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## THE EFFECT OF THE INVOLVEMENT FACTORS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SPONSORSHIP ACTIVITIES CASE STUDY OF HAMRAH-E-AVVAL; THE SPONSOR OF TRAKTORSAZI CLUB OF TABRİZ

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### Abstract

The aim of the research is to study the Effect of involvement factors on the outcomes of sponsorship. Five constructs studied in this research are attractiveness involvement, centrality involvement, the image of the sponsor, word of mouth statement, and purchase intention. The time period of research is one year, and the research population is all fans of Traktorsazi Football team of Tabriz in East and West Azerbaijan, Ardabil and Tehran; The metropolis.

The sampling method of this research is simple random sampling. As for the ambiguity of the exact number of the fans of Traktorsazi of Tabriz, 384 questionnaires were provided using of the cochran Formula. Findings of the research indicated that advocating of team with high level involvement, results in expansion of the sponsor image; and it causes the increase in purchase intention of advocates and advertising of the products of the company via word of mouth statement.

**Keywords:** Sport Sponsorship, Involvement , Word of Mouth, Purchase Intentions

**JEL code:** M31

## İLGİLENİM FAKTÖRLERİNİN, SPONSORLUK AKTİVİTELERİ ETKİNLİĞİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ HAMRAH-E-AVVAL ÖRNEĞİ; TRAKTORSAZI TABRİZ KULÜBÜ SPONSORU

### Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, katılım faktörlerinin sponsorluğun sonuçları üzerindeki etkisini incelemektir. Bu çalışmada incelenen beş yapı, çekiciliğin katılımı, merkeziliğin katılımı, sponsorun imajı, ağızdan ağıza ifadesi ve satın alma niyetidir. Araştırma süresi bir yıldır ve araştırma nüfusu tüm Doğu ve Batı Azerbaycan, Erdebil ve Tahran'daki Tebriz'in Traktorsazi Futbol takımının tüm taraftarlarıdır; Metropolis. Bu araştırmanın örnekleme yöntemi basit rastgele örneklemedir. Tebriz Traktorsazi hayranlarının kesin sayısının belirsizliğine gelince, kokran Formülü kullanılarak 384 anket sağlandı. Araştırmanın bulguları, yüksek düzeyde katılımı olan ekibin savunulmasının sponsor imajının genişlemesine yol açtığını; şirketin sözlü ifadesi ile avukatların satın alma niyetinde ve şirket ürünlerinin reklamlarında artışa neden olmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Spor Sponsorluğu, Katılım, Ağızdan Ağıza İletişim, Satın Alma Niyetleri

**JEL kodu:** M31

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## INTRODUCTION

Sports are one of the phenomena that have dominant impressments in modern society (Van Heerden and Pleesis, 2003). In the international perspective, sport has a high ranking order among different chief sectors.

The sport sector contains divisions including sport commodities, marketing, executive employees, sponsorship, sportswear section, sport media and sport instruments. A method of supplying sufficient funds for sport activities; in particular, professionals, is attracting financial resources in the sport industry (Smith, 2008). The most important means (revenue source) in modern sport is sport sponsorship (Strelize, 2005). The concept of sport sponsorship is not a new phenomenon and Its origin dates back to about 140 years ago (Van Heedren & pleesis, 2003).

Yet, neither in sport nor in other fields, there has not been a specific and comprehensive description of sponsorship. In general, sponsorship is described as providing financial and non-financial aid to an activity through an organization with the aim of gaining commercial goals (Meenaghan, 1983). According to Tek (1997), sponsorship is “to use other communication tools systematically to purchase an organization related to any activity and create positive ideas in favor of the business in the target audience in order to achieve marketing communication objectives.”. Sponsorship is known to be the most effective communication method to reach the target audience (Bozkurt, 2005). It is prominent for sport organizations to get and keep a high level of competitiveness (Escamilla et.al, 2020). Sports sponsorships, are the most popular kind of sponsorship with estimated spending of \$16.4 billion annually in 2016, which encompasses about 71 percent of global sponsorship revenues in 2016 (IEG, 2016). Besides, it has been observed that, many sport organizations have encountered financial deficits in their duty performance and financial problems have taken their activity to a blind spot nationally and internationally. It seems that the gradually increasing financial problems would make execute the formulated designs and programs of the organizations difficult.

Therefore, they no longer have ability to attain their goals, and must attempt to gain sufficient revenue and maintain their career survival (Babatunde Sagba, 2008).

In general, all the definitions for sponsorship are expressed as the hope of providing benefits for both parties as a result of assistance in moral or in cash. It is believed that the expectations of the parties from each other are to gain a profit from the goals set (Soyer, 2003).

Three of main factors for assessment of sponsorship effectiveness are increasing brand awareness (IEG 2014), purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth (Christensen, 2006.; Tsiotsou , 2005; Tsiotsou and Alexandris, 2009; Gwinner and Swanson, 2003).

On the other hand, Tsiotsou and Alexandris (2009) showed that there is a possibility that involvement has impact on outcomes of sponsorship. In this research the effect of involvement on the outcomes of sponsorship has been evaluated and it will help academicians to have a better understanding about the effective factors on effectiveness of sponsorship.

## 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

For finding the Effect of the involvement factors on the effectiveness of Sponsorship activities, It's important to give some description about the concepts of research model and write the Hypotheses of the research.

### **1.1. The World Sport İndustry**

Presently, in advanced countries, sport and salubrious recreations are considered as an important industry and effective in developing the national economy. This industry extended its stems in the whole scopes of the world, by the belief that milliards men impart it in any way.

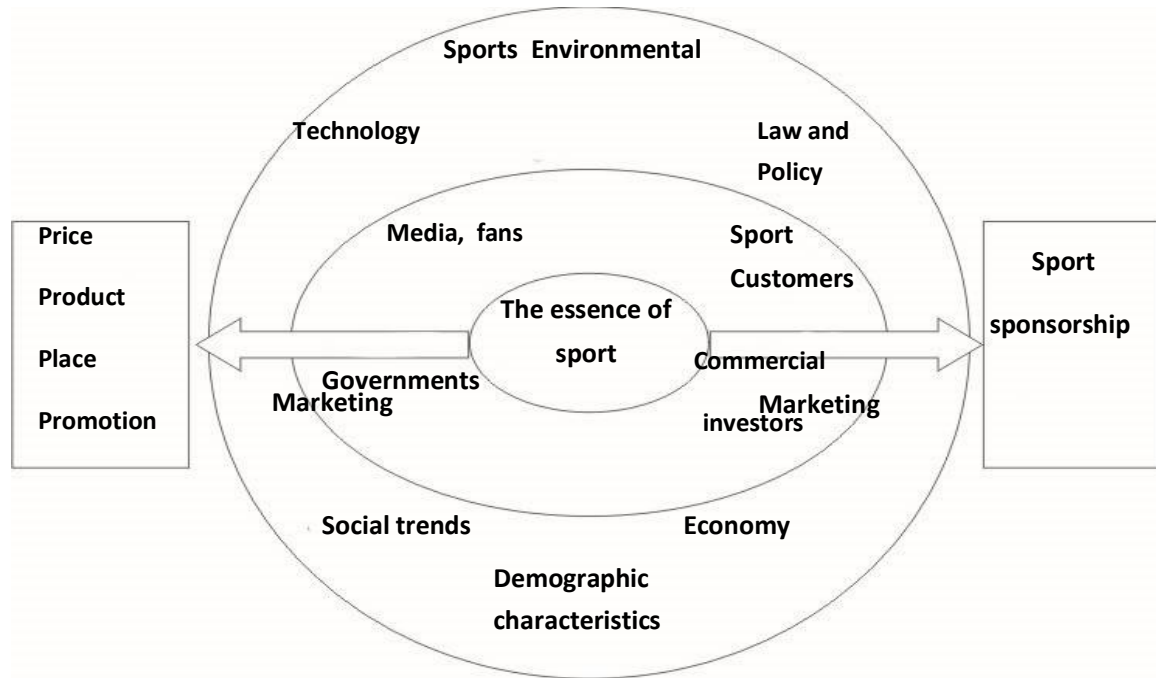
Presently, sport has a fundamental role, either practically or theoretically in generating and consuming sport commodities and services, and economic development of different societies (Jefkin and Frank, 1993).

### **1.2. Sport Marketing**

Sport marketing is divided in some groups. Shannon categorized sports marketing in two groups; marketing of sports and marketing with sports. marketing of sports is marketing of sport equipment and events to fans and contributors. On the other hand, marketing with sports is to promote non-sporting products at sporting events, and using athletes in order to support and confirm non-sporting productions (Shannon, 1999).

In 2005, Johnson and Sommers presented a model for sport marketing. According to their model, sport marketing is in interaction with sport elements, sport advocates, and the sport environment and it is affected by and effects each of the mentioned elements.

Participants, mediums, commercial investors, governments, and other sports have been introduced as sport customers. Social tendencies and demographic features are the components recognized as the environment of sport in this model. According to this model, marketing of a sport consists of price, product, place, advancement, sponsorship, and endorsement, all of which are affected by and reciprocally affect sport customers and the sport environment. The related diagram shows the model in sport marketing (Johnson and Summers, 2005).



**Figure 1.** Description of sport marketing from Johnson M., summers.j. (2005).

### 1.3. Sport Sponsorship

One definition of sports sponsorship is “the consumer (in most cases in business) is exchanging money or products for the right to associate its name or product with the sporting event” (Shank, 1999).

Pop in his research in 1998 reached a generalization of the results of some researches about sponsorship goals. In this generalization, he categorized the goals of sponsorship in four domains including corporate goals, marketing goals, medium goals, and personal goals. The following table shows Pope’s generalization of sponsorship goals (Pope, 1998).

**Table 1.** Description for sport sponsorship objectives.

Sport sponsorship objectives			
Corporate objectives	Marketing Objectives	Medium objectives	Personal Objectives
Public awareness Corporate image Public perception Community involvement Financial relations Client entertainment Government relations Employee relations	Business relation Reaching target market Brand positioning Increasing sales Sampling	Generate visibility Generate publicity Avoiding clutter Target specificity	Management Interest

Competing with other competitors			
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Pope, N. (1998). Overview of current sponsorship thought. *The Cyber-Journal of Sport Marketing*, 2(1): 1-7.

#### 1.4. Brand Awareness

Brand awareness, which shows the potential to remember and recognize a brand, is known to form the entry of a brand spreading strategy. Instead of creating a new brand name, it seems that it makes sense to choose the existing brand name (Turhan and Yılmaz 2007).

According to Howard & Crompton, companies are to achieve up to four advantages by implementing sponsorship: awareness improvement, firm image improvement, creating a relation by hospitality, and increasing sales rates. Awareness of the name and brand is achieved via creating ease and probability, by which the consumer recalls the brand. Generally, according to Acker, awareness of name and brand includes three elements: recognizing the brand, reminding the brand, and placing the brand in the back of the mind (Meenagham, 1991). According to Odabaşı and Oyman (2002), awareness of the brand affects decision making positively. Known brands are preferred over unknown brands (Odabaşı & Oyman 2002)

#### 1.5. Purchase Intentions

Purchase intention means the probability of purchasing commodities and using respective services. Purchase intentions are not like real purchases, although, one's intentions have a strong impact on his/her future behaviors. One definition for purchase intentions is that, it is one's intentional planning for purchasing a brand (Deep et al., 2008).

In fact, purchase intention is a replacement for sales rate. Moreover, it can be said that, purchase intention can be a substitute for consumer behavior, but it must be mentioned that real behavior is different from programmed behavior (Smith, 2008). By definition, consumer perceptions regarding product quality, means consumer evaluation about being superior of general attributes of a product. The importance of this subject has been emphasized by marketing scope pragmatics perspective, as, this variable takes place on marketing operation by emphasizing upon consumer's purchase intention and behavior (Tsotsou, 2005). Karaman (1990) and Parrasuman et al. (1966), were of those who emphasized on the direct impact of perceptions related to product quality on purchase intention (Soutor & Johnson, 1999).

#### 1.6. Word of Mouth

The phrase "word of mouth" was first published in *Future Magazine* by "William White" some 40 years ago during a classic marketing study. In recent years due to discovering its manifest effects on consumer behavior, it has been noticed by marketing researchers, However social nets studying in society has been discussed in detail from many years ago (Moven, 1996, 354). Kaks (1967) reminisced the word of mouth advertisements simply that is, a simple talking related to products. Oral advertisement (word of mouth advertisements) is used for describing oral communications (positive or

negative) among groups like product suppliers, independent experts, family, friends, and potential customers. All these three groups may be involved in oral advertisements, but more researches have focused on real and potential customers (Ennew et al., 2000). Arndtez (1967) described “oral advertisement” as follows “ a direct communication among a receiver and a sender of a message, in which the receiver, receives information about an address, product and/or an informational service from noncommercial channels”. This definition poses two specific points. First, it involves oral and face to face contact between receiver and sender that seems needs to get updated and modernized in cases; like electronic communications (e.g. dialogue and chat rooms). Since nowadays, internet has grown as an important resource for people’s recommendations and complaints. For this reason, letters, faxes, electronic messages can also present opportunities for word of mouth advertisements. Thus, maybe these dialogues and conversations are not face to face and oral. Second, message receivers argue that the sender of the message has no relation with the respective services or goods (Stokes & Lomax. 2002).

### **1.7. Centrality and Attraction Involvement**

Involvement is considered as a multidimensional factor; attraction and centrality are its two main dimensions and have extensive application in this research. According to Kill’s studies in (2004), and Tsotsou and Alexanderis (2009) attraction is related to the perceived importance of formed activities for each of the people, interest, pleasure and recreation obtained from doing those activities. Centrality refers to the centrality of an activity in terms of the consumer’s lifestyle. An activity is considered central if other aspects of consumer’s life are organized around the activity (Tsotsou & Alexanderis 2009). Anthony et al. express the dimensions of involvement in four stages, in the research about sport involvement in 2010 including the following:

**1) Awareness:** Awareness is considered as a primary and necessary stage of decision making. Nobody is able to make decisions in an activity in a firm without knowledge of possible opportunities. Research creates an opportunity to increase individual awareness and attitude toward activities that have not been done before, and is formed by influencing external factors including cultural-social beliefs, mediums, family, and the environmental structure. These factors thus, influence the desirable and perceived identity structure of people (Anthony et al., 2011).

**2) Attraction:** Attraction is a description of the process of environmental, individual, psychic reciprocal relations regarding awareness results that cause intentional and sentimental reactions. Subjective factors such as sexuality, age, race, and social-environmental conditions can measure attraction activities. Subjective, social and mental factors are to respond to requirements and profit from incorporation, and people would evaluate choices appropriate to their attitudes.

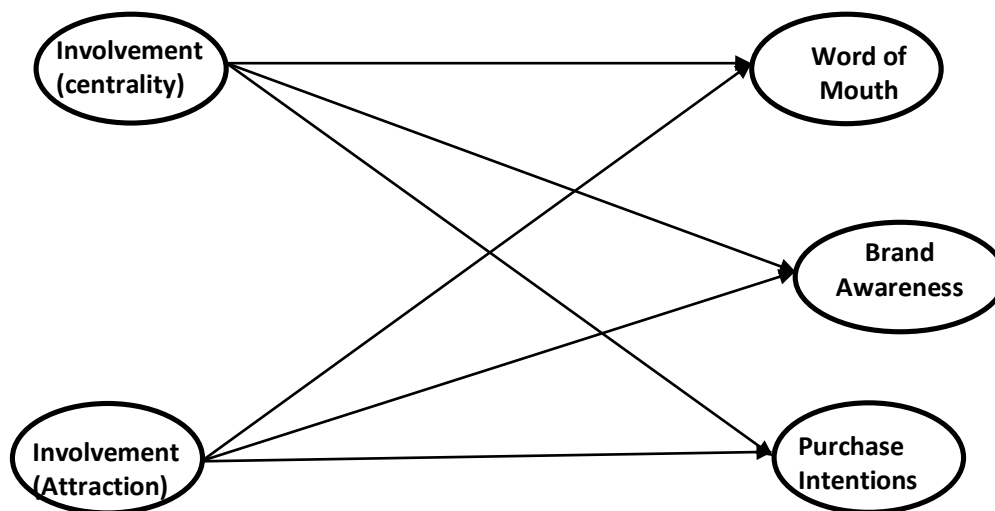
**3) Centrality:** The process of centrality is an indicator of sentimental, operational and symbolic activity, and an involvement transmission from attraction to centrality, and centrality to confirmation.

This concept may result from subjective proficiencies development (self-differences with others), integration (self-integration with others), and physical orientation (changing oneself from one condition to the other). The centrality involvement process, in respect of attraction stage, causes

complexity to increase in subjective communications. Centrality involvement means perseverance, and would become a reason for stability of an individual's communications and activity. By continuing incorporation, physical contacts become stronger and stable.

**4) Confirmation:** The final stage of confirmation can be resulted by obtaining feedback from the centrality involvement stage and considering individual factors convergence. Here, people would replace their activities as pivotal values, their beliefs, and continuing partnership. This stage is greatly protected from the theoretical and internal motives perspective .

**Figure 2.** conceptual model of research



## 2. METHODOLOGY

This research is of empirical type based on its goal, and is descriptive from the information collection perspective.

The research proceeds to produce and process information by use of a questionnaire, and by emphasizing on the collected data, proceeds to recognize effective and proper guidelines.

It also starts to generalize all the results to the statistical society by gathering information of the statistical sample in a proper meaningful level. The research scope in the present study is about the results of sport sponsorship and effect of involvement on them.

The research location is East Azerbaijan and Tehran provinces, which all the advocates of Traktorsazi club of Tabriz in these provinces. The period is one year from the beginning of 2017 until the end of 2018.

The sampling method is simple random sampling. Because of uncertainty of exact number of Traktorsazi club fans in Iran, Cochran statistical formula was used for assessing sample volume. According to this model, the sample volume rate of society is equal to 384, which is obtained from the following relation (Seyedjavadin et al.,2010):

$$N = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot \frac{1}{2} \cdot \frac{1}{2}}{0.05^2} = 384$$

In this research, all required data as to literature and theories were extracted from library resources, scientific bases, and domestic and international papers. In summary, made use of the following methods for data collection:

The planned questionnaire was based on Likert spectrum with five choices including “I disagree (1) – I agree(5)” along with the research hypothesis were given to the professors of marketing field, and after obtaining their opinions and making necessary reformations, qualitative justifiability of the research was confirmed.

For measuring two dimensions of involvement: attraction and centrality McIntyre and Pigram’s (1992) scale and Three items for purchase intentions from Tsiotsou and Alexanderis (2009), two items for brand awareness from Rajh (2002) and five items for word of mouth from Tuskej et al.(2013) were used. In the respective research, Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated for 384 questionnaires, and obtained results above 0.7, showing its high reliability, which is observable in the following diagrams.

**Table 2.** Description for Cronbach’s Alpha

Coefficient of type	Number of respondents	The results obtained
Cronbach’s Alpha	384	94%

### 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research uses structural equations modeling (SEM) for examining hypotheses. This technique is of multivariate regression family which provides the possibility of simultaneous evaluation of a series of regression equations.

The average ages of the respondents were 13-70, which 89% of them were 13-20. 49.7% were 21-30, 39.3% 31-50, and 0/02% respondents were 51-70 years old. From the education status perspective, 2.6% are primary level, ¾% are guidance school, 30.5% have a diploma, 26% have an associate’s degree,

19.8% have a Bachelor’s degree, 13.8% possess a Master’s Degree, and finally 0.8% have a PhD degree. SPSS and LISREL software were used of analyzing the questionnaire data :

**Table 3.** Measurement model of sponsorship and confirmatory factor results **Note:** \*Significant at the 0.05 level

variables	Indicators	Loading	AVE	CR	MSV	ASV	INVA	INVC	BAW	PI	WOM
INVA ( $\alpha = 0.897$ )	INVA1	0.72*	0.79	0.89	0.57	0.45	0.6241				
	INVA2	0.71*									
INVC ( $\alpha = 0.779$ )	INVC1	0.76*	0.81	0.86	0.71	0.62	0.3425	0.6561			
	INVC2	0.59*									
	INVC3	0.68*									
BAW	BAW1	0.73*	0.78	0.86	0.64	0.51	0.4174	0.6449	0.6084		



( $\alpha = 0.861$ )	BAW2	0.90*										
PI ( $\alpha = 0.902$ )	PI1	0.87*	0.75	0.90	0.62	0.53	0.3564	0.2845	0.4451	0.5625		
	PI2	0.90*										
	PI3	0.84*										
WOM ( $\alpha = 0.915$ )	WM1	0.86*	0.79	0.91	0.45	0.42	0.4144	0.2925	0.3635	0.5124	0.6241	
	WM2	0.84*										
	WM3	0.84*										
	WM4	0.86*										
	WM5	0.76*										

Necessary conditions for validity and reliability of construct are as bellow:

**Reliability**

AVE > 0.5

**Convergent Validity**

CR > 0.7

**Discriminant Validity**

MSV < AVE and ASV < AVE

And Square root of AVE should be greater than inter-construct correlations (Hair et.al, 2010). Looking at the table above, this measurement model has validity and reliability for two sample groups.

**Table4.** The Goodness of Fit indexes of measurement model

Result	Values	Acceptable value for Fit of model	Index's name
Accepted	0/981	Values close to 1, More than 0.9	IFI
Accepted	0/906	Values close to 1, More than 0.9	CFI
Accepted	0/847	More than 0.6	PNFI
Accepted	0/701	More than 0.6	PCFI
Accepted	0,049	Good <0.05 , 0,05-0,10 moderate >0,10 bad	RMSEA
Accepted	3,598	Between one and five	CMIN/DF

Hair et.al (2010)

### 3.1. Results from the Research Hypothesis Examination

**Table 5.** Test of hypotheses

	Hypotheses (causality relationships)			$\beta$	T	Expected signs	Results
H <sub>1</sub>	INVC	→	WoM	0.85	11.05**	+	Accepted
H <sub>2</sub>	INVC	→	PI	1.06	12.29**	+	Accepted
H <sub>3</sub>	INVC	→	BAW	0.61	8.87**	+	Accepted
H <sub>4</sub>	INVA	→	WoM	-0.11	-2.09*	+	Rejected
H <sub>5</sub>	INVA	→	PI	-0.21	-1.84	+	Rejected
H <sub>6</sub>	INVA	→	BAW	0.83	6.94**	+	Accepted

**Notes:**  $\chi^2(309) = 1053.98$ , RMSEA = 0.079, GFI = 0.83, AGFI = 0.80, CFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.96, NNFI = 0.97, \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.01$ ,; WOM = word of mouth; PI = purchase intentions; BAW= Brand Awareness ; INVA = involvement (attraction); INVC = involvement (centrality)

According to the results its shown that sport involvement centrality factor has positive and meaningful effect on Word Of Mouth, Purchase Intention and Brand Awareness. On the other hand, Sport involvement attractiveness factor only has positive and meaningful impact on Brand Awareness.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research attempted to study the effects of sport sponsorship results by using the structural equation modeling. According to the performed studies, following the research hypothesis results, it can be concluded that:

If Football or any sponsored sport branch by a brand or organization is only so attractive for person it will make him have high Brand awareness ability (because of the high coefficient (0.83)) but it will not lead to positive word of mouth or purchase intention necessarily. On the other hand if the football or any sport branch that is sponsored by a brand has a central role in the life of Supporters, it makes the customer have purchase intention, brand awareness and have positive word of mouth.

The H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>6</sub> Hypotheses are in the same direction with Tsotsou and Alexandris (2009) that show a direct relationship between Sport Activity Involvement factors have positive effect on Word Of Mouth and Purchase intention. On the other hand the results of this study in contrast with Tsotsou and Alexandris (2009) show no meaningful relationship between Sport Activity Involvement factors on Positive word of mouth and Purchase intention.

In sum it's obvious that a brand or organization that wants to sponsor a club should consider the centrality of the sport that the club competes in its league, in the fans life more than the attraction of that sport for fans.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCHES**

This research places only Hamrah-e-Avval Company as Tractor club's sponsor. It is recommended:

- 1) Effectiveness on sport sponsorship results in companies and clubs with limited advocates or different cultures can be evaluated.
- 2) Sponsorship results can generally be evaluated in sports such as Volleyball, Basketball and other sports in countries.
- 3) Evaluating the reasons of not achieving desired results concerning company's sponsorship and present proper guidelines.

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