

SWOT analysis of the marketing of badminton premier league of Islamic Republic of Iran

Análisis DAFO de la comercialización de la liga de primera división de bádminton de la República Islámica de Irán

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Abstract: The present study was aimed at SWOT analysis of the marketing of badminton premier league. It was a descriptive-analytical study. The statistical population included 120 individuals who were experts, reporters, coaches and supervisors, and vice-presidents of the provincial boards among whom 92 individuals were selected as the study sample by a stratified random sampling method. Data collection was carried out using a researcher-designed SWOT questionnaire that was confirmed by 10 university and academic experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed based on a primary study on 30 individuals (Cronbach's Alpha $\alpha=0.88$). The results indicated that marketing of badminton premier league had 10 strengths, 10 weaknesses, and 10 threats, and it is recommended that opportunities should be utilized to turn threats to opportunity and weaknesses to strengths in order to have a more dynamic league.

Keywords: marketing, premier league, strength, weakness, opportunity, threat.

Resumen: El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo el análisis DAFO de la comercialización de la liga Premier de bádminton. Fue un estudio descriptivo-analítico. La población estadística incluyó 120 individuos que fueron expertos, reporteros, entrenadores y supervisores y vicepresidentes de las juntas provinciales, entre los cuales se seleccionaron 92 individuos como la muestra del estudio mediante un método de muestreo aleatorio estratificado. La recolección de datos se llevó a cabo utilizando un cuestionario DAFO diseñado por un investigador que fue confirmado por 10 expertos universitarios y académicos. La confiabilidad del cuestionario se confirmó en base a un estudio primario en 30 individuos (alfa de Cronbach $\alpha = 0,88$). Los resultados indicaron que la comercialización del bádminton de primera división tuvo 10 puntos fuertes, 10 puntos débiles y 10 amenazas, y se recomienda que se utilicen las oportunidades para convertir las amenazas en oportunidades y las debilidades en fortalezas para tener una liga más dinámica.

Palabras clave: marketing, premier league, fortaleza, debilidad, oportunidad, amenaza.

Introduction

In recent years, sports industry has experienced a new period, such that sport as an economic sector that produces sports goods, provides sports services, and develops national economy of countries is considered as one of the most profitable industries (Plunkett, 2010). On the other hand, most countries in the world consider championship (professional) sport as a powerful efficient tool to make economic, social, and cultural development (López et al, 2016, 2017, 2018). In this regard, sports marketing, among various issues, needs to be paid special attention in order for it to survive and develop. Marketing knowledge whose importance is increasing day to day is regarded as one of the components helping sports organizations, including federations, survive (Estiri, Aghazadeh, Rayej, & Raoufi, 2010). Also, Al Khajah (2001) has pointed out that utilizing scientific methods and marketing management in different fields can increase quality at competitive levels of sports and professionalism. Different ideological

views have proposed different definitions for marketing. One of the most important definitions is proposed by Kotler & Armstrong (1991), who defined marketing as a human activity to satisfy his needs and wants through exchange process. The term "marketing" was first used in the USA in 1987, but it was Kesler (1979) who proposed the first definition as the activities carried out by customers and marketers who increasingly utilize sport as a means to promote their products or services among sports sponsors. In another definition, Stotlar (2009) consider sports marketing as the process of designing and implementing activities for products, price, development, improvement, place, and distribution of sports services or products. The important point is that effective sports marketing, whether it is a large-scale event or a small local one, does not happen by accident. On the other hand, in order for marketers and marketing experts to develop their marketing plans, they cannot rely on guesses and hope to do things according to their own will. Instead, organizations need to spend time and make sufficient efforts to create marketing plan and help with issues they require (Shank, 2009). It is crucially significant for marketers to make correct decisions

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in today's business environment because most sports organizations do not have enough time and budget for research, as a result, marketing can involve mistakes which can be quite costly. Moreover, tournaments are highly important for sports consumers so they can spend their free time and have fun. If your marketing is not efficient, there are always other competitors to take your place (Ibid). The organization should also know the environment is constantly changing, and it is significant to understand the surrounding world. Moreover, key questions need to be responded based on understanding of the marketing environment, customer needs, and rival organizations (Bradley, 2003).

Sports marketing managers are responsible for dealing with sports market and customers of final sports products and services. It should be noted that marketing requires strategic program which is nowadays considered by marketing managers as the most important means to make strategic plans and analyze the marketing environment of a sports league or organization because sports marketing is an open social system and is interrelated with different environments (political, economic, cultural, etc.). To achieve the goal of strategic planning and better marketing in badminton premier league, marketing questions need to be analyzed, in which internal and external factors should be taken into account so that the organization's opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses can be identified in the future, and appropriate strategy can be adopted to deal with them (Hunger, Willon, & Thomas, 2005).

Given the fact that Iran's sport is mostly dependent on government resources, it is necessary to utilize sports marketing techniques. In this regard; however, marketing is faced with some barriers. Among sports marketing barriers in Iran are weak marketing and failure to attract financial resources and make money (Hamidi, 2012), administrative and structural-environmental barriers (Ghasemi, Javadipour, & Tarkfar, 2014), and lack of financial support (Ehsani, & Abudarda, 2008; Seyyed Ameri, Moharramzadeh, & Bashiri, 2009; Elahi, 2009; Rezaeei, 2011). Marketing and financial affairs have also been referred as key activities in the strategic plan of the Badminton World Federation (BWF website). Marketing is weak in sport in general and in the field of professional sport in particular. Given the fact that tax exemption was removed in all sections following the sixth five-year development plan, professional sports marketing in sports organizations gathers increasing importance. Sports marketing in Iran has been focused on in some research studies which mostly dealt with marketing barriers, developing strategic marketing plan, and analyzing sports environment questions. Some of these studies are presented below.

The results of the study carried out by Vandian (2016) indicated that institutional football capability has a significant effect on infrastructure capability which in turn significantly

influences strategic capability which in turn has a significant impact on operational marketing capabilities. In their study, Fallah and Aghakhani (2016) indicated that TV programs, content of magazines, and the internet have the highest effect on financing sports organizations and clubs. Also, Daskar-deh (2015) concluded that the federation has a WT position regarding sports marketing, while it should use a defensive strategy. The results of the study conducted by Safarnezhad (2015) indicated that the marketing strategy of Public Sports Federation is in WO region. The results of the study carried out by Akbari (2013) showed that the most important factor in developing tourism in Zanjan Province is security followed by tourist attractions, sports events, economy, education, residence, human resources, facilities and equipment, advertisement and marketing, and transportation services, respectively. In their study, Askarian, & Azadan, (2012) reported developing seven structural-management factors, failure of the sponsors to obtain sponsorship, failure to utilize marketing principles, low level of Iran's professional football, legal and media barriers, lack of technical aspects in sports clubs, and lack of efficient grounds to attract international sponsors as the barriers to attracting sponsors in Iran's professional football. Also, Chaleshtari et al (2011) showed that there is a significant positive relationship between structural (i.e. economic, informing-marketing, encouraging-supportive, and cultural-social) factors and attracting foreign investment in Iran's football industry. In their study, they concluded that decision makers in sports organizations pay more attention to strengths or potential positive results. Based on the theoretical principles and presented background, it can be stated that although numerous studies have focused on sport and its marketing, few studies have dealt with premier league, and sports marketing in handball has not dealt with in any studies. In this regard, the present study focused on analyzing marketing questions of badminton premier league.

Methods

Participants

The statistical population included 120 individuals who were the main beneficiaries and consumers of badminton premier league (including the chairman and members of the board of directors and experts of the Badminton Federation, the league organization, coaches and supervisors of the clubs present in the premier league, the presidents and vice-presidents of the provincial boards) and elites (including the specialists and university professors involved in sports marketing, among who 92 were selected as the study's sample based Morgan's table by a stratified random sampling method.

Procedures

Given its topic and aim, the present study was an applied one which was carried out by a descriptive method, and the required data were collected using a field method by referring to libraries, studying documents, utilizing a researcher-designed questionnaire, and through focal method (strategic council).

Instruments

The questionnaire was distributed among them, and 85 were returned completed and usable for data analysis. In order to collect other required data, library resources, related literature, and interview (with elites) were employed. Afterwards, the researcher-made questionnaire made up of 10 questions on strengths, 10 on weaknesses, 13 on opportunities, and 10 on threats was prepared. It is noteworthy that the number of the items were finalized according to the strategic coun-

cil. The questionnaire was designed based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from I totally disagree (1), I disagree (2), I have no idea (3), I agree (4), and I totally agree (5). Its face and content validity were confirmed according the opinions of 10 expert professors, and its reliability was calculated and confirmed through a sample of 30 individuals using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha=0.88$).

Statistical analysis

In order to analyze the collected data, descriptive analysis (frequency, mean, etc.) and inferential statistics (Friedman test) were used.

Results

Descriptive results

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the participants (n=92)

Criterion	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	49	58
	Female	36	42
Education	Diploma	10	12
	Associate's degree	4	5
	Bachelor's degree	40	47
	Master's degree	18	21
	PhD	13	15
Work experience	Below 5 years	5	6
	5 to 10 years	14	16
	11 to 20 years	38	45
	21 to 30 years	23	27
	Over 30 years	5	6
Field of study	Physical education	49	58
	Other	36	42
	Athlete	17	20
	Referee	4	5
Activity background	Coach	25	29
	Sports manager	21	25
	Marketing manager/expert	7	8
	Scientific/university expert	11	13

The descriptive results indicated that 58% of the participants were men and 42% women, 47% had bachelor's degrees or above followed by master's degree (21%), PhD (15%), diploma (12%), and associate's degree (5%). Regarding their work experience, the highest frequency belonged to the work experience of 11 to 20 years (45%), 21 to 30 years (27%), and 5 to

10 years (16%), and the lowest frequency was related to the work experiences of below 5 and over 30 years. Moreover, in terms of their field of study, 58% studied physical education and 42% fields other than physical education. With regard to their activity background, the highest frequency respectively belonged to coaches (29%), sports management (25%), athle-

tes (20%), experts (13%), and marketing manager and expert (8%), and the lowest frequency to referee (5%).

Determining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in marketing of badminton premier league of Islamic Republic of Iran

After the meeting of strategic council was held, the marketing outlook and statement of badminton premier league were determined according to the experts and elites' opinions on the marketing of badminton premier league.

The outlook of badminton premier league of Islamic Republic of Iran

Badminton premier league, leading in sports marketing
The statement of sports marketing mission of badminton premier league of Islamic Republic of Iran:

Sustainable development of badminton by developing financial supports and interacting with the private sector and long-term investment by increasing the number of supporters and spectators and satisfying them and increasing the number of teams present in the premier league and holding public conferences in order to create public culture and observe religious, Islamic, national, and moral values

Prioritizing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in marketing of badminton premier league of Islamic Republic of Iran

Table 2. The results of Friedman test

List	Chi-square	Df	Sig.	Rating mean	Result
Strength	79.70	3	0.001	2.10	Significant difference
Weakness	79.70	3	0.001	2.86	Significant difference
Opportunity	79.70	3	0.001	3.05	Significant difference
Threat	79.70	3	0.001	2.09	Significant difference

According to the data presented in Table 2, ranking the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in marketing of badminton premier league of Islamic Republic of Iran was

significant ($p < 0.05$). In this regard, ranking the marketing of badminton premier league is presented in Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Table 3. Ranking the strengths in the marketing of badminton premier league.

Priority	Item	Mean of ranks
1	Presence of interested and able manpower in the federation	5.70
2	Holding various national and international competitions by the federation	5.65
3	Presence of experienced and expert coaches in the federation	5.30
4	Proper educational system at the league level to involve individuals in the league	5.23
5	Using modern technologies such as the internet and social network	5.13
6	Providing administrative facilities by the federation	5.4
7	Attracting sponsor for different programs	4.8
8	Valid club contracts	4.6
9	Strong Iranian referees at world and Asian scopes	4.15
10	Holding international tournaments at different levels and attracting sponsors and spectators	3.99

Table 4. Ranking the weaknesses in the marketing of badminton premier league.

Priority	Item	Mean of ranks
1	Lack of financial and income-making sources	5.70
2	Lack of creativity in the organizational atmosphere of the federation	5.61
3	Weak relationship with the mass media	5.32
4	Tenure of the governmental sector and disinterest of the private sector	4.90
5	Attracting financial sources at a weak level	4.85
6	Lack of attractiveness of badminton league	4.60

Priority	Item	Mean of ranks
7	Lack of attention to talented areas	4.30
8	Poor management of clubs	4.10
9	Lack of a system to spot talented youths	3.90
10	Traditional vision and traditional managers at federation level	3.60

Table 5. Ranking the opportunities in the marketing of badminton premier league.

Priority	Item	Mean of ranks
1	Presence of local and foreign sponsors and identifying marketing opportunities	8.11
2	Paying attention to this sport on TV	8.09
3	Presence of international markets in tournaments	8.00
4	Holding big conferences in large cities and suitable visual news coverage	7.90
5	Presence of able political-economic individuals interested in this sport	7.85
6	Novelty of badminton for marketing and high motivation of sponsors	7.85
7	Presence of suitable grounds for private investment	7.65
8	Possibility of interacting with the national and provincial TVs to feed the policy-making council with opinions about producing and broadcasting and culture making	7.53
9	Holding various international tournaments and tours, Asia-championship, Asian games and Olympics	7.42
10	Extensive advertising environment and numerous medals	7.36
11	People's interest in badminton	7.00
12	Youngness of society	6.99
13	Hosting different international competitions in the country and using various sponsor	6.83

Table 6. Ranking the threats in the marketing of badminton premier league.

Priority	Item	Mean of ranks
1	Presence of political problems and sanctions	6.2
2	Discrimination between sports	5.4
3	Lack of support of premier league teams by the fans	4.82
4	Expensiveness of badminton facilities	4.45
5	Inappropriateness of economic situation of the country	4.17
6	Novelty of sports marketing and lack of sufficient information	4.8
7	Lack of research backgrounds in this field	3.9
8	Poor presence of well-known international teams in national international tournaments	3.5
9	Lack of real clubs	3.4
10	Lack of indoor venues	2.89

Discussion

The results of relevant studies have shown that SWOT model helps policymakers of organizations identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and it has been effective in regulating appropriate strategies, leading to an increase in total efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, the present study was aimed at pathology and analysis of the internal and external marketing environment of badminton

premier league. The most significant strength in the present study is presence of interested and able manpower in the federation. This finding is in agreement with the study carried out by Safarzadeh (2014) who reported that expert and able manpower is considered as one of the strengths in developing the marketing strategy in cycling federation, which can be interpreted as the fact that manpower is the driving force in organizations. If there is expert and efficient manpower, success can be achieved and limitations can be overcome

ven the unlimited resources. In this regard, Vandian (2016) put emphasis on human resources in marketing strategy. The second most significant strength was holding various national and international competitions by the federation, which is in agreement with the study carried out by Safarzadeh (2014). This finding can be interpreted as the fact that hosting various national and international competitions has helped equip infrastructures, increase the number of fans, and raise public awareness, brought about success to marketing, and promoted the fans' willingness to support the league. In this regard, Keshavarz, Farahani, Rezaeei, & Zakaeei (2015) considers the failure to hold international events as a threat in obtaining international hosting. The third strength figured out in the present study was presence of experienced and expert coaches in the federation, which is in line with the study conducted by Keshavarz et al (2015) who referred to keeping valuable expert and experienced human resources as the advantage of obtaining international hosting, and Mahdian (2014) put emphasis on presence of famous experienced coaches in football league clubs in Mazandaran Province. Such people can be more effective in marketing of badminton premier league using their fame and influence. Availability of a proper educational system at the league level to involve individuals in the league was the fourth strength, which is in line with the results of the studied carried out by Safarzadeh (2014), Vandian (2016), and Keshavarz et al (2015). Given the relevant scientific advances and new achievements, marketing authorities and league managers need to utilize these facilities, strengths, and new findings in their proper educational facilities to be provided to sports organizations. In this regard, it is necessary to develop a training management system in marketing of badminton premier federation and league. Employing technology and social media as a strength on marketing of badminton premier league clarifies this point that the capacity of mass and social media need to be used for this purpose. This finding is in agreement with the results of the study carried out by Vandian (2016). The marketing plan of Badminton World Federation which is based on the capacity of technology is in agreement with the study conducted by Rezaeei Sufi, & Sha'bani (2014).

It seems that badminton premier league has appropriate strengths in the field of marketing, and given the obtained strengths in human resources, material and technological facilities and the capacity to attract sponsors are in different phases. It is suggested that strengths especially financial resources should be promoted, and that other strengths including human resources, technological capacity, and so forth should be boosted in order to develop the financial field and control weaknesses and turn them into strengths.

Weaknesses

The most important weakness is lack of income resources which refers to financial problems and is related to the government's tenure of badminton and disinterest of private sector and attracting weak financial resources at federation level. This finding is in agreement with those of the studies carried out by Safarzadeh (2014) and Izadi et al (2017). In the study conducted by Safarzadeh (2014), lack of financial resources and attracting financial resources are referred to as a weakness. In their study, Izadi et al showed that marketing of Iran's premier league clubs is faced with problems like lack of supportive, facilitating, and encouraging principles and programs by financial sponsors and a lack of scientific attitude toward income making and governmental monopoly. In interpreting this finding, it can be stated that there should be efficient attempts to attract support from governmental and private sectors. In designing and developing championship sport in Kurdistan Province, Seifpanahi (2009) referred to the importance of attracting the support of governmental and private sectors. In this field, weakness should be resolved by making use of environmental opportunities such as presence of local and foreign sponsors and political diplomacy by penetrating into prominent political characters, and strengths need to be utilized to resolve weaknesses and convert them into strengths. One of the identified weaknesses in this field was disinterest of the league which affects not only the public and sports organizations but also cultural field. One of the factors that makes sports environment interesting for sponsors is presence of a large number of fans who bring about a proportional profit to the sponsors. Therefore, this issue needs to be paid attention in the field of talent detection, and grounds should be created to increase the number of fans in this sport. In this regard, it is essential to make use of strengths, decrease environmental threats, and value the opportunities to improve marketing in badminton premier league. Another weakness is the weak relationship with the mass media. The results of the study carried out by Rezaeei Sufi, & Sha'bani (2014) indicated that the mass media plays an average role in supplying of financial resources, method of marketing, and development of sport industry, which necessitates the need for revising mass media financing and broadcasting rights. Rajabi et al (2012) pointed out that the media and spectators are two significant factors in attracting fans and private capital. Other major weaknesses are the lack of a system to detect talents and poor management of clubs which need to be taken into account, which will lead to an increase in private and governmental support of badminton premier league.

Opportunities

Presence of local and foreign sponsors and identifying marketing opportunities, paying attention to this sport on TV, presence of international markets in tournaments, holding big conferences in large cities and suitable visual news coverage, presence of able political-economic individuals interested in this sport, novelty of badminton for marketing and high motivation of sponsors, presence of suitable grounds for private investment, possibility of interacting with the national and provincial TVs to feed the policy-making council with opinions about producing and broadcasting and culture making, holding various international tournaments and tours, Asia-championship, Asian games and Olympics, extensive advertising environment and numerous medals, people's interest in badminton, youngness of society, and hosting different international competitions in the country and using various sponsor are the prioritized opportunities of badminton premier league marketing. The art of the badminton premier league marketing managers is to utilize these opportunities in appropriate situations and focus on improving strengths and decreasing weaknesses and environmental threats. Unlike before, organizations cannot nowadays achieve long-terms success through mere dependence on their internal capacities, so they need to consider the outside as well. Opportunities are resources for organizations that are gained after spending a large amount of material cost; however, there should be expert managers to create opportunities because opportunities can fade away just life power. These items are in line with those of the studies carried out by Safarzadeh (2014), Izadi et al (2017), and Seyyed Bagheri, & Sharifian (2017).

Threats

Presence of political problems and sanctions, discrimination between sports, lack of support of premier league teams by the fans, expensiveness of badminton facilities, inappropriateness of economic situation of the country, novelty of sports marketing and lack of sufficient information, lack of research backgrounds in this field, poor presence of well-known international teams in national international tournaments, lack of real clubs, and lack of indoor venues are the prioritized

threats in the studied field. According to researchers of the present study, presence of political problems and sanctions is the most significant threat because organizational budgets are mostly governmental, and sanctions can directly affect the national budget and organizational budgets especially sports ones. If an organizational superior believes that the manager of the federation lacks political qualification, he will sure face problems in terms of attracting resources and developing the organization, which is also confirmed in the topic "Qualifications of a Manager" in Rabin's book which refers to political qualification as one of the manager's characteristics in addition to cognitive, specialized, and human skills. In order to resolve threats in an organization, they need to be converted into opportunities by boosting internal strengths and reducing weaknesses and properly using the available opportunities. If threats are not dealt with, they may endanger the organization's entity and increase its problems as a result of adding up to its weaknesses.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion of the present study is that marketing of badminton premier league needs to make optimal use of the available human resources, appropriate training system, facilities and technologies, and the mass media and employ environmental opportunities to covert weaknesses into strengths and threats into opportunities, so that proper marketing happens in badminton premier league to come up with a dynamic league and achieve the stated outlook.

It is recommended that badminton premier league should develop a systematic method to attract financial resources, hold badminton festivals, design a system to detect talents, penetrate into Asian federations, create a special portal for premier league, and develop communications and use of mass media by attracting financial sponsors and reducing governmental tenure. Moreover, with regard to research, it is suggested that the should develop strategic plans for badminton premier league marketing and introduce a model in this regard and cross-compare among several different countries in order to achieve the goals of the league, which is specifically helped by scientific marketing.

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