



ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Identifying the Knowledge and Training Components of Sports Brokerage in Iranian Football

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of the research was to identify the knowledge components of sports brokerage in Iranian football. Considering the importance of football in the society, the knowledge and training of sports agency in Iranian football is necessary.

Method: The qualitative method of content analysis has been used in this research. This research is exploratory because it expands the knowledge and training of sports brokerage for the first time. Considering that football managers benefit from the acquired knowledge, the population is presidents and secretaries of current and former football federations, sports brokers, faculty members with simultaneous expertise in marketing and football, and senior sports managers of the country. With the targeted method, 10 people were considered as samples. In this research, the effective factors have been identified using content analysis theory. Coding of interview texts in MAXQDA software has been done by presenting research interview questions and interviewees' categories tables.

Findings: Based on the theme analysis, 9 constructive themes were identified. These 9 constructive themes are sports management, political development, economic development, cultural development, sports diplomacy, software infrastructure development, hardware factors and supporting resources, brokerage knowledge, media interactions.

Conclusion: This research helps to understand the increasingly important relationship between players and brokers. Based on the results obtained, it is suggested that if associations and/or players' unions want to prevent possible injury to players by their agents, it seems advisable to intensify and support information and awareness campaigns or to adopt new rules that market Adjust players' brokers more precisely. ©authors

1. Introduction

Football is considered one of the most important sports around the world (Ferreira et al. 2017) and due to its popularity, professional football teams earn huge incomes (Müller et al. 2017). Today, football is no longer a pastime and has turned into a money-making industry, so knowledge in this field has become very important (Oprean & Oprisor, 2014). Financial resources, money and sports knowledge have become a necessary part of today's football world. When competing in the elite sector or at the international level, access to financial resources determines the success of a football club to some extent, but knowledge and training are one of the necessary infrastructures for success in this field (Fløtnes, 2011). Football is a major part of the sports industry in the world and has left many effects on sports and society in the world economically, socially and culturally (Green et al, 2021).

Brokerage has always been an integral part of football, which of course exists in all countries of the world, but the way brokers work sometimes differs from each other (Gohritz et al., 2022). In Iran, with the establishment of the professional football league and the subsequent injection of more money into it, the circle of intermediaries' activities expanded until today, and these intermediaries can be referred to as a network that plays an important role in the transfer of players, coaches, and sometimes managers (Rookwood et al., 2017). But the obsolescence of the word broker on the one hand and the criticism of the activity of this guild in football on the other hand caused these people to look for a more dignified name for their profession. FIFA's program and official transfer agents made their work much easier. In the meantime, due to the importance of sports brokerage in football, knowledge in this field and formal training are not followed (Bull et al., 2022).

One of the actors in the field of sports activities are sports brokers or in other words sports agencies (Cleland, 2017). With the increase in knowledge and the professionalization of sports activities, the emergence and expansion of sports brokers as mediators of sports transactions has become more necessary, because in sports communities, conducting transactions with many problems in terms of legal issues, price awareness, reaching an agreement, process Exchange and transaction amount and brokerage knowledge will face each other (Gray, 2018). On the other hand, considering the diversity, finding the right trading partner for an exchange and spending less time is not an easy task. Therefore, sports brokers, as a meeting place for information from suppliers and applicants, create the conditions for a suitable choice according to the preferences and expectations of each party (Ioannidis, 2019). Intermediaries with the required knowledge and experience can be simple and direct facilitators in the interaction between suppliers and applicants or play the role of auctioning or biased mediation in the market mechanism (Manouselis and Sampson, 2003). Therefore, sports brokers play different roles in the sports market, especially football. On the one hand, he is the agent of information transfer between the actors of the football market, and on the other hand, he plays the role of a legal intermediary between the buyer and the seller. Based on the fact that this job does not have the necessary training in Iran, there is a need to identify knowledge and training in the field of sports brokerage in Iranian football (Geraert, 2016).

In this research, the knowledge and training components of sports brokerage in Iranian football will be identified with a qualitative approach. Therefore, this research is looking for an answer to the question, what are the knowledge and training components of sports brokerage in Iranian football?

2. Literature Review

A sports broker is a legal representative for professional sports figures such as athletes and coaches (Bacchi et al., 2014). They draft and negotiate employment and endorsement contracts for the athlete or coach they represent. Due to the unique characteristics of the sports industry, sports agents are responsible for communicating with team owners, managers, and other individuals (Lades, 2020). They are also responsible for providing recommendations and in addition to finding sources of income, they often do public relations for their clients. Clients rely on sports brokers for guidance in all aspects of the business, and sometimes even more widely. Due to the length and complexity of contracts, many sports agents are lawyers or have experience in contract law (Yilmaz, 2018). Brokers are expected to be knowledgeable about finance, business management, and financial and risk analysis, as well as sports. It is important for a sports broker to follow sports trends and have the necessary training in this field. Other skills that a broker should have are excellent communication and negotiation skills. In these fields, high knowledge, sufficient experience and specialized training are needed. Agents must be highly motivated, willing to work long hours and able to multitask (Bromma, 2020).

Raabe et al. (2023) presented a research entitled graph representation for the analysis of multi-agent spatio-temporal sports data. Choosing the right data representation is very important because it has a significant impact on the performance of the model. The theoretical findings and the proposed method provide insights and a robust methodological alternative for all applications of classification, prediction or pattern recognition in the fields of collective motion analysis, automatic matching analysis, and performance analysis.

Gohritz et al. (2022), presented a research entitled the opportunistic behavior of players' agents in football and its monitoring by players - an empirical analysis from the players' perspective. The results show that players' agents in all leagues take actions that are potentially harmful to players, and show that roughly 50-60 percent of players were monitoring their current agent. Supervisory behavior is influenced by "selection criteria" and "framework conditions of working relationships", but not as much as might be expected.

Green et al. (2021), presented a study titled emergency practices of English football agents. The sports brokerage industry has undergone a period of evolution as those involved become increasingly specialized in their methods of facilitating transactions as clients continue to expect the highest level of personalized service, often unrelated to "on the field" performance.

Bull and Faure (2022), presented a research titled "Agents in the field of sports: Law and economics perspective". The field of sports and football, especially, has a great social impact and economic value. However, sports law has so far been notably absent from an economic approach to law.

Ioannidis (2019), presented a research entitled Football Intermediaries and Self-Regulation: The Need for More Transparency Through Disciplinary Laws, Sanctions and Qualification Criteria. The author concluded that this can only be achieved through a combination of self-regulation and external regulation in an international environment. Williams et al. (2019), in a research, addressed the governing bodies of sports as agents of knowledge in sports. The results have shown that sports governing bodies are not strategically using the full potential of online tools to strengthen communities. They should focus on supporting communities by taking a strategic approach and using new media tools, allowing practice standards to emerge rather than dictate them. Wang et al. (2017) presented a research titled hybrid learning-based brokerage model for strategic power exchange in smart grid markets. The proposed brokerage model was evaluated on the TAC Power platform. Experimental results show that our broker is not only competitive in terms of profitability, but also maintains the balance of supply and demand well. In addition, two

empirical rules were discovered in the environment of the competitive power market, which are: 1. The decrease of the profit margin when there is intense competition in the markets; 2. The rate of supply demand imbalance increases when the market environment is highly competitive.

3. Method

In this research, the qualitative method of content analysis has been used. This research is exploratory because it expands the knowledge and training of sports brokerage for the first time. Considering that football managers benefit from the acquired knowledge, it is practical. Based on the method of Sterling (2001), the analysis of the interviews of sports agents and managers has been done. According to the qualitative research process, in order to make the data more productive, various groups will be interviewed (the data collection tool is in-depth interview) in order to avoid data bias. The statistical population of the research includes the group of transferred players, managers of clubs who have transferred players during their management, presidents and secretaries of current and former football federations, sports brokers, faculty members with simultaneous expertise in marketing and football, and senior sports managers. It was the country. With the targeted method, 10 people were considered as samples.

The full text of all the interviews along with the coding and initial classes will be sent to the esteemed supervisor and advisor. In addition, the professors' confirmation and supplementary comments were used in all stages of the work in order to implement, code and extract the primary classes. In order to gain validity, an effort is made to select participants with a maximum diversity of experiences. Sampling continued until the data reached saturation and the most appropriate semantic unit was selected. Internal validity of content analysis was evaluated through face validity. For content validity, a panel of experts was used to support concept generation or coding themes, as well as participant review.

4. Findings

In this research, the effective factors have been identified using content analysis theory. Coding of interview texts in MAXQDA software has been done by presenting research interview questions and interviewees' categories tables. From all the indicators obtained from the open coding stage, categories were determined in this stage and 9 main categories and 35 sub-categories were obtained.

Table 1. Knowledge and training components of sports brokerage in Iranian football

The main theme	Constructive theme	Sub-theme
Knowledge and training components of sports brokerage in Iranian football	Sport Management	Development of long-term planning for sports agency
		Using brokers with experience in international forums
		Obtaining international seats and attending the IOC board of directors
	Political Development	Improving the managerial ability of football in the country
		Development of long-term planning for sports agency
		Using brokers with experience in international forums
	Economic Development	Obtaining international seats and attending the IOC board of directors
		Profitability and reduction of additional costs
		Financial transparency
		Providing a suitable economic base for the country
	Cultural Development	Increasing economic enterprises in sports
		Promoting sports culture and promoting national pride
		Cultivation of sports brokerage knowledge in society
		Creating interaction and cooperation between brokers and players
	Sports Diplomacy	Reducing anomalies and moral and social corruption
Improving and correcting the country's football image		
		Policymaking and the process of obtaining a brokerage license

The main theme	Constructive theme	Sub-theme
		Promoting peace and friendship between brokers, managers and players
		Encourage international development
		Sports brand development
	Development of Software Infrastructure	Compilation of the schedule for holding courses in brokerage and football
		Evaluation and supervision of managers in brokers' programs
		Sports brokerage knowledge registration databases
		Hiring specialist officials in the field of brokerage
		human recourse development
	Hardware Factors and Supporting Resources	Standard equipment and devices approved by national and continental brokers
		Equipment and hardware facilities in the field of sports brokerage
		Financing of sports brokerage training from the government
		Strengthening the country's sports brokerage education infrastructure
	Brokerage Knowledge	Teaching common foreign languages
		Creating a sports brokerage field
		Specialization of sports brokerage
		Interaction with media and social networks
	Media Interactions	The influence of the media in improving the state of sports brokerage
		Interaction with visual and audio media

5. Discussion

The aim of the research was the knowledge and training components of sports brokerage in Iranian football with a qualitative approach. Interviews were analyzed in MAXQDA software. Based on the theme analysis, 9 constructive themes were identified. These 9 constructive themes are sports management, political development, economic development, cultural development, sports diplomacy, software infrastructure development, hardware factors and supporting resources, brokerage knowledge, media interactions. Poli et al. (2012), showed the importance of sports brokerage knowledge in football.

The primary themes of sports management are: developing long-term planning for sports brokerage, using experienced brokers in international forums, gaining international seats and attending the IOC board of directors, and improving the managerial ability of football sports in the country

Themes of political development include: improving political communication between managers and brokers, creating political communication regarding airlines and tourism transfer, and mutual communication regarding hosting with other countries.

The themes of economic development are: profitability and reduction of additional costs, financial transparency, providing a suitable economic platform for the country and increasing economic enterprises in sports.

The themes of cultural development are: promoting the culture of sports and promoting national pride, cultivating the knowledge of sports agency in the society, creating interaction and cooperation between agents and players, and reducing anomalies and moral and social corruption.

The themes of software infrastructure development include: drafting a program for holding brokerage and football courses, evaluating and supervising managers in brokers' programs, sports brokerage knowledge registration bases, and hiring officials specializing in the field of brokerage. Heard (2018), confirmed the software in the brokerage program.

The themes of hardware and support include: human resource development, standard equipment and devices approved by national and continental brokers, equipment and hardware facilities in the field of sports brokerage, financing education and sports brokerage from the government. Poli (2016), confirmed the importance of infrastructure in the development of sports brokerage.

The themes of sports diplomacy include: improving and correcting the image of the country's football, policymaking and the process of obtaining a broker's license, promoting peace and friendship between brokers, managers and players, encouraging international development and sports brand development.

The themes of brokerage knowledge are: strengthening the country's sports brokerage training infrastructure, teaching common foreign languages, creating a sports brokerage field and specialization of sports brokerage.

The themes of media interactions are: interaction with the media and social networks, the influence of the media in improving the state of sports brokerage and interaction with visual and audio media. Kelly et al. (2018), in their research, mentioned the media in sports brokerage.

Sport for all is a major challenge for sport organizations and policy makers around the world. Sport for all is a practical activity and a knowledge-intensive field characterized by fragmented knowledge creation and sharing processes involving multiple agents, professionals and volunteers. Agents representing professional athletes provide a wide range of services to clients (Darby et al, 2007). The variety of these services is such that one cannot expect a person to be able to master all the skills required for them. The traditional role of an agent is to find an employment position for a sportsperson by negotiating his contract with a club, although an agent may be involved in a wide range of activities such as deciding on various types of player contracts (sponsorship, advertising, etc.) or management. His property should play a role.

The best specialty a sports agent can have is sports education. Experience here means having knowledge about the business and how it works. A sports broker often has experience from the sports industry as an active athlete. Education can also be helpful, as a supplement. An example of training in this subject is Sports Management in Båstad, Sweden, which is a two-year training. It has theoretical as well as practical moments and gives the student a qualified degree in sports management. This program was started after pressures from sports agents, both national and local, and this was seen as a sign of increasing demand for people with sports management qualifications. Learning is based on projects from the business world and students have the opportunity to shape and develop their own learning in collaboration with teachers and other students. Exams are held as assignments or in groups, and during the study period, cooperation between students and companies and organizations takes place. In some courses, the training includes an internship, during which the student is given opportunities to work more practically in the field. General qualifications include Social Sciences, Mathematics and English, alternatively work experience and/or study (International Football Association Board, 2018).

6. Conclusion

Organizational work and doing sports at a professional level also have advantages. There are also a large number of different online courses that are supposed to train a sports agent, but many of them are not of high quality and therefore need to be critically reviewed before being used. All these courses are often very expensive, so there is a possibility that a new sports agent without experience will be scammed. This research helps to understand the increasingly important relationship between players and brokers. Based on the results obtained, it is suggested that if associations and/or players' unions want to prevent possible injury to players by their agents, it seems advisable to intensify and support information and awareness campaigns or to adopt new rules that market Adjust players' brokers more precisely. In the end, it can be said that the improvement of each of the mentioned factors can increase the competitive advantages of Iran's sports agency against rival countries. Each of these factors needs investment, planning, management and attention in proportion to its importance, weakness and strength compared to

other countries. On the other hand, it should be noted that due to the increase of environmental complexities and the intensity of competition, the competitive advantage is either easily imitated by competitors or fades from people's point of view, so it is necessary to think of formulating new advantages.

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