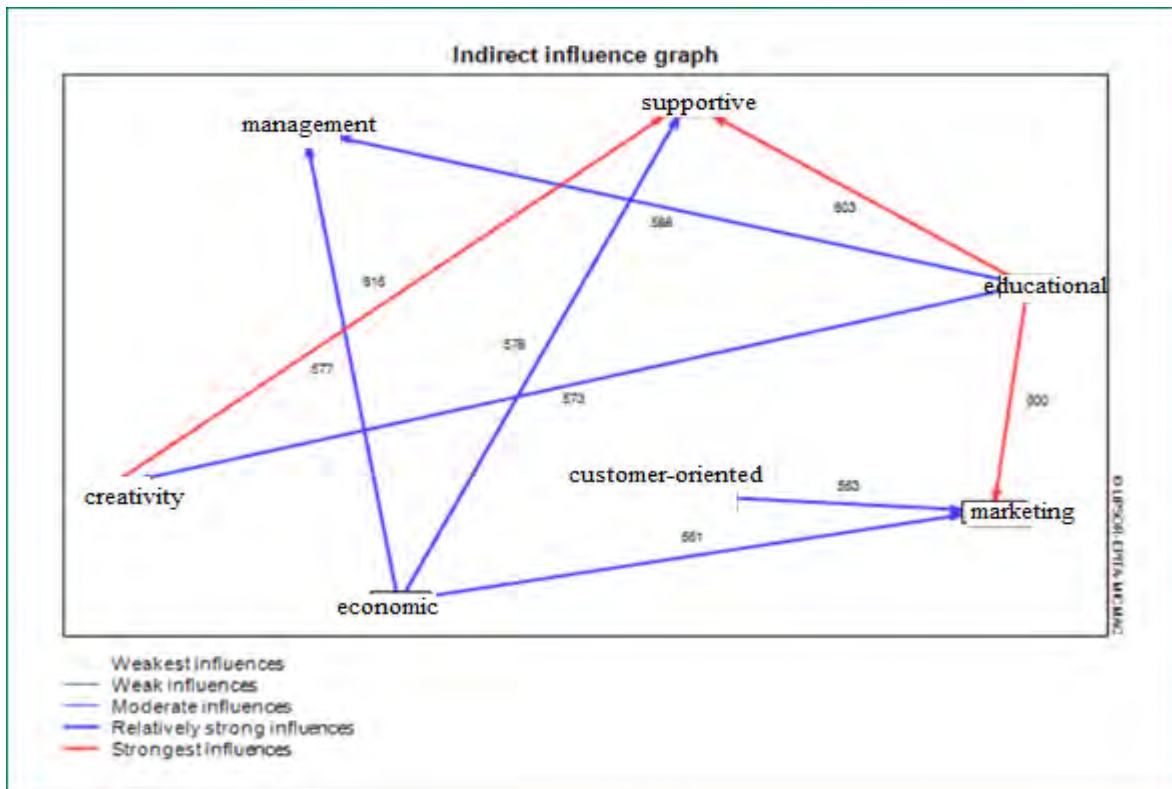


Figure 2. Indirect Influence Map

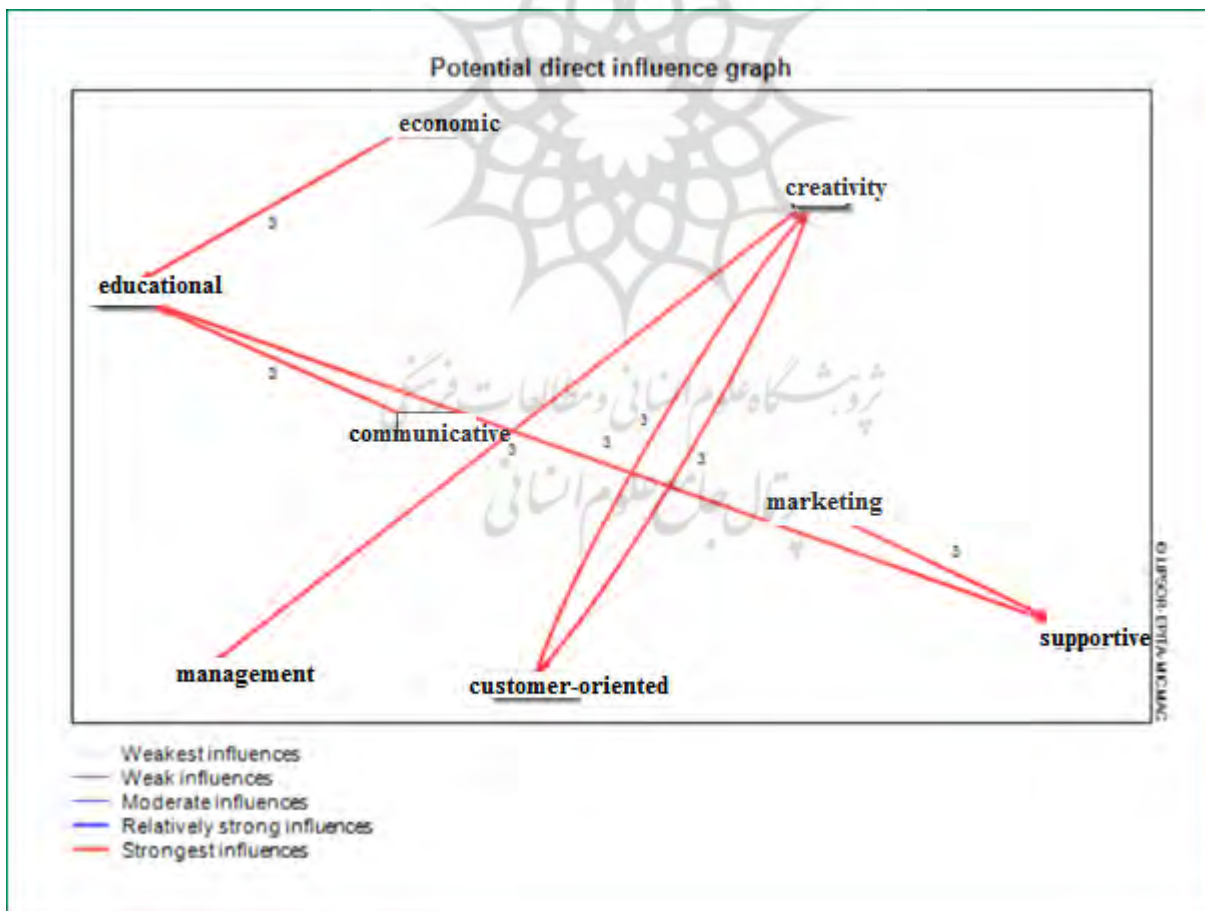


Figure 3. Potential Direct Influence Map

## Discussion and Conclusion

The obtained results show that supportive drivers, marketing drivers, and creativity and innovation drivers have an important role in improving system relationships. Supportive drivers include government support in allocating subsidies to investors for the construction of sports facilities, supporting land allocation and facilities, supporting professionals, innovators, and researchers, promoting entrepreneurship, and creating a suitable environment. Other government support includes reducing the interest rate facilities, making governmental policies such as preventing the import of smuggled sports goods, supporting and encouraging the officials to have a positive attitude toward sports businesses, increasing government support for advertising sports businesses, legislating laws to protect active sports businesses, eliminating restrictive rules for sports businesses, removing negative factors and pressures to promote the wrong principles in sports businesses, paying attention to social problems and solving problems in the goals of sports businesses and rewarding innovative activities and ideas in the sports business. Mohseni and Dehghani Firoozabadi (2021) and Lv et al. (2022) focused on the importance of this issue and how supporting businesses can be helpful in their development (Lv et al., 2022; Mohseni, 2021). Marketing drivers include; active marketing, checking able to influence new markets, doing internet advertising, being able to do marketing for valuable products and services, identifying new markets for sports businesses in the society and branding local examples of an area. Golabi et al. (2011) and Ziyadullaev et al (2022) has also focused on the importance of marketing's role in business development (Golabi, Khodadad Hoseini, Yadollahi, & Rezvani, 2011; Ziyadullaev, 2022). The creativity and innovation drivers include: benefiting from innovation power, supporting domestic patent, being able to participate in information technology system, innovating the product, producing and providing creative and innovative products and services of the organization to achieve a competitive advantage, making rapid innovation in providing products and services to customers and beneficent employees, emphasizing on continuous learning of employees to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and paying attention to creativity and innovation as a value. Hashemi (2017) and Lv et al (2022) focused on the importance of creativity and innovation in sports businesses which can lead to development (Hashemi, 2017; Lv et al., 2022). These drivers are the most important and influential indicators in sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province and the future of sports businesses in Khorasan Razavi province depends on the development of these drivers. It is beneficial to encourage artisans and investors to invest in this drivers. Youth Affairs and Sport Organization and City organization are major players in the sports business environment, and the decisions made in these sectors affect the sports business environment. Sports businesses and the obstacles they face are of less concern to the trustees. One of the oldest concerns in the field of sports business is the lack of adequate support, supervision, and guidance in this field. There are too many centers named Sports Services in various areas of Khorasan Razavi and they are rarely supervised. These activities lead to stagnation and the challenge of formal businesses. Marketing, on the other hand, maintains and strengthens an organization's reputation and makes it a stand-out brand among its audience. Branding is a sustainable principle for the survival and development of an organization, and the continuation of the brand name and this process will make the minds of customers familiar with the name and consequently the products and services. Therefore, marketing can play an important role in creating a roadmap for a company to provide desired services and products to its customers. Hence, making a relationship between the business and its customers is an important principle of any organization and a significant goal of marketing. Meanwhile, creativity and innovation in the sports businesses are important reasons for the growth of any businesses like sport. Consequently, considering the importance of supportive drivers in sports businesses, it is suggested; the sports departments in Khorasan Razavi subsidize investors to build sports facilities or produce sports goods and prevent the excessive import of worthless and poor quality sports products. On the other hand, since marketing drivers in the province's sports businesses are important, it is suggested to use new marketing techniques, such as neural marketing, viral marketing, etc. Finally, due to the importance of creativity and innovation drivers, it is suggested that



to increase people's motivation for creativity reward innovative actions and ideas in sports businesses among employees.

The three categories of drivers with the highest and the lowest impact include economic drivers, educational drivers, and customer-oriented drivers. Economic drivers include; optimizing product pricing to mitigate the impact of tariffs, allocating subsidies to entrepreneurs and investors, considering economic issues such as the purchasing power of the people, and stabilizing the country's foreign exchange market. Hashemi (2017) and Lv et al. (2022) argued that economic factors play an important role in business development (Hashemi, 2017; Lv et al., 2022).

On the other hand, educational drivers include; holding training courses in workshops and seminars, providing training in access to information, marketing, new technologies, entrepreneurial skills, and business network development, holding training and extension courses in the field of sports businesses, creating scientific content regarding Islamic businesses in sports and updating the existing training in sports businesses with the needs.

Karimi and Sepahvand (2020), and Shabani Kalateh Mullah Mohammad Gholi et al. (2021) and Lv et al. (2022) pointed out that educational factors play an important role in business development (KARIMI & SEPAHVAND, 2020; Lv et al., 2022; Shabani Kalate Molla Mohammadgholi, Azma, Saeidi, & Tajari, 2021). Customer-oriented drivers include; paying attention to new customer needs, keeping emmmmmmm add srcccs ss -to-date, taking advantage of nnarrsssss add rrrrrrrr ciiii eennng ..... . aaiiity add cmmmmmm ..... . rrrr eagggggggg.. AA Aff services and sports goods, and respecting customers in sports businesses. Therefore, regarding the conditions of the sports business, it is necessary to pay attention to these indicators. Mahdavi et al. (2018), Ahmadzadeh Fard et al. (2018), Salounh et al. (2020) and Ziyadullaev et al (2022) argued that customer orientation has an important role in business development (Ahmadzadeh Fard, Gholami Karin, Taghavi, & Sadeghi, 2018; Mahdavi, Aqili, Hashemzehi, & Farhangi, 2018; Salounh, Saketi, & Purmahdi, 2020; Ziyadullaev, 2022). Financial indicators are the most fundamental indicators of the success of a sports business and cannot be ignored. Many valuable and useful ideas have seemed theoretically successful, but ignoring the financial issues and its margins have ultimately led to the failure and destruction of the ideas. On the other hand, educational issues are very important. Online business has become one of the most attractive businesses in the world. Generally, to start a business, whether online or offline; learning and teaching the principles of business management is vital. One of the attractions of starting a new business is dramatical increase in financial and business growth. In case of internet business; the business can be run at any time, and the business owner feel like having a money-making machine all the time. Eventually, a storm of management changes swept gggggg . cíiiii ee..... . eeee caáee. a99ct ee pccccccceee eelle''s aa y of giii cf ocnnsuunee rrr snnnnn naa tt he..... . e fffff f ff cccc cccc ccc tiiii iv ee ee faacdt rs ooccc ttt h7ss ff a business. It is the customer who determines the longevity of the sports business. Sports companies that cannot keep customers satisfied will be eliminated from the market in the long run and will be quickly replaced by old and new competitors. Regarding the importance of educational drivers, it is recommended that online sports business training be given to talented individuals who can develop their sports businesses under the condition of the COVID19 pandemic. On the other hand, considering the importance of customer-oriented drivers, it is suggested that a team of employees of a business is formed to act as a checking committee and attract more customers with a variety of services and sports goods.

Drivers such as; cultural drivers, communicative drivers, and management drivers are more influenced and less influential. Cultural drivers include; the value of the role of sports in individual and social life, valuing the role of sports in society, spreading the culture of honesty in sports businesses, promoting the culture of citizenship behavior of sports businesses, and improving the culture of customer loyalty in sports businesses. Taybi Abolhasani et al. (2019), and Jame Bozorgi et al. (2021) and Gammelsæter (2021) argued that culture plays an important role in business development (Gammelsæter, 2021; Jame Bozorgi, 2021; Tayebi Abolhasani, Khodabakhshi, & Azizian Khalkhooran, 2019). Communicative drivers include; making communication with institutions and organizations, making appropriate communicative infrastructure (access to transportation facilities, etc.), establishing the evaluation committees and monitoring the good activities of sports businesses, being able to communicate and convey thoughts and feelings to others

and other employees and making access to the World Wide Web as a source of knowledge. Daneshmehr et al. (2019) and Kakaei et al. (2021) reported that communication has an important role in business development (Daneshmehr, Radfar, & Heidarzadeh Hanzae, 2019; Kakaei, 2021). Management drivers include; management ability and expertise, managers' benefit from consultants and expert marketers, appropriate use of opportunities, the rapid response of the organization and employees to new economic ideas and models, regulation so that obedience to them leads to competitive advantage, a proper business strategy, an efficient business model and entrepreneurship and employment ecosystem in sports to students and graduates. Nabi Zadeh and Nobari (2020) and Norouzi et al. (2019) and Ziyadullaev et al (2022) focused on management factors that have an important role in business development (Nabi Zadeh & Nobari, 2021; Norouzi, Davoodabadi Farahani, & Bahamin, 2019; Ziyadullaev, 2022). These three drivers are somehow affected by the relationships between other key drivers and indicators. Dimensions of attitude toward entrepreneurship such as innovation, initiation, and risk-taking grow in cultures with high individualism and appear in harmony with cultures of low individualism (collectivism). In such circumstances, entrepreneurial values and cultures with low individualism are compatible. Such value proportionality is the basis of the culture-practice proportionality paradigm. In support of this view, researchers have argued that the success rate of entrepreneurial activities such as innovation, risk-taking, and initiation is high among Japanese organizations that utilize research and development teams of marketing, quality control, and new product development teams which are characterized by cultures with low (collectivist) individualism. Success in producing new products is also greater in organizations that focus on project and matrix teams rather than task structures. Similarly, other researchers believe that the successful innovation of new products in organizations where research and development activities, as well as marketing, are conducted with a common vision and goal, is more evident in the characteristics of cultures with low individualism.

Regarding the importance of cultural drivers, it is suggested that promoting the culture of citizenship behavior of sports businesses according to the law in a sports culture charter can be designed by the relevant authorities and it is necessary for sports businesses. Smart companies are confident that their managers know the balance between being professional and being human. Managers who do not care about their employees and do not communicate with them will always have high resignation statistics. Meanwhile, managing the business is very important, so it is suggested that due to the importance of management drivers, sports managers must include specialized consultants and marketers in the field of sports in their businesses and use a proper business model and strategy in their sports businesses.

Finally, manpower drivers did not play a significant role in the formation of the sports business spatial organizations in Khorasan Razavi, but it should not be completely ignored. Manpower drivers include; professional and efficient human resources, licensing professional careers in sports with priority given to sports science graduates, increasing the self-confidence of sports businesses, employing self-motivated, active employees who try to both teach and learn, benefiting from teamwork skills and having skills of using up-to-date technologies. The jobs related to sports business management training has specific tasks based on their field.

Paying attention to human resources, and hiring and firing employees are two responsibilities of the sports business manager. During the recruitment process, even if an applicant has a strong and brilliant resume, a business manager who manages human resources well is higher. The overall position of the employees in the organization has often been widely regarded as an important factor in the success or failure of a sports team. The sports managers often acts as the main member and spokesperson for the sports organization. Thus, the sports business manager can schedule interviews and organize press conferences with the media. That is why this driver should not be ignored as well. The Discussion section is the most important component of a scientific paper. The Discussion section serves to interpret the results and place them in a broader context by citing and discussing related studies. The purpose of the Discussion section is to make conclusions and evaluate the results within the general context of the research, rather than to summarize the results, although it can start with this.

## Acknowledgments

We thank participants in this study for expending their time and energy to support this research.

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