



Financial Performance Model of Sports Product Manufacturers Based on Entrepreneurial Marketing and Market Orientation with the Mediating Role of Information Technology

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ABSTRACT

Today, the sports industry is known through modern technology, especially in the field of manufacturing sports tools and equipment. The present study uses correlation and applied methodology, which was done in the field using Structural Equations Modeling (SEM). The statistical population included producers of sports products, of which 320 producers from Iran were considered through available sampling. Morris (2002) Standard Entrepreneurial Marketing Questionnaire, Moghimi Market Orientation (2011), Noh and Fitzsimmons Information Technology (1999), and Azizi (2011) Financial Performance Questionnaire were used to collect data. Finally, 292 questionnaires were received physically and electronically. The results showed that entrepreneurial marketing and market orientation had a direct and indirect effect (mediated by technology) on financial performance and they significantly affected the financial performance. Finally, the model had the goodness of fit. In general, manufacturers who adopted a combination of entrepreneurial marketing strategy and information technology had better and more rational financial performance by taking advantage of attractive entrepreneurial opportunities. According to the research results, it is suggested that manufacturers provide the consumers with superior value by paying attention to the market orientation and innovation, to enable the company to achieve a competitive advantage.

Introduction

Sports equipment is a general term for the types of equipment, devices, and supplies used by people to participate in sports. Today, the influence of sports is gradually expanding day by day. With the

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advancement of science and technology, the important role of sports equipment in sports has been highlighted. Manufacturers of sports equipment innovate in each sport, which not only promotes sport, but also provides comfort for all levels of the sports population (Maksudov, Bobamirzayeva, Xomidjonova, & Mahkamova, 2021). The design and construction of sports equipment are closely related to the performance of sporting events and closely related to the use of sports participants. In sports competitions, the difference between the equipment used by athletes is mainly independent competitive equipment, and this type of equipment mainly includes the following categories: sports shoes, sportswear, and other independent sports equipment. Good quality sports equipment, stable performance, safety, and reliability can not only ensure free and fair competition but also create the necessary material conditions to improve the level of sports (Huang & Qiu, 2020).

In 2020, the sporting goods industry was constrained for the first time since the 2007-2008 financial crisis. Most brands, retailers, and manufacturers ended the fiscal year miserably, despite returning to activity after the first wave and before the second wave due to COVID-19-related quarantines. Covid-19 has created the next normal environment for the industry, defined by factors such as digital commerce, increased demand for sustainable products, and increased participation in individual forms of sport and sport. To win in the new environment, the industry must adapt both the customer offer and its operational capabilities (Becker, Berg, Kohli, & Thiel, 2021).

Considering the expansion and development of sports and the high volume of exchanges in this field, the need for extensive marketing in the field of the sports industry has become more pronounced. Several studies on the relationship between entrepreneurship and market orientation incorporate companies and the for-profit sector (Morris, Schindehutte, & LaForge, 2001). Pakdel and his colleagues (2011) examined the relationship between market orientation, innovation, customer loyalty with business performance. The analysis of the results shows that the increase in innovation has resulted from the growth of marketing, leading to better innovation performance in the company (Pakdel, Nayebzadeh, & Dehghan Dehnavi, 2011). The results of Mansouri and his coworkers (2021) entitled investigating the mediating role of market orientation between internal marketing and the development of entrepreneurial orientation within private sports clubs indicate a positive relationship between internal marketing and employees' entrepreneurial orientation. This study also showed that market orientation has also played a positive mediating role in the relationship between internal marketing and entrepreneurial orientation (Mansouri, Boroujerdi, Polonsky, Husin, & Seydi, 2021).

In addition, evaluating business performance is necessary for any business and entrepreneurship. It also has different dimensions, one of the most common of which is financial indicators (Ren, Eisingerich, & Tsai, 2015). The Financial indicators are related to economic factors such as value management, cost reduction, and risk control (Taperashi, Esmaeli, & Amirtash, 2018). In general, the performance of any organization is the ability of that organization to meet the maximum benefits and satisfaction of the organization's stakeholders. However, the performance in this study means profit growth, cost reduction, and market value referred to as financial performance. Although many companies use traditional performance appraisal metrics such as payroll rates and cost-to-income ratios, Sheel (2018) argues that traditional performance appraisal metrics do not work to create value for shareholders (Sheel, 2018). For example, asset turnover affects the rate of return on shareholders' salaries, which is a traditional measure of performance appraisal, while asset turnover does not necessarily benefit shareholders (Ren, Eisingerich, & Tsai, 2015). To address the shortcomings of traditional performance appraisal criteria, Ismail (2018) stated that sports finance managers should use criteria that are closer to economic realities to enhance traditional performance appraisal criteria. In other words, in addition to increasing profits and reducing costs, they should also pay attention to product quality and brand value promotion (Ismail & Zainol, 2018).

In this regard, the topic that has attracted the attention of idea owners, entrepreneurs in the field of sports, and innovative accelerators is the issue of technology in business. Therefore, one of the ways to keep sports businesses competitive is to search and utilize information and communication technology to develop existing capacities (Zehir, Köle, & Yıldız, 2015). In today's world, information and communication are valuable assets for any organization and can be very important in increasing the growth of any organization (Vasilchenko & Morrish, 2011). The results show that information and communication technology has a significant impact on the success of organizational resources. It also increases the speed and quality of things, affects organizational performance, and allows

employees to increase their efficiency and effectiveness (Rizvandi, Tojari, & Esmaili, 2018). Entrepreneurship is a prerequisite for technology development, and technology development is the bedrock of entrepreneurship. Today, a digital entrepreneur is a person who uses the Internet and information and communication technology in general as a tool to create opportunities to prepare a business using the capabilities of information and communication technology. Therefore, in marketing with an entrepreneurial approach for achieving various goals, including finance, equipping the profession created with information technology is necessary (Morris, Schindehutte, & LaForge, 2002). According to the findings of Kalani (2016), one of the capabilities that help to form customer agility in a competitive market is the ability of market intelligence; overactive anticipation of undiscovered market opportunities, and anticipation of customer needs and competitive movements, which depends on the superiority of the use of information technology and entrepreneurial awareness of managers and organizational personnel (Amini Roshan, Gholamian, Mahmoudi, & Azizi, 2022; Kalani, Eskandari, & Mohammadi Shams Abadi, 2016). Information technology reduces the need for entrepreneurs to move from one place to another physically. Technology also helps entrepreneurs reach broader geographies and new customers to expand their business (Rizvandi et al., 2018). Therefore, when the entrepreneur intends to take advantage of new opportunities due to limited resources, he/she must use an innovative approach to dealing with environmental uncertainty (Khodami, 2012). Therefore, when the goal is to take advantage of new opportunities due to limited resources, the entrepreneur must use an innovative approach to deal with environmental uncertainty. Accordingly, the results of Ghasemzadeh's (2019) research showed that the characteristics of Internet access, landline, and mobile subscribers played an essential role in the development of entrepreneurship (Ghasemzadeh & Salatin, 2019).

The results of studies by Taperashi and his colleagues (2018) showed a significant relationship between the dimensions and characteristics of entrepreneurship and the performance of sports clubs. Moreover, the more prominent the entrepreneurial qualities of the club managers are, the more they will improve the club's performance (Taperashi et al., 2018). Ziyae's (2019) findings showed a positive and significant relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance. Electronic readiness in the sense of networking and open innovation approach also had positive and significant effects on the performance of start-up sports businesses. The results showed a significant relationship between the components of organizational entrepreneurship and organizational performance in sports and youth departments in northern Iran (Ziyae & Toutifar Tehranpour, 2019). Among the components of organizational entrepreneurship, two components of creativity and managerial structure had the largest share in predicting organizational performance (Ghezelsefloo & Chorli, 2020). Findings of Zehir (2015) showed that regarding entrepreneurial opportunities based on the impact of knowledge assets on the process of entrepreneurial opportunities, intellectual capital as a knowledge asset and each of its three dimensions, including human, structural, and social capital has a positive and significant effect on value creation in the sports industry (Zehir et al., 2015). The results of some research show that in open markets, entrepreneurial marketing processes can be used strategically to create higher value for both club customers and club owners. A club with an entrepreneurial marketing approach will actively innovate and manage risk during the marketing process to create, communicate and deliver value to customers in a way that benefits the club and its shareholders (Morrish, 2011). The results of Ghezelsefloo's (2020) studies showed a significant effect of the four dimensions of virtual competitive advantage on the entrepreneurship of small and medium-sized sports businesses. According to him, the mediating role of creative management is effective in developing sports businesses (Ghezelsefloo & Chorli, 2020). Therefore, managers and owners of active sports companies can create spaces in favor of sustainable entrepreneurship by providing infrastructure related to the deployment of cyberspace technology and applying it in marketing processes and the entrepreneurial mentality of managers. The weakness of sports businesses in creating a competitive advantage and lack of innovation in sports products lead to the need for agility and change in the production and trade models of sports businesses more and more (Zehir et al., 2015). In this regard, the sports industry as an attractive, lucrative, competitive, and developing industry needs to develop a comprehensive model with these variables to create and discover new business opportunities. Some researches like Gholamian, Darabi, Mahmoudi & Azizi (2022) and Lv, Wang, & Jin (2022) believed that the block chain and the sports industry would lead to innovation

and development of the sports industry shortly. By analyzing the problems in the current business model of the sports industry, they considered 200 innovation indicators in 50 sports industry listed companies (15 companies used the block chain and 35 companies did not) as a research sample. The results showed that sports companies use the block chain. Companies that use the block chain do not perform better in terms of innovation efficiency, which indicates the need for a business model for the block chain (Gholamian, Darabi, Mahmoudi, & Azizi, 2022; Lv, Wang & Jin, 2022).

Entrepreneurial marketing can be considered one of the ways to create a lasting advantage in the sports industry. Through it, the new needs and demands of customers of sports products can be identified in the best way, and their satisfaction can be achieved. Therefore, evaluating the sports market is important, from an entrepreneurial perspective, and achieving success for entrepreneurs in this field in financial and non-financial dimensions. The desire to attract more customers and perform well in the sports industry guarantees success and survival in today's dynamic market. This owes much to surpassing competitors through innovation, value creation, leadership, and the achievement of predetermined goals. Previous research, as well as in the field of the sports industry, has less examined the relationship between the performance of sports business with entrepreneurial marketing and the use of information technology, and in this regard, there is a serious study gap. Therefore, it seems that conducting this research and similar studies can be useful in filling this research gap and providing sufficient empirical evidence. Thus, by examining the studies and models presented in previous research on the emerging category of "entrepreneurial marketing" in the field of sports, in this study, an attempt was made to provide a new model for sports and manufacturers of sports products. Given the gap in studies on the use of information technology for market development in the sports industry, this study will examine the direct and indirect effects of entrepreneurial marketing and market orientation on financial performance. Undoubtedly, due to the increasing competition between sports equipment manufacturers and products, the research results can provide helpful information for launching or developing related businesses. Accordingly, this study seeks to highlight the model of the effect of entrepreneurial marketing and market orientation on the financial performance of sports product manufacturers through the mediation of information technology in the Iranian sports industry.

Methodology

This research was applied in terms of purpose and correlational in terms of research method. The statistical population of this study included producers of sports products such as goods, equipment, and facilities of sports venues in Iran. To sample, by referring to the company registration organization and reviewing Internet sites (for example www.faaltarin.com), and by using the formula $5Q \leq n \leq 15Q$ (n means the number of samples and Q means the number of items), at least 320 manufacturers of sports products were considered. Forty questionnaires were physically distributed, 90 were distributed electronically through the related sites (www.DigiSurvey.net), and 190 questionnaires were distributed through virtual social networks (mainly WhatsApp). Finally, 292 questionnaires were received from sports product manufacturers in IRAN. Standard electronic and physical questionnaires were used to collect data. The Morris (2002) questionnaire with 21 items and 7 components was exerted to assess entrepreneurial marketing. Moghimi's (2011) questionnaire with 36 items and 11 components was used to measure market orientation (Moghimi, 2011). Azizi's (2011) questionnaire with 21 items and 3 components, including value management, risk control, and cost control, was applied to measure financial performance (Azizi, 2011). The Noh (1999) standard questionnaire with 22 items was also used to measure the information technology variable (Noh & Fitzsimmons, 1999). All four questionnaires were assessed on a five-point Likert scale from the very low option number 1 to the very high option number 5. Twelve sports management professors assessed the face and content validity of the questionnaires. Then, the content validity ratio was calculated (0.74) using the Lawshe formula and it was approved according to the answers of 10 participants. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaires. The reliability of the Entrepreneurial Marketing Questionnaire was 0.85, the Marketing Orientation Questionnaire 0.84, the Financial Performance Questionnaire 0.87, and the Information Technology

Questionnaire 0.86. Because the alpha value obtained was higher than 0.7, the reliability of the questionnaires was confirmed. This research was conducted in the summer and autumn of 2020. The elongation and skewness test was used to ensure normal data distribution. Moreover, to analyze the data, the Structural Equation Modeling was exerted based on SPSS and Amos software version 24. An acceptable significance level for confirming or rejecting the hypotheses was $P < 0.05$.

Results

The demographic characteristics of sports product manufacturers are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of subjects

Variable	frequency	percent	
Age of producers	Less than 30 years	43	14.7
	30 to 40 years	112	38.4
	41 to 50 years	63	21.6
	Over 50 years old	74	25.3
Experience	Less than 5 years	0	0
	Between 5 and 10	102	35
	Above 10 years	190	65
Level of Education	Graduate and below	146	50
	Bachelor's degree	111	38
	Masters and above	35	12

The results of demographic data showed that all producers of sports products (292 people equivalent to 100%) are men. Moreover, more than 60% of them (175 people) are between 30 and 50 years old. In addition, 35% of them (102 people) had 5 to 10 years of experience, and 65% (190) had more than ten years of experience. More than 50% of producers (146 people) had a diploma and a lower degree. In the inferential findings section, the normality of the data was first examined, and the results of the tilt and elongation test showed that the variables were standard ($-2 < x < 2$). In addition, before starting the structural equations, some of its preconditions, such as the non-alignment of variables were examined. In the present study, the alignment between the variables independent of the values related to the two indices of inflation variance and tolerance coefficient, which indicates the degree of alignment between the independent variables, was investigated according to Table 2.

Table 2. Estimation of Multiple Alignment using Tolerance Coefficient and Variance Inflation Factor

Variables	Tolerance Coefficient	Variance Inflation Factor
Criteria	---	---
Entrepreneurial Marketing	0.577	1.732
Market Orientation	0.621	1.609
Information Technology	0.564	1.772
* $p \leq 0.05$ criteria variable: financial performance		

Thus, the index of entrepreneurial marketing tolerance was 0.58 and market orientation 0.62, which were higher than 0.4 and considered desirable. Then, the correlation relationships between the research variables were examined (Table 3). The results of the Pearson test showed a significant correlation between the variables. In addition, the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and information technology as predictor variables is less than 0.7 and indicates no alignment to perform structural equation testing.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Coefficients, Predictor, and Criterion Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
Entrepreneurial Marketing	1			
Financial Performance	0.671**	1		
Information Technology	0.600**	0.646**	1	
Market Orientation	0.543**	0.534**	0.557**	1

****All correlations were significant at the levels of $P \leq 0.01$ and $P \leq 0.05$**

Another assumption of structural equations is the absence of outdated data. For this purpose, in the present study, the z score of each individual in each variable was calculated using SPSS software to examine univariate outliers. The results showed that the data related to the subjects did not have a significant standard deviation higher or lower than the mean.

The Mahalanobis distance was also calculated for the exogenous variables of the model to examine multivariate outlier data. The minimum and maximum values of Mahalanobis distance in the present study were 23.43 and 47.07, respectively. Considering that the two-critical chi at the $p = 0.05$ is equal to 212.00 and also, according to the maximum distance of Mahalanobis (47.07), which is smaller than the value of the two-critical chi, there were not any multivariate outlier data.

Then, the construct validity of the questionnaires was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis (first stage and second stage), and the relevant factor loads were calculated. Due to the software output, all factor loads of the research variables were more than 0.5, so the items and dimensions of the questionnaires had the necessary validity. The study of each variable's critical ratio and significance coefficient also showed the significance of coefficients of paths of the observed variables and hidden variables. Figure 1 shows the present research model's output and the path coefficients.

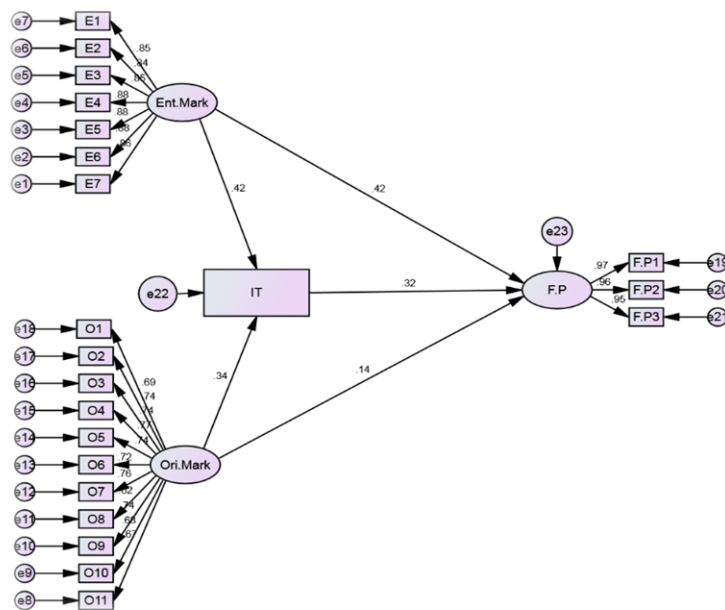


Figure 1. The output of Research Model in the Mode of Standard Path Coefficients (AMOS)

Table (2) shows the fit indices of the final model.

Table 4. Results of Model Fit Indices

Indices	χ^2	P-Value	df	RMSEA	CMIN/DF	NFI	AGFI	GFI	CFI
Acceptable Values	-	P>0.05	df ≥ 0	RMSEA < 0.05	CMIN ≤ 3	NFI > 0.8	AGFI > 0.8	GFI > 0.95	CFI > 0.8
Output Desirability	212.00	0.334	304	0.012	1.040	0.961	0.923	0.938	0.998
	Confir med	Confir med	Confir med	Confir med	Confirmed	Confir med	Confir med	Confir med	Confir med

The results in Table 4 show that the fit indices of the final model including the chi-square index ($\chi^2 = 212.00$), the goodness of fit index (GFI = 0.938), the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI = 0.923), the comparative fit index (CFI = 0.998), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.012), indicate a suitable fit of the model. Therefore, the final model has a good fit.

Table 5 shows the relevant paths and standard coefficients in the final model. All path coefficients related to the final model are significantly based on the results.

Table 5. Paths, Standard Coefficients, and Critical Ratios Related to Direct Effects between Variables

Path	β	C.R	S.E	p-value
Entrepreneurial Marketing - Information Technology	0.42	7.16	1.39	0.000
Entrepreneurial Marketing - Financial Performance	0.42	7.24	0.067	0.000
Information Technology - Financial Performance	0.32	5.79	0.003	0.000
Market orientation - information technology	0.34	5.46	1.46	0.000
Market orientation - financial performance	0.14	2.42	0.065	0.016

According to Table (5), since the C.R for all variables is more than 1.96 and the significance level is less than 0.05, the direct relationships between all variables in the model are significant.

As mentioned before, the bootstrap method was used to investigate the intermediate relationships between the research variables. The results for the indirect path are shown in Table (6).

Table 6. Bootstrap Results between Independent, Dependent, Mediator Variables

Path	Bootstrap Coefficient	Standard Error	Bootstrap		Sig
			Lower Limits	Upper Limits	
Entrepreneurial Marketing-Information Technology-Financial Performance	0.154	0.033	0.097	0.227	0.001
Market orientation-Information Technology -financial performance	0.123	0.032	0.070	0.199	0.001

The results in Table 4 show that in indirect paths, given that zero is not within the confidence interval (lower and upper limits), the indirect effect of entrepreneurial marketing on financial performance, and the indirect effect of market orientation on financial performance through the information technology mediator variable was significant.

Discussion and Conclusion

The overall purpose of this study was to determine the impact of entrepreneurial marketing and market orientation on the financial performance of sports product manufacturers mediated by information technology. The results of path analysis showed that all direct and indirect paths related to entrepreneurial marketing and market orientation with financial performance have a direct and significant effect. In addition, the research findings indicated that based on the values of fit indices, the overall structure of the research model was approved. Based on the research results, there is a significant relationship between market orientation and entrepreneurial marketing of sports product manufacturers with their financial performance. Based on the research results of Rizvandi, Tojari, & Esmaili (2018); Seif, Mohamad zamani, Shojae, & Moghadam (2018); Mazrouei, Fatahi, & Dolatshah (2020); Ahonen (2019); Morrish (2011), there is a strong correlation between entrepreneurial characteristics (innovation, power of risk-taking, independence, responsibility, and self-confidence of managers), sports companies, and their success rate in the market (Ahonen, 2019; Mazroui Nasrabadi, Fatahi, & Dolatshah, 2020; Morrish, 2011; Rizvandi et al., 2018; Seif, Mohamad zamani, Shojae, & Moghadam, 2018). Therefore, the manufacturers of sports products must also act with prudence and risk in today's world. It means that they accept and tolerate the risk of failure and ultimately hunt for opportunities (opportunism) which indicates that these entrepreneurs are more ambitious to realize their ideas. Therefore, they try to achieve more success and perhaps can sometimes interpret these dreams as predicting and anticipating the situation. Thus, hunting for opportunities that lead to success is more likely to depend on risk-taking and quick action than on other competitors. Based on the results of studies by Taperashi, Esmaili & Amirtash (2018); Kalani, Eskandari, & Mohammadi Shams Abadi (2016); Nojavan, Karbasi & Mohammadi (2018); Ratten & Tajeddini (2019), the foresight of sports product manufacturers has an impact on their financial performance (Kalani et al., 2016; NOJAVAN, Karbasi, & Mohammadi, 2018; Ratten & Tajeddini, 2019; Taperashi et al., 2018). Accordingly, the manufacturers measure the market conditions with reflection and foresight and try to move in the right direction so as not to be challenged or less involved. According to the findings of Staniewski & Awruk (2019) on the impact of value creation on financial performance, it is suggested that by paying attention to strategies such as using different pricing strategies compared to other non-sports producers, the possibility of achieving Easy purchase and ordering of the product, guaranteeing the quality of the sold products, providing diverse marketing services to customers, using appropriate advertisements to introduce the distinction and

difference between their products and other manufacturers, and other things, to improve the performance of sports product manufacturers (Staniewski & Awruk, 2019).

The use of up-to-date information technologies can also reduce the risk for manufacturers. New technologies, such as new devices, produce customers more willing to buy products. In addition, some management software, which is in the category of technologies, provides the possibility of proper and easy control of various management, production, and control processes at manufacturers' service, and they can perform their activities with less risk. Information and communication technology can facilitate the conditions for creating entrepreneurship and reduce obstacles. Information and communication technology reduces the need for entrepreneurs to physically move from one place to another. On the other hand, technology can facilitate entrepreneurship by reducing information asymmetry. Also, technology helps entrepreneurs to reach wider geographical areas and new customers to come and expand their business in this way.

In terms of value creation, which means providing a more valuable product or service than competitors' product/service to customers, sports product manufacturers should offer packages such as providing additional free services to particular customers in addition to the core service to create this feeling in all customers who have received more benefits for the cost (such as free use of sports facilities, free internet, discounts, etc.). This finding is consistent with the findings of Khodami, Khodadad, Mashbaki, & Azar (2012); Ren, Eisingerich, & Tsai (2015); Miles & Darroch (2006); Zehir, Köle, & Yıldız (2015). Undoubtedly, the leading companies in sports product production owe their success and proper financial performance to technology and the manufacturing of quality products (Khodami, 2012; Miles & Darroch, 2006; Ren et al., 2015; Zehir et al., 2015).

According to the research results on the effect of customer variables on financial performance, it is suggested that manufacturers of sports products emphasize close communication with the customer to maximize the impact of entrepreneurial marketing on financial performance and achieve better performance. Using new ideas to gain a competitive advantage and take the lead in applying innovative methods derived from customer feedback to market products to strengthen their entrepreneurial marketing strategies. In this regard, it should be acknowledged that a sports products company that uses tools such as entrepreneurial marketing, strengthens its relationships with existing customers, and constantly seeks ways to identify and take advantage of new opportunities to respond to hidden demands and future demands, thereby expanding the customer base from athletes and sports fans to non-athletes. New technologies such as virtual media, websites, and social networks have made it much easier to communicate with customers. Customers can now express their opinions or suggestions about the products of sports companies in various ways and through technology, and companies can use this feedback to correct their problems. Customer relationship software also continuously monitors customer relationships from the moment of arrival until after the service is provided, resulting from technology development.

Based on the research findings, entrepreneurial marketing has a significant effect on financial performance through information technology. In addition, the direct impact of the mentioned features on cost control and customer satisfaction has been evident. Moreover, this means that the more entrepreneurs use entrepreneurial, technical, and market information, the more it will improve their performance. This result is consistent with Ziyae & Tootifar (2019); Ghasemzadeh & Salaatin (2019); Vasilchenko & Morrish, (2011), and Ismail & Zainol (2018) (Ghasemzadeh & Salatin, 2019; Ismail & Zainol, 2018; Vasilchenko & Morrish, 2011; Ziyae & Toutifar Tehranpour, 2019). Therefore, it is possible that increasing the level of knowledge, awareness, and information of manufacturers along with the use of modern technology is one of the leading factors in the industry, which has a significant impact on the financial performance of manufacturers of sports products. Information technology with various features and capabilities can show remarkable flexibility in the field of entrepreneurship, marketing, and market orientation. These features have increased the efficiency of this technology in the market and created employment in the field of sports. Fast calculation and processing of information and its immediate transfer reduces the time of doing work and thus increases productivity.

Information technology also provides the possibility of searching and quickly accessing information. In human-based jobs, the accuracy of work is variable; while information technology provides and guarantees high and stable accuracy. In all kinds of processing and calculation activities, the accuracy of the computer is much higher than that of humans. With the development of information technology and its use, there is no need to carry and store a large amount of information physically. It is easy to store the information of several sports products or even a sports store in each compact disk or to receive the required resources through computer networks. The use of information technology increases transparency in doing things and eliminates many intermediaries. These two key advantages lead to the elimination of some administrative corruption, especially at the lower levels. With the help of information technology, many customer inquiries and references are done automatically through computer networks. Therefore, it can be used 24 hours a day.

It is suggested that sports product manufacturers take a networking and innovation approach in the research and marketing of their products and services because creating a new product or service in the form of open and networked communications, primarily through e-business, is likely to improve organizational performance and agility. For example, creating a digital marketing unit in such manufacturing companies for the active and continuous presence of customers in cyberspace (such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, and Facebook) and daily monitoring and analyzing of their opinions in these spaces in various ways, causing customer orientation, market leadership, opportunism, and innovation.

According to the study results, which indicated the influential role of resource utilization in improving financial performance and cost control, it is suggested that managers of sports companies prepare proper context to empower employees based on training and facing employees' needs. In addition, they should use think tanks and tools such as brainstorming, appropriate procedures, and processes to better use available resources (financial and human resources). In addition, they should make the most of environmental opportunities by moving away from traditional methods and using organic and dynamic structures. Finally, they should remove barriers and strengthen opportunities and effective factors to create innovation and market products. This finding is consistent with the findings of Ghezlsoflu & Chorli (2020); Niehm, Hurst, Son, Fiore, & Sadachar (2013); Becherer, Helms, & McDonald (2012); Sheel (2018)(Becherer, Helms, & McDonald, 2012; Ghezelsefloo & Chorli, 2020; Niehm, Hurst, Son, Fiore, & Sadachar, 2013; Sheel, 2018). It is possible to facilitate a sense of teamwork by encouraging employee participation (various areas of production, distribution, and sale of sports products) in decision-making and encouraging employees to commit to the company's goals strongly. It is also possible that using a "performance-based reward" system can encourage employees to innovate and engage in behaviors that are good for the organization's performance. Such payment systems attract, retain, encourage and motivate employees to behave flexibly in response to changes in the external environment.

In general, according to the research results, it can be said that manufacturers of sports products, like other companies and institutions, must appear in an excellent competitive arena to surpass current competitors. Companies that adopt an integrated style of entrepreneurial marketing and information technology are better able to explore and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities. This high level of entrepreneurship and knowledge of entrepreneurial marketing processes enables large companies to effectively and efficiently improve financial performance. In addition, companies' good financial and economic situation will guarantee their survival and better presence in a competitive market. As a result, with the help of information technology, new technologies of the market and the diversity of customer demand will better examine to guide and support customers to create new markets instead of just providing services in existing markets. In addition, in the face of declining resources and the global financial crisis, anyone striving for entrepreneurship in doing new business, with the crystallization of entrepreneurial thinking in marketing, can create value for customers and better business for organizations and even governments. According to the results of the present research, market orientation is one of the most important dimensions in the performance of sports clubs. Also, paying attention to the needs of the customers and subsequently getting to know the competitors and

as a result coordinating within the club to meet the needs of the customers, getting to know the competitors, and taking steps in the future play an important role in the performance of the sports club; Therefore, the lack of strategic knowledge for young entrepreneurs may lead to the early termination of small sports clubs. Therefore, it is suggested to promote and expand strategic knowledge training in educational centers and pay attention to brand orientation in addition to entrepreneurship and market orientation. In this regard, the formulation of brand development and branding policies and their training is suggested to entrepreneurs. In other words, if this training changes the attitude of customers towards the brand, this becomes a prerequisite for branding and sustainable competitive advantage. The value, attitude, and views towards the brand as a strategic asset make a difference in sports businesses. This research, like other ones, was associated with some limitations in different stages. One of the main limitations was the relatively low willingness level of some manufacturers to complete the questionnaires due to their limited time and involvement in work activities due to the impact of the coronavirus on the market situation. It is suggested that research be conducted separately for each group of sports products produced and in Iran's field of sports services. It is also recommended that with emphasis on entrepreneurial marketing, manufacturers' performance in exporting sports products be examined. In addition, by comparing a comparative study of the situation of producers in Iran with other countries in the region.

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