

## THE EFFECT OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE FIRST COMPANION BRAND IN SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE QUALITY OF BRAND-CONSUMER RELATIONSHIP AND BRAND-CONSUMER COMPLIANCE IN IRANIAN PREMIER FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The purpose of this research was to investigate the effect of supporting the first financial brand in social media on the quality of the brand-consumer relationship and brand-consumer compliance in Iranian premier football league. **Materials and Methods:** The current thesis was used in terms of intent, and the data was collected using descriptive survey research. This study's statistical demographic included both Iranian Premier League fans and spectators. Standard questionnaires were used to evaluate the study theories, and structural equation simulation with SPSS and Smart pls applications was used to collect data. **Result:** The results showed Hamrahe Aval brand Financial Support of sports activities in social media had a significant relationship with brand-consumer compliance and brand-consumer relationship quality ( $p < 0.05$ ). **Conclusion:** To sum up, as Hamrahe Aval brand sponsorship of sports activities in social media and brand-consumer compliance increase, the brand-consumer relationship quality will improve. By recognizing the importance of brand value and its influence on customer loyalty, sport managers investigate and invest in influencing factors such as social media advertising and creating brand awareness.

**Key words:** Financial Support. Social Media. Consumer. Brand.

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### RESUMO

O efeito do apoio financeiro da primeira marca companheira nas mídias sociais na qualidade do relacionamento marca-consumidor e na conformidade marca-consumidor na liga de futebol iraniana premier

**Introdução:** O objetivo desta pesquisa foi investigar o efeito do apoio à primeira marca financeira nas mídias sociais na qualidade do relacionamento marca-consumidor e na conformidade marca-consumidor na liga de futebol premier iraniana. **Materiais e métodos:** A tese atual foi usada em termos de intenção, e os dados foram coletados usando pesquisa descritiva. A demografia estatística deste estudo incluiu fãs e espectadores da Premier League iraniana. Questionários padrão foram usados para avaliar as teorias do estudo, e simulação de equação estrutural com aplicativos SPSS e Smart pls foi usada para coletar dados. **Resultado:** Os resultados mostraram que o apoio financeiro da marca Hamrahe Aval às atividades esportivas nas mídias sociais teve uma relação significativa com a conformidade marca-consumidor e a qualidade do relacionamento marca-consumidor ( $p < 0,05$ ). **Conclusão:** Para resumir, à medida que o patrocínio da marca Hamrahe Aval às atividades esportivas nas mídias sociais e a conformidade marca-consumidor aumentam, a qualidade do relacionamento marca-consumidor melhorará. Ao reconhecer a importância do valor da marca e sua influência na fidelidade do cliente, os gerentes esportivos investigam e investem em fatores de influência, como publicidade em mídias sociais e criação de conscientização da marca.

**Palavras-chave:** Suporte financeiro. Mídia social. Consumidor. Marca.

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## INTRODUCTION

Football is a social phenomenon and a suitable way to form people's identity. Football is considered one of the most popular sports, in particular, it can be considered a collective performance in which the team, players and fans are the symbol of a community, city or region, and in this environment, people find meaning and identity widely (Arakelian, Brito and Rosenthal, 2020).

Today, according to the available evidence, football is the most popular sport in the world; To the extent that many countries consider it as their national sport. The existence of thousands of football players and millions of their fans all over the world, the overflowing stadiums and the competitions with hundreds of millions of viewers, have introduced football as the most popular sport in the world (Davvetas and Halkias, 2019).

In this regard, football players play the most key role in the development of national teams and clubs. Therefore, creating suitable fields to respond to the growing needs of players as customers and the main audience of football has forced the managers of the field of sports and marketing to seek to evaluate and satisfy the needs of players, and through this, the field of increasing team identity and presence they provide in sports events (Rather et al., 2019).

Sports brands use social media to strengthen the consistency of their relationships with clients and communicate more efficiently (Kunkel and Biscaia, 2020).

These companies use social media as a promotional medium to create relationships with their customers by increasing contact, brand recognition, sporting endorsement photos, and inspiring customers to purchase goods.

According to the popularity and virtual potential of communities to put like-minded and disparate individuals together in company, some industry researchers are keen to encourage businesses to use and transcend social media for their sustainability (Essamri, McKechnie and Winklhofer, 2019).

On average, online social media users spend around a third of their time on the platform, which illustrates the importance and the impact of social media on people's lifestyles, interactions with each other, peers, brand

community and its members (Arakelian, Brito and Rosenthal, 2020).

Although social media is a remarkable opportunity for a brand to improve consumer relationships, it is crucial to understand and assess social media's different aspects and their effect on brand engagement and dedication (Feyz et al., 2016). Social media is also a prerequisite for digital promotional communications (Sanderson and Weathers, 2020). Many businesses see social media as a medium of contact and service provider that aims to meet consumers' desires, wishes, concerns, and habits so that businesses can enhance competitiveness better than ever.

According to a CNN survey from 2014, there were just 275 million Chinese bloggers whose published data influenced consumers' decisions (Chu et al., 2016).

Because of this media's exponential rise, the relationship between customers and suppliers has been very rapid in recent years. So, it can also be said to be occurring right now.

Of course, this relationship is between the seller and the customer and between the consumers, and businesses should strive to maximize this ability (Vilnai-Yavetz et al., 2016).

On the other hand, sponsorship is one of the most well-known and progressive promotional resources open to brand marketers.

Sponsorship is a contractual agreement that supports a specific event to create a brand impression of significance, raise brand recognition, and specifically enhance sales of goods and services offered by that brand.

Today, sports advocacy is one of the main components in sports of countries, but in the field of administration, sports advocacy tackles factors such as sports advocacy priorities, parameters for selecting a sport, marketing contact, and assessment of sports support, all of which are critical factors in the process. Sports assistance is viewed and applied as a process (Coelho, Rita and Santos, 2018). Sports sponsorship offers unique opportunities to enter target markets, making it a robust contact tool in marketing communications. It has been accepted as the fifth communication tool in marketing communications (Bonar et al., 2012).

According to some research findings, sports sponsorship can impact the sponsor brand's brand value, brand recognition, brand

properties, desire to buy, and self-compatibility. In reality, brands can improve the appeal of their products and their name by taking this step (Hudson et al., 2015). by growing the number of sports networks on social media, sponsors are constantly seeking new ways of interacting with consumers through advertising, which has resulted in a decrease in advertisements (attention gained through advertising) and the rate at which people accept commercials. As a result, sponsors of athletes, sports teams, or sports competitions will enhance the brand's familiarity and appeal, so customers will become more motivated to obtain additional information about the brand. Based on this, it is possible to conclude that social media promotion of sports brands may positively impact brand-consumer compliance. Another element in this research is the quality of the brand relationship (Davvetas and Halkias, 2019).

The quality of relationships is a meta-structure with several constituent elements that demonstrates the fundamental essence of the organization's relationships with its consumers. Relationship quality can be defined as a set of intangible values that reinforce goods and services and contribute to the purchaser's expected interaction (Kunkel and Biscaia, 2020).

The concept also expresses the consumer's perceptions of how well the interpersonal relationship can fulfil the customer's expectations, projections, priorities, and desires. Customers' satisfaction is influenced by the quality of services they offer and their interaction with the service provider and the brand. On the other hand, the quality of relationships is defined as customers' positive emotions toward the service provider, their relationship with the supplier in terms of confidence and loyalty, and their overall satisfaction with the supplier (Rather et al., 2019).

Commitment, gratification, desire to reinvest, the presumption of continuity, limited opportunism, and confidence are some of the theoretical concepts suggested on relationship efficiency dimensions. However, research and observational evidence suggest that partnership success dimensions are divided into three categories: happiness, confidence, and loyalty. Many customers today have a unique and distinct relationship (in comparison

to others) with various brands, making it critical to estimate and classify the factors that can influence their relationship with a brand. Long-term and promoted consumers perceive a business to correlate positively with its growth (Das, Gopal, Khatwani, 2016).

In this regard, Kim, Ko (2012) studied the effect of social media practices on consumers' unique value and willingness to purchase, in which they considered five aspects of entertainment, engagement, stylishness, customization, advertisement, and the findings revealed that these social media factors influence the customer's unique value and desire to purchase. According to research, consumers and a brand's engagement by internet retrieval practices plays an essential role in developing a brand-consumer relationship, owing to the likelihood of a two-way interaction between the consumer and the brand and brand promotion.

It is possible to create a positive and trustworthy brand presence on social media, contributing to brand loyalty. As a result, social media has the potential to promote a brand-consumer relationship (Fu et al., 2017). Following that, a group of researchers confirmed that customers' self-awareness of a brand influences their desire to repurchase (Han et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Lee, Cho (2017) stressed that brand compliance with perceived customer identity has a positive effect on the brand-consumer relationship's consistency.

Brand-consumer adaptation seems to affect the consistency of the brand-consumer relationship. The sponsorship of the Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities, especially football, is one of the things that must be tackled. A quick summary of the Premier League and FA Cup competitions can be seen in various forms (direct sponsorship of football clubs, commercial), promoting the Iranian football industry, and impacting a wide range of its target community. For example, during the draw ceremony for the 16th round of the Premier Football League (Persian Gulf Cup), Hamrahe Aval was announced as the Football Federation's most influential supporter and one of the league's most famous teams. According to the above, this study's primary goal is to clarify the critical question of whether the Hamrahe Aval brand's financial sponsorship influences the quality of brand-consumer

relationship and brand-consumer compliance in sport?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current thesis was used in terms of intent, and data were collected using descriptive survey research. This study's statistical population included all spectators and followers of Iranian Premier League matches who followed the league through stadium

attendance or other media. Following the determination of the coefficient, 40 questionnaires were spread to Premier League viewers and followers. There were 332 samples for the dependent variable's stability and volatility, as well as its location in Cochran's formula. To be sure, 400 questionnaires were circulated to the audience in a non-probable manner, and the data from 332 questionnaires were analyzed. The following instruments were used to gather the necessary data.

**Table 1 - Research Questionnaire Specifications**

Column	Questionnaire	Number of balls	Alpha Coefficient	Reference
1	Brand's sponsorship of sports activities on social media	14	0.755	(Do, et al., 2015)
2	Brand-Consumer Compliance	16	0.736	
3	Brand-Consumer Relationship Quality	22	0.724	

The validity of the questionnaires used in this study was tested by 10 professors from the sport management department, and the

validity of the questionnaire was validated after adding their corrective opinions.

**Table 2 - Cronbach's alpha coefficient related to the reliability of the questionnaire questions**

Variable	Number of Questions	Alpha Coefficient
Brand's sponsorship of sports activities on social media	14	0.955
Brand-Consumer Compliance	16	0.936
Brand-Consumer Relationship Quality	22	0.924

The data collected from the questionnaire in this study is categorized after the study. Each variable's number or significance was calculated based on the data and scores obtained from the questionnaire to interpret the data and facts, following the proposed objectives. Then, by describing the details gathered in the form of descriptive tables and diagrams, a general picture of how they are distributed is created, which helps in various statistical patterns.

The study hypotheses were then evaluated using the structural equation method in the following phase. This technique is most often used in multivariate data analysis, where multiple dependent variables are being evaluated simultaneously. Structural equation

modelling is a multivariate and robust multivariate regression method and, more specifically, an extension of the general linear model that helps the researcher evaluate sets of regression equations simultaneously. Many of these tests were carried out using the SPSS24 and Smart Pls2 software packages.

## Findings

According to Table 3, it can be seen that 51.5% of the respondents were under 25 years old, 37% were between 25 and 35 years old, 5.5% were between 35 and 45 years old, 1.2% were over 45 years old, and 8.4% did not answer this question.

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**Table 3 - Description of respondent's age**

	Frequency	Percentage
Under 25 years old	171	51.5
Between 25 and 35 years old	123	37
Between 35 and 45 years old	18	5.5
Over 45 years old	4	1.2
Did not answer	16	4.8
Total	332	100

**Respondent's Education**

According to Table 4, it can be seen that the education's level of 35% of the respondents

belongs to who didn't get their diploma, 30.4% diploma, 22% associate, 7.8% bachelor, 2.1% master, 0.3% doctoral and 2.4% did not answer this question.

**Table 4 - Description of respondent's education**

Level of Education	Frequency	percentage
Did not get diploma	116	35
diploma	101	30.4
Associate	73	22
Bachelor	26	7.8
Master	7	2.1
Doctoral	1	0.3
Did not answer	8	2.4
Total	332	100

According to Table 5, it can be seen that the rate of using Hamrahe Aval brand services is 0.6% of respondents under two years, 4.2% 2 to 3 years, 27.4% 3 to 4 years, 42.7% 5 Up to

6 years, 19.3% were 6 to 7 years old, and 2.4% were more than seven years old, and 3.4% did not answer this question.

**Table 5 - Description of Hamrahe Aval's history of using services**

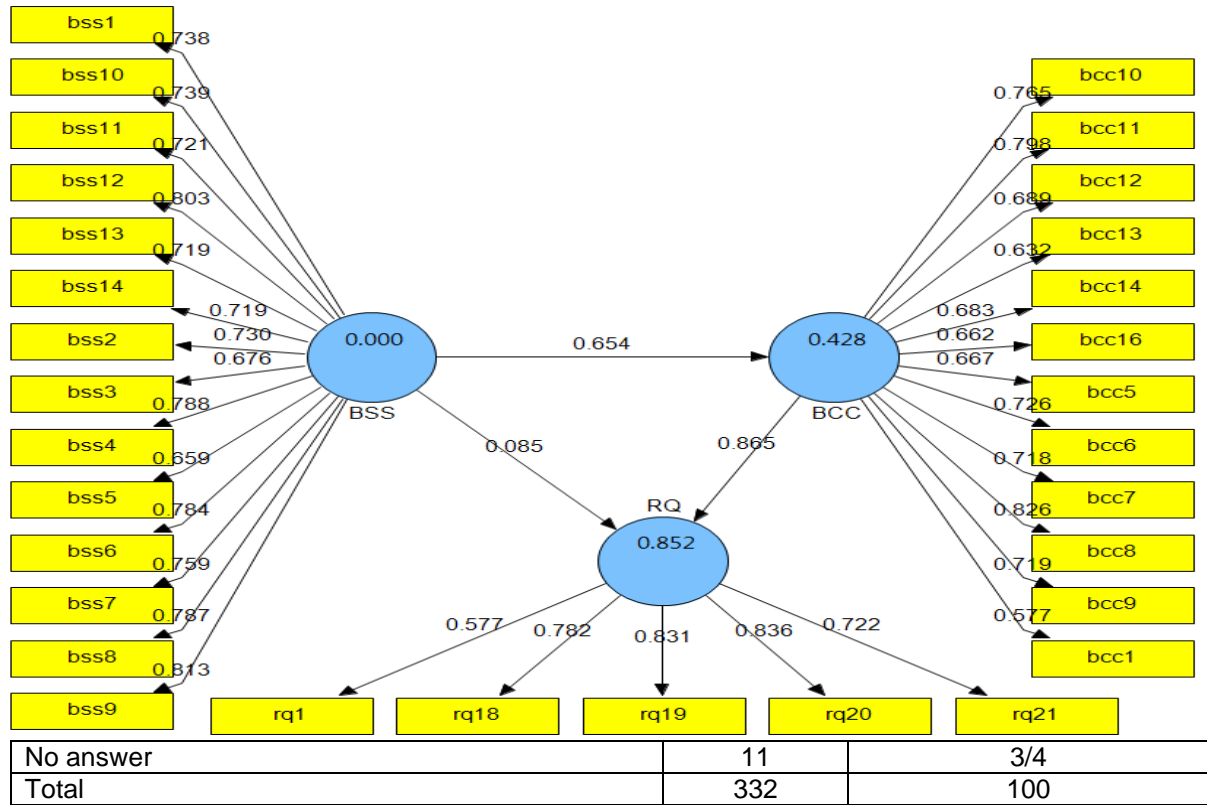
	Frequency	Percentage
Under 2	2	0.6
2_3	14	4.2
3_4	91	27.4
5-6	142	42.7
6-7	64	19.3
Older than 7	8	2.4
Did not answer	11	3.4
Total	332	100

According to the figure and table 6, it can be recognized that the number of games seen by Hamrah aval brand's respondents is 1.2% of the respondents fewer than five games,

44.8% 5 to 10 games, 48.8% 10 to 15 games 0.6% had played more than 15 games and 3.4% did not answer this question.

**Table 6 - Number of games seen by Hamrahe Aval's respondents**

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 games	4	1/2
5 to 10 games	149	4/48
10to 15 games	162	48/8
15 to 20 games	4	1/2
More than 20 games	2	0.6

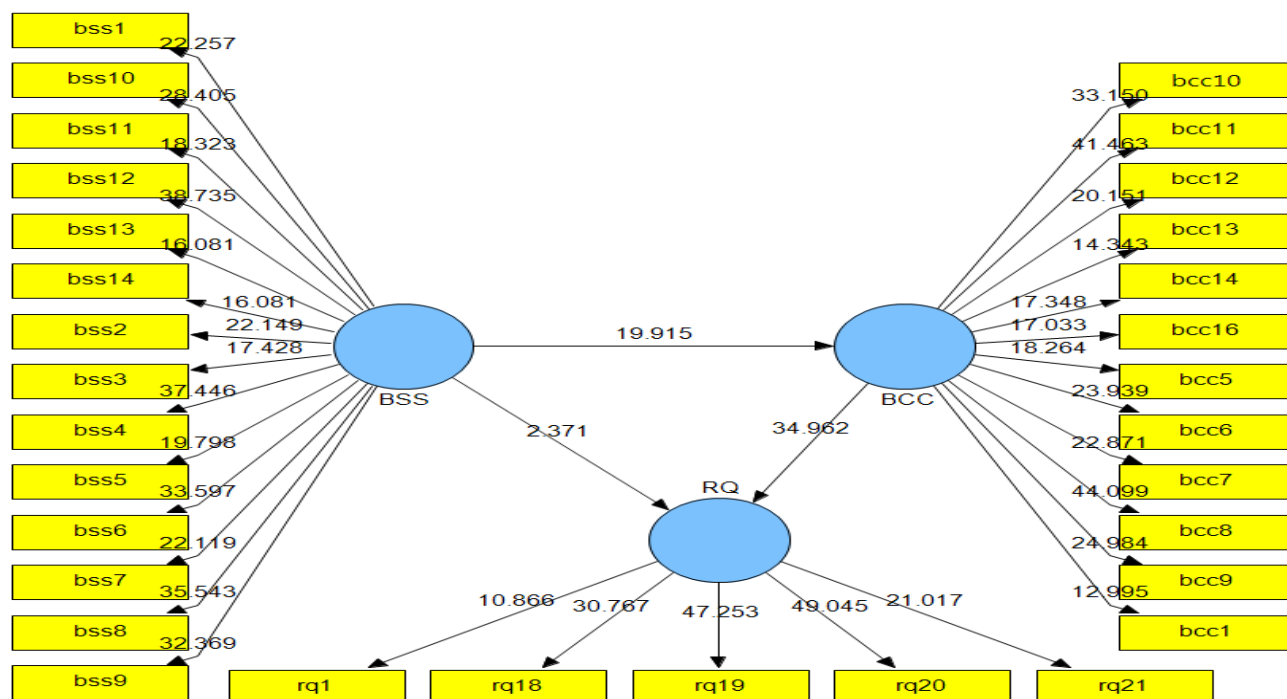


For research hypotheses, the model is used as follows.

**Figure 1** - Structural equations' model in a significant state

Considering that the t-statistic in all cases is more than 1.96, so all the hypotheses of the present study were confirmed.





**Figure 2 - Structural equivalence modeling in standard mode**

**According to the above figure can be obtained:**

The financial support of Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media affects brand-consumer compliance. Considering the significance coefficient of Z in the relationship between the financial support of Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media with the brand-consumer adaptation, which is equal to 19.915, this hypothesis has been confirmed the effect is equivalent to 0.654.

The financial support of Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media affects the brand-consumer relationship quality. Considering the significance coefficient Z in the relationship between the financial support of Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media on the quality of the brand-consumer relationship, which is equal to 2.371, shows that this hypothesis has been confirmed and the effect is similar to 0.085.

In Hamrahe Aval brand, brand-consumer adaptation affects the quality of the brand-consumer relationship. Considering the

significance coefficient of Z in the relationship between brand-consumer compliance with the quality of the brand-consumer relationship, which is equal to 34.962, this hypothesis has been confirmed, and the amount of this effect is similar to 0.865.

The Hamrahe Aval brand financial support of sports activities on social media through brand-consumer adaptation affects the brand-consumer relationship quality. To test this hypothesis, the Sobel test and determining the intensity of the mediating effect should be used, which is discussed below:

This test is used to examine the significance of one variable's mediating effect in the relationship between the other two variables.

$$Z\text{-value} = \frac{a \times b}{\sqrt{(b^2 \times s_a^2) + (a^2 \times s_b^2) + (s_a^2 \times s_b^2)}}$$

a = The value of the path coefficient of the independent and mediating variables

b = The value of the path coefficient of the mediator and dependent variables

Sa = standard error for independent and mediator variable path

Sb = Standard error related to mediator and dependent variable path

This value was calculated as 13401/17 about the role of partial mediation of brand-consumer compliance in the relationship between brand sponsorship of Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media and the quality of the brand-consumer relationship and at 95% confidence level can be said brand-consumer compatibility is confirmed in the relationship between brand-first support of sports activities on social media and the quality of the brand-consumer relationship.

The following information has been used to calculate this number:

$$S_b = 0.024765 \quad S_a = 0.033248 \quad b = 0.865 \\ a = 0.654$$

Beside the Sobel test, to determine the intensity of indirect effect through the mediating variable, a statistic called VAF is used, which is between 0 and 1, and the closer it is to 1, the stronger the effect of the mediating variable.

The VAF formula is as follows:

$$VAF = \frac{a \times b}{(a \times b) + c}$$

a = The value of the path coefficient of the independent and mediating variables

b = The value of the path coefficient of the mediator and dependent variables

c = value of path coefficient of the independent and dependent variable

This value was calculated to be 0.87 for the role of partial mediation of brand-consumer compliance in the relationship between brand sponsorship of Hamrahe Aval sports activity and the quality of the brand-consumer relationship, which means that approximately half of the total effect. The mediator variable of brand-consumer compliance indirectly explains Hamrahe Aval brand sponsorship of sports activities on social media and the quality of brand-consumer relationship.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the effect of the Hamrahe Aval brand financial support of sports activities on social media affected brand-consumer relationship quality and brand-consumer compliance. The results showed that the financial support of Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media affects brand-consumer compliance. Considering the significance coefficient of Z in the relationship between the financial support of Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media with the brand-consumer adaptation, which is equal to 19.915, this hypothesis has been confirmed the effect is similar to 0.654. This finding is consistent with the results of (Do, et al., 2015; Segoro, 2013).

This finding shows that the reflection of financial support for sports activities on social media affects the consumers of brand products and services, and in a way, a correlation is created between brand and sports activities image and athlete have received financial support; And consumers who feel there is a compliance between the image portrayed of the brand and the image they portray of themselves, a brand-consumer game is formed; Therefore, it can be told that there is a relationship between the financial support of Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media and brand-consumer compliance.

In another part of the study, the results showed that the financial support of Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media affects the brand-consumer relationship's quality. Considering the significance coefficient Z in the relationship between the financial support of Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media on the quality of the brand-consumer relationship, which is equal to 2.371, shows that this hypothesis has been confirmed and the effect is similar to 0.085. This finding is consistent with the results of (Tuškej, et al., 2013). As in the previous hypothesis, it can be understood that with the brand's financial support of sports activities which is attractive for consumers, a good image of the brand is formed in the minds of consumers. When consumers feel their self image equal with their favorite brand image, the quality of brand-consumer relationship becomes stronger.



Also, part of the research results indicated that the Hamrahe Aval brand of brand-consumer adaptation affects the brand-consumer relationship's quality. Considering the significance coefficient of Z in the relationship between brand-consumer compliance with the quality of the brand-consumer relationship, which is equal to 34.962, shows that this hypothesis has been confirmed and the amount of this effect is similar to 0.865, which this finding the research of (Lee, Cho, 2017, Lou, Koh, 2017) is in line. According to this hypothesis, it can be concluded that when people feel that the image, they have in mind is in line with the idea of their favorite brand, they will establish a better relationship with the brand and, therefore, the quality of the brand-consumer relationship will be strengthened.

On the other hand, the results showed that the financial support of the Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media affects the quality of the brand-consumer relationship through brand-consumer adaptation. To test the hypothesis, the Sobel test and determination of the mediating effect's intensity were used. The Hamrahe Aval brand of sports activities on social media and the quality of the brand-consumer relationship was calculated to be 0.87, which is in line with the findings of (Yan, et al., 2016). Considering the confirmation of the relationship between Hamrahe Aval brand sponsorship of sports activities on social media with the brand-consumer adaptation and the quality of the brand-consumer relationship, as well as the items related to the Hamrahe Aval brand sponsorship of sports activities on social media, It is suggested that the managers of Hamrahe Aval brand pay attention to other aspects in addition to the current sports support activities; For example, one of the things that can be more effective in the Hamrahe Aval is financial support in improving the province's sports infrastructure, such as the quality and quantity of sports facilities (stadiums, stadiums), which can increase the responsibility level.

Another factor that can effectively create a sense of brand-consumer compatibility is to provide an authentic and comprehensive brand image. Therefore, it is suggested that the managers of Hamrahe Aval brand try to present a clear idea of their brand so that the audience can communicate between the idea they know of themselves and the image of Hamrahe Aval

brand formed in their minds, as well as sports managers by creating Personal traits in brand, attract customers and consumers to the brand so that they can make brands more attractive and desirable and improve the customers loyalty.

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Received for publicaion on 23/05/2024  
Accepted on 11/09/2024