

Sports Marketing is an Economic and Strategic Lever to Promote Brands in Light of Contemporary Media

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Abstract

This theoretical-analytical study aims to explore the interactive relationship between contemporary media and sports marketing as economic and strategic levers to promote sports brands in the digital age. The study was based on the main hypothesis that the integration of media and communication with sports marketing contributes to raising the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and enhancing the mental image and brand loyalty. The study relied on a descriptive-analytical approach. To analyze the relevant literature and theoretical models, it relied on an approach that integrates economic and communication perspectives to understand how digital media, sports sponsorship, and event marketing and sports stars are used to build brand identity, market value, and sentiment. The results concluded that contemporary media, with its traditional and digital media, is no longer just a channel for transmitting the sporting event, but has become a strategic partner in the sports marketing industry by creating sustainable public interaction that enhances loyalty and belonging. It also showed that sponsorship and sports advertising supported by effective media coverage achieve higher marketing returns than traditional advertising, and that the integration between media and marketing generates a synergistic effect that exceeds the total impact of each individual element. The study concluded with proposing an interpretive theoretical model that integrates three main approaches: media, marketing, and the result of promoting the brand through awareness, mental image, and loyalty, making sports marketing supported by media a strategic lever to enhance the economic and social value of brands.

Keywords: *Sports Marketing, Contemporary Media, Branding, Sports Sponsorship, Integrated Marketing Communication, Mass Loyalty, Digital Sports Economy.*

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Introduction

Chapter One: General Introduction to Study

Introduction and Research Problem

The growing importance of entrepreneurship within the sports industry reflects broader structural shifts affecting labor markets around the world. Recent research confirms that entrepreneurship has evolved into a strategic mechanism to address unemployment and market imbalances, especially in contexts characterized by limited traditional job opportunities. As (Berbache et al, 2025). pointed out, entrepreneurship represents "the strategic and ideal solution to eliminate unemployment and rebalance domestic markets, especially the labor market". This perspective is particularly relevant for the sports sector, where professional integration increasingly relies on the creation of innovative sports-related projects rather than relying on traditional career paths. Sport is not just a physical activity, but a symbol of inclusive development that is concerned with the most precious thing that society possesses: the

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human being with his mind and body. With the development of economic and social life, sports are no longer just a hobby, but a huge industry that requires huge investments, paving the way for the emergence of sports marketing as an integral part of the modern sports system (Al-Qadi, 2023, p. 45). Today, the world is witnessing a deep intersection between sports, economics, and media, as sports have become a stand-alone industry that contributes to GDP and attracts huge investments from various sectors (Zheng & Mason, 2022). In this context, sports marketing has emerged as a strategic tool capable of transforming the sporting event into an integrated economic and promotional platform that invests in the popularity of the masses to achieve financial gains and enhance the mental image of brands (Mahmoud, 2024, p. 118).

Contemporary media, especially digital media, has redefined the relationship between the public and sports, making clubs and athletes stand-alone brands beyond stadiums to media and social media spaces (Khan, Aslam, & Burki, 2022, p. 375). Recent Arab studies have confirmed that sports media contributes to promoting sports culture and spreading it among young people, in addition to its impact on consolidating the image of sports as a soft power in society (Baghoura and Gleed, 2024, p. 67). Sports evaluation is no longer limited to physical performance or field results, but has also extended to economic and social aspects. Sport has become an integrated economic sector, and major commercial companies have invested in sporting events to promote their products and build a positive image of their brands (Zheng & Mason, 2022). Recent studies indicate that the breadth of distribution and the diversity of product lines are among the most prominent determinants of brand strength, as widely distributed brands perform better in periods of recovery and even economic downturn (Rajavi, Kushwaha, & Steenkamp, 2022). Sports today are one of the most effective means of advertising due to its wide popularity and the interaction of fans with it, as sports activities have become huge advertising platforms that generate huge profits for sponsoring companies.

Many studies have addressed the concept of sports marketing from different angles. In a study by Helmy Ibrahim (1995) entitled "*An Overview of the Problems of Sports Financing and Marketing in the United States*", the researcher pointed out that purchasing power is one of the main factors that determine the extent to which individuals interact with sports activities, stressing that "social awareness of the value of sport is a crucial element in supporting sports investment" (p. 22). He also warned of the shortage of sports marketing specialists within sports institutions, which weakens the efficiency of funding and promotion strategies. As for the study of Boumediene, Heiba et al. (2019), entitled "*Sports Marketing and its Role in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals*", it showed that increasing the number of sports facilities and equipment has become a central goal of sports marketing, which has gone beyond the limits of selling products to become part of the sustainable sports economy (p. 41). In Waleed Ahmed Sami (2000) study of the *evaluation of the methods of sports recreation activities in some institutions and clubs*, the researcher pointed to the lack of marketing competencies and specialized departments within the clubs, which he considered a major obstacle to the development of this field (p. 37). He also called for the establishment of educational institutions specialized in preparing sports marketing cadres. On the other hand, Abdelkader Mozari and Hakim Nashad (2018) concluded in their study *of the role of sports sponsorship in raising the marketing performance of productive enterprises* that sports sponsorship has surpassed traditional advertising, as it provides institutions with greater opportunities to interact directly with the public, and enhances psychological brand affiliation (p. 52). These studies show that the topic of sports marketing in relation to the media still needs more research, especially in light of the recent technological and media developments that have made sports an open competitive field for international brands.

Based on these data, the research problem is determined in the following main question:

How do commercial companies that finance sports clubs through sports marketing, in light of media and communication, affect the success and effectiveness of marketing campaigns?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the most effective media strategies that commercial companies use to support sports clubs?
2. How does collaboration between businesses and the media affect brand promotion and awareness?
3. What are the most prominent barriers facing companies in using sports marketing as a promotional tool, and how can they be overcome?
4. Does the effectiveness of sports marketing vary based on the size of the company or the type of business?
5. How can the impact of club-funded marketing campaigns be measured on sales and returns for businesses?

Main Hypothesis:

Businesses that invest in sports marketing through sponsorship, media, and communication achieve a significant increase in the success of their marketing campaigns and the effectiveness of their brands.

- *Sub-hypotheses:*

1. Innovative and targeted media strategies increase the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.
2. Collaboration between commercial companies and sports media enhances the credibility of brands and increases their impact on the public.
3. High costs and poor awareness of sports marketing are among the most prominent obstacles facing companies, and they can be overcome through the development of strategies and professional training.
4. The impact of sports marketing varies depending on the size of the company and the nature of its business.
5. The impact of marketing campaigns can be measured via sales indicators and brand awareness data.

Chapter Two: The Methodological Framework of the Study

First: Type and Nature of Study

This study is one of the theoretical and analytical studies that rely on the descriptive-analytical method, as it does not aim to collect field data as much as it seeks to analyze previous concepts, theories, and practices related to sports marketing, media, and communication, in order to build an integrated interpretive perception of the existing relationships between these variables. This type of study focuses on the systematic description of the phenomenon and the analysis of its theoretical dimensions based on reliable academic sources, to derive the basic relationships and determinants without the intervention of the researcher in the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 41). The descriptive-analytical approach is one of the most widely used approaches in social and media studies, as it allows the understanding of phenomena in their real-life contexts by analyzing the relationships between their components (Al-Rahmi et al., 2023). It does not merely describe the phenomenon – as in the case of the purely descriptive approach – but goes beyond that to explain the causal and functional relationships between variables, which contributes to building a theoretical framework that can be relied on in future studies (Neuman, 2014, p. 97).

Based on the nature of the research topic, the present study tends to analyze how the media, especially digital media, is employed in enhancing the effectiveness of marketing campaigns for sports brands. This

requires analyzing the previous literature in the field of sports marketing, sponsorship, and corporate communication, in order to derive theoretical insights that illustrate the role of communication in raising the efficiency of marketing performance (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014). The study also adopts a comparative analytical approach when presenting the results of previous Arab and foreign researches, with the aim of identifying the points of convergence and difference in addressing the relationship between media and sports marketing. This approach contributes to building a comprehensive and integrated perception through which the phenomenon can be understood in its globalized framework, where economic, communication, and cultural dimensions intersect (Smith & Stewart, 2021, p. 62).

In addition, the nature of the theoretical study allows the researcher to analyze modern marketing concepts and practices such as sports sponsorship, identity marketing, and managing the mental image of the brand through various media (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). Through this analysis, the study aims to develop an interpretive framework that shows how the media can enhance the economic and promotional value of sport and its associated brands. Based on the above, it can be said that this study is a theoretical-analytical study of an interpretive nature, combining systematic description and critical analysis of specialized literature, to provide an integrated vision on the role of media in the development of sports marketing, while benefiting from the findings of previous studies in building theoretical hypotheses and indicators that can be tested in subsequent studies.

Second: Study Methodology

This study relied on the descriptive-analytical method, because of its ability to analyze concepts and theories and link them within a comprehensive framework. The descriptive approach is not limited to presenting the phenomenon, but goes beyond it to explain the relationships between its variables through the analysis of theoretical and conceptual contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 115). This approach is employed in the current research through three interrelated phases:

1. A detailed description of the concepts of sports marketing, sponsorship, and contemporary media, by reviewing the theoretical foundations that form the essence of the relationship between these elements (Shank & Lyberger, 2015).
2. A comparative and critical analysis of the most prominent previous studies on sports marketing and digital media, in order to identify the aspects of agreement and differences in the results and approaches (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014).
3. Drawing theoretical conclusions that contribute to building an integrated perception of the relationship between media and marketing effectiveness in the field of sports, in a way that enhances the possibility of developing a contemporary interpretive model (Mahmoud, 2024).

Creswell (2014, p. 97) argues that the descriptive-analytical approach is "an effective tool for discovering the theoretical relationships inherent in complex social and economic phenomena," which is the same as the relationship between media and sports marketing that is the focus of this study.

Third: Study Tools and Sources

Due to the theoretical nature of the research, a variety of scientific sources with academic credibility were relied upon, including:

- ✓ Books and references specialized in marketing, media, and communication, such as *Sports Marketing: A Strategic Perspective* (Shank & Lyberger, 2015), which is one of the primary references in analyzing the relationship between marketing and sports.
- ✓ Refereed academic studies published in international and Arab scientific journals that addressed sports marketing and contemporary media issues (Al-Qadi, 2023 (Khan, Aslam, & Burki, 2022);

✓ Sports economic reports and indicators issued by international bodies such as *Statista Sports Market Outlook* (2024), to support the descriptive aspect with recent data.

✓ A comparative analysis of modern media and marketing models, especially in a digital media environment that reshapes the relationship between brands and audiences (Zheng & Mason, 2022).

The study relied on the analysis of these sources in a critical and deductive manner, with the aim of building a theoretical framework that shows how to employ the media in raising the marketing effectiveness of sports brands.

Fourth: Hypothesis Analysis Method

The hypotheses are discussed in an analytical inferential way, based on the presentation of the results of previous relevant studies, and then comparing them with modern theoretical models in marketing and media. In this regard, the method of comparative analysis between Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) models and media impact theories (Belch & Belch, 2021) is employed. When analyzing the hypothesis that "*strong collaboration between businesses and sports media enhances brand credibility*", he draws on the IMC model that shows how the integration of media and advertising messaging can build public trust in the brand (Belch & Belch, 2021, p. 64). These findings contrast with Mahmoud's (2024, p. 151) finding that continuous media engagement in sports leads to "a long-term impact on consumer brand loyalty."

Fifth: Limitations of the Study

✓ **Objectivity:** It is limited to the theoretical analysis of the relationship between media and sports marketing and their role in promoting the brand, without addressing field or empirical measurements.

✓ **Chronograph:** Covering the literature from 1990 to 2025, a period that saw major shifts in the field of marketing and digital media.

✓ **Spatiality:** It includes the analysis of Arab and international models and experiences without specifying a specific geographical scope, with the aim of disseminating the theoretical results as widely as possible (Mullin et al., 2014).

Sixth: The General Objective of the Curriculum

This methodological framework aims to provide **an interpretive analytical insight** that highlights how sports marketing, supported by contemporary media, can be **a strategic lever for brand promotion**. The proposed approach blends economics, media, and sports into a single model that explains the interaction between them, and allows marketing policies to be directed towards building a strong and sustainable mental image of the public (Al-Qadi, 2023 (Zheng & Mason, 2022;

Chapter Three: The Theoretical Framework of the Study

First: The Concept of Sports Marketing

Sports marketing is one of the most prominent manifestations of the transformation in the contemporary sports economy, as sports are no longer just a recreational or competitive activity, but have become an integrated industry that generates huge profits and influences consumer behavior and the level of public interaction (Bühler & Nufer, 2006, p. 1*2). In which sports institutions and sponsors use sports activities as a platform to promote non-sporting products or services as well (Bühler & Nufer, 2006, p. 8)

From a general perspective of marketing (not just sports), Kotler & Keller (2016) defines marketing as "the set of activities that aim to plan, promote, and distribute products and services to satisfy consumers' desires and ensure a financial return for organizations." To apply this definition to the sports environment, sports marketing can be said to be "the set of activities aimed at planning, promoting, and distributing sports

products and services to satisfy consumers' desires and ensure a financial return for sports organizations or sponsors."

Sports marketing can generally be divided into two main types:

1. **Marketing of sports products:** It relates to the sale and marketing of sports-related goods and services (equipment, clothing, training services, sporting events, subscriptions, etc.).
2. **Marketing through Sport:** The use of sports activities and practices as a means of promoting products or services that are not directly related to sports. For example, a commercial company may sponsor a sporting event or sports team to reach sports fans and associate its brand with this fan experience.

It can be said that the distinction between the two types is important because each type requires different marketing and media strategies. "Sports product marketing" is based on understanding the needs of sports practitioners or sports consumers, and focuses on the features and innovation of the sports product. "Sports marketing" benefits from the passion of the crowd and belonging to the team or athlete, and from media mobilization and sponsorship promotion, which makes it fraught with special challenges such as dealing with Broadcasting rights, and maintaining the credibility of the relationship between the brand and the audience (Shank, 1999, p. 16); Bühler & Nufer, 2006, p. 5*6)

Second: The Concept of Brand and Its Importance in the Sports Field

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a trademark as "a name, term, logo, symbol, design, or combination thereof... It aims to define goods and services and distinguish them from those offered by competitors."(AMA, n.d.) In the context of sports, a brand is no longer limited to a single product or service, but has become **a strategic asset** built around clubs, athletes, events, and sometimes even host countries. For example, brands such as Nike and Adidas have become cultural and economic icons in the sports industry, representing not only clothing and footwear, but also lifestyle and sporting values, and a sign of performance and innovation.

David A. Aaker (2010) points out that brand strength is determined by four main elements:

1. **Brand awareness**
2. **Brand loyalty**
3. **Perceived Quality**
4. **Symbolic Engagement**

Brand awareness means the extent to which consumers or sports followers are able to identify and associate the brand with the product, athlete, or club. The greater this awareness, the greater the chances of the brand being called out and chosen by the audience or consumer, giving the brand a competitive advantage (Aaker, 2010). Loyalty, on the other hand, is associated with the public continuing to support a brand – whether by buying its products or following its sports activities – despite the existence of alternatives. This loyalty is a strong asset for a brand, as it reduces its vulnerability to competition or market changes (Aaker, 2010). Perceived quality is the perception that the public or consumer builds about the extent to which a brand is superior in terms of performance, reputation or innovation compared to alternatives. This perception is an important factor in the consumption of sports products or brand support (Aaker, 2010). Finally, symbolic association refers to the knowledge network associated with the mark: the values, images, experiences, users, or usage contexts associated with it. In the sports field, this association may relate to the prominent athlete wearing the mark, the sporting event it sponsors, or the audiences that support it, all of which deepen the meaning of the mark and give it an emotional and cultural dimension (Aaker, 2010).

In the field of sports in particular, it can be said that the brand becomes a fan anthem that is seen on the team's shirts, written in the media, and celebrated in sponsorship campaigns. When a brand is associated with a major club or an international sporting event, it benefits from media coverage, audience presence, and social interaction, which enhances the brand's reach and economic value. In this sense, the brand in sports is a strategic marketing and economic tool, not just a cosmetic façade.

The importance of the brand in the field of sports can be limited to a number of points:

- Enable partnerships and sponsorships: A strong brand attracts top sponsors looking for a broad audience and a positive image.
- Increase direct and indirect revenue: through the sale of branded products, broadcasting rights, permits, etc.
- Building a long-term relationship with the audience: A brand that cultivates loyalty contributes to sustaining fan support, creating a "brand community" around the team or athlete.
- Differentiation in a competitive environment: Many clubs and athletes compete not only on the field, but also for attracting media and commercial attention, and a strong brand gives them a distinctive position.
- Enhancing the mental image and values associated with sports: A brand that is associated with success, professionalism or sportsmanship that elevates its standing in the minds of the fans, which translates into commercial value.

It can be said that the concept of a brand in sports goes beyond being just a slogan or a name, to become an intangible capital that the club or athlete invests to reach the masses, make a profit, and enhance the impact. With a participatory view, the brand connects the athlete or event with the audience, sponsors, and the media, making it the cornerstone of contemporary sports marketing.

Third: Contemporary Media as a Strategic Actor

Today, the media is witnessing a real digital revolution, transforming the traditional concept of mass communication into a direct interaction – even a dialogue – between sports institutions and their fans through multiple digital platforms. These platforms have become tools that enable clubs and athletes to craft narratives that contribute to deepening the emotional relationship with fans, thereby strengthening their loyalty and affiliation with the sports brand.

Studies by Petros Parganas et al. (2017) suggest that social media engagement has a significant impact on fan brand engagement at football clubs, with the study finding that "social media interactions were positively associated with brand attributes at fan clubs in England and Greece" (Parganas et al., 2017, p. 149). Therefore, it can be said that digital media is not only about conveying the sporting event, but also becoming a partner in building the sports experience itself, through content that is narrated, a mass meeting that engages and a mental image that is created.

This ability to tell stories by clubs and athletes is one of the most important strategic media tools in sports marketing, as it enables the sports brand to weave a "story" in which the audience participates, shapes and reproduces it, and becomes part of its journey. In this way, the audience becomes not only a recipient, but also a participant in the creation and affiliation of the sports brand.

Moreover, contemporary media through digital channels enables clubs to diversify their communication with audiences: behind-the-scenes clips, short stories, live streams, instant interaction, and live polls. These tools foster a sense of closeness with the sporting brand, and increase the chances of switching from mere follow-up to financial or moral support.

Since audiences today are preoccupied not only with watching the match, but also in interacting, expressing and participating, contemporary media is a network of transformation: from a sporting event to an integrated experience, from a passive audience to an active participant, and from a perform-oriented brand to a tell-a-feel brand.

It is clear that contemporary media is a pivotal strategic actor in the sports marketing industry, not only as a carrier of the event or an advertising medium, but also as an active partner in building identity, deepening belonging, and increasing its marketing value.

Fourth: Sports Sponsorship as a Marketing and Media Tool

Sports sponsorship is a form of integration between the economy and the media, as it provides sponsors with the opportunity to enhance their image and reach the masses. Numerous studies have shown that the effectiveness of sports sponsorship depends on a set of essential factors. For example, T. Bettina Cornwell and Young bum Kwon (2019) have shown that the extent to which the company's image is compatible with the sporting event is one of the most prominent of these factors, as having a sense of the pasture's brand with the nature of the event gives a greater opportunity to convey a positive mental image to the public (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019, p. 610). The study also noted that the volume of media coverage of the event – whether through traditional television or digital platforms – plays a pivotal role in enhancing the brand's visibility and making it more visible to the public (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019, p. 613). In addition, the study emphasized that the degree of audience engagement via social media is a critical indicator of sponsorship success, as the more followers (e.g., likes, comments, engagement) engage with the content of the event or with the sponsor's brand, the higher the marketing benefit of the sponsor (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019, p. 617).

Sports sponsorship is not just about putting the company's logo on players' shirts or billboards inside the stadium, but is understood as an integrated media marketing system that leverages traditional and digital media and the interactive ability of fans. A company that carefully chooses its sponsorship, ensures that its brand and the event is in harmony, and that activates sponsorship in the media – especially through social media – makes the most of this marketing form. Recent studies confirm that the effectiveness of sponsorship does not stop at visual exposure to the brand, but extends to behavioral and cognitive effects related to the value of the brand itself. The more sponsorship is associated with an integrated audience experience, the more effective it is in enhancing consumers' perception of brand quality and trust (Almaiman, 2024). "Research has shown that sponsorship, beyond traditional advertising, contributes to raising the market value of a brand when combined with live audience experiences and extensive media coverage (Ailawadi, Lehmann, & Neslin, 2003). The literature shows that this type of transformational care generates a long-term attachment to the brand, more than traditional advertising achieves in sports environments. Therefore, we say that the success of sports sponsorship as a marketing and media tool is related to three main indicators:

1. Compatibility between the company and the sporting event.
2. Adequate and continuous media exposure of the event and the sponsor.
3. Active public engagement across digital platforms.

Fifth: Integration between sports marketing and media

According to the IMC Integrated Marketing Communications model, the integration of media and sports marketing is not only limited to the coordination of promotional messages, but also extends to achieving a unified and consistent impact on the target audience. Integration is one of the main pillars of IMC, and it translates into message unification, channel harmony, and audience-brand-product alignment (Fill & Turnbull, 2019, p. 383).

In the field of sports, it can be said that "the more the harmony between the media strategy and the sports marketing strategy, the more powerful and effective the brand will be" (Fill & Turnbull, 2019, p. 384). This saying makes it clear that not only is the presence of media or sports marketing individually enough, but their relevance and harmony form a powerful lever for a sports brand or sponsoring company. This can be detailed in the following points:

- **Message Standardization:** In sports marketing, there are multiple players, clubs, sponsors, fans, and media. Using a media strategy that is independent of the marketing strategy makes the brand lose the logical connection between these elements. When implemented well, the media message supports the message of sports marketing and vice versa, which enhances the brand's mental image with the audience (Fill & Turnbull, 2019, pp. 383-384).
- **Channel Harmony:** Sports media today extends from television to digital platforms and social media. In terms of sports marketing, forms of sponsorship, satellite TV, digital content, and live experiences intertwine. When channels are effectively integrated, what is called "channel integration" occurs that increases the marketing impact (Jones & Sami, 2024). For example, in a study on sports clubs, it was found that those clubs that employed multiple channels with higher coherence achieved higher audience engagement rates (Janković, 2019, p. 91).
- **Focus on the audience as a central interface:** The external model of IMC suggests that planning should start from understanding the needs and attitudes of the audience and not just from within the company or club (Fill & Turnbull, 2019, p. 383). In the field of sports, the audience is not only a product audience, but also an emotional audience, linked to identity and belonging, which requires the integration of media and marketing in particular to convey the appropriate message and stimulate interaction and engagement.
- **Sports brand value:** Through integration, a sports brand – whether it is a club, player or sponsor – can create higher value. Sports marketing provides the platform, the media promotes it and gives it a wider reach, and with the harmony between the two, the market and emotional value of the brand is enhanced (Luxton et al., 2015).

It is clear that the integration between sports marketing and media is not a luxury but a strategic necessity in the renewed digital media environment and sports that have become an industry. There is no doubt that sponsoring companies or sports clubs that invest in coordinating their media and marketing messages will have a clear comparative advantage.

Sixth: Towards an Interpretive Theoretical Model

This model builds the interaction between three main approaches: (1) the media approach, (2) the marketing approach, and (3) the outcome of brand promotion (awareness, loyalty, engagement). This can be formulated as follows:

1. Media Portal

This approach includes the following elements: media coverage, mass engagement, and digital media. Media coverage is a key means of communicating a sporting event to the public, while digital media and cross-platform interaction are an increasing part of this path (Zheng & Mason, 2022). In other words: ' the transformation of the media environment into a multimedia system that has allowed sport to attract more attention and economic value ' (Zheng & Mason, 2022, p. 5). Thus, media interaction is an introductory entry that generates awareness and prepares the public to receive marketing initiatives.

2. Marketing Approach

This portal includes components such as sponsorships, advertising, and sports brand identity. Sports marketing is not only about selling sports products, but also about using sports events as promotional

platforms for non-sports brands (IceCreamTutor, 2025). Sports sponsorship, for example, is a way to monetize popular and turn it into marketing gain, as the relationship between a brand and a team or player enhances brand credibility and makes it more relatable to the public (IceCreamTutor, 2025). Hence, it can be said that the marketing approach represents the "point of commercial interaction" that injects economic value into sports.

3. *Result: Brand Enhancement (Awareness – Loyalty – Engagement)*

When the two approaches – media and marketing – are combined, the expected result is to strengthen the sports brand or sponsor's brand: in terms of audience awareness, loyalty, and emotional or behavioral attachment to the brand. Effective media coverage is assumed to prepare the audience, and then marketing campaigns capitalize on this situation to create a long-term association. "Investing in sports sponsorship makes the consumer feel closer to the brand and strengthens the psychological relationship between the brand and the organization," says one researcher (Matic et al., 2022); the model can be conceived as a summary of the following system: Media Approach→Marketing Approach→Result (Brand Promotion)

This can be illustrated by the premise: unless there is effective media support (coverage, digital media, interaction), sponsorship and advertising initiatives will not reach the desired returns from audience loyalty or brand engagement.

Seventh: Summary of the Theoretical Framework

- **Sports marketing has become an economic and strategic pillar.** Studies show that sports marketing is no longer just a sport-supporting activity, but has become an essential element of the sports industry to achieve a competitive advantage by attracting investments and maximizing revenues. According to a comprehensive literature analysis, "sports marketing has emerged as an important strategic tool, not only for sports organizations, but also for businesses and communities, taking advantage of the global appeal of sports" (Celikr & Gül, 2024, p. (...). A case study in Iraq also showed that there is a fundamental correlation between sports marketing strategy and achieving competitive advantage (Al-Faraji & Al-Rabawi, 2024). The contemporary sports ecosystem is no longer driven solely by traditional institutional structures, but is increasingly being shaped by entrepreneurial initiatives. In this regard (Berbache et al, 2025). argue that the absence of entrepreneurial ventures significantly limits career opportunities, especially for graduates of sports institutions. The authors explicitly state that "there are no jobs or job opportunities for graduates of sports institutes without resorting to the creation of entrepreneurial-based sports projects". This observation reinforces the argument that modern sports marketing strategies must be understood within a broader entrepreneurial framework, where innovation, project creation, and value generation become central mechanisms for the growth of the industry. Strategically, sports marketing can be envisioned as a pioneering process that involves identifying opportunities, mobilizing resources, and creating value (Berbache et al, 2025). highlight that "as sports projects develop and expand ...The more it helps create jobs, the more it contributes to reducing unemployment". Media-driven marketing strategies should therefore not be seen as mere promotional tools, but as catalysts for the growth of entrepreneurship within the sports economy. This clause emphasizes that sports economic expansion requires the adoption of sports marketing as a pillar of support through strategic planning (Ennis, 2020, pp. 129-151).

- **Contemporary media is the most powerful arm of promotion.** Traditional and digital media are the primary catalyst that connects audiences to sports and brands. Media sponsorships, television coverage, and digital broadcasting provide broad and visual audience access to sports marketing agents. "Sports sponsorship is an effective marketing channel in the sports environment, giving the brand the ability to reach a passionate and highly engaged audience," Insight explained. (Understanding cultural sponsorship or partnerships, 2025). In addition, a Saudi field study showed that the digital interaction of fans is an important element in building loyalty to the sports brand, although it is not enough alone (Awad, 2025).

Therefore, it can be said that the contemporary media is the actual arm that activates the role of sports marketing and gives it its spread and effectiveness.

- **Sports sponsorships and advertising foster brand loyalty.** The results of several studies suggest that sports sponsorship enhances consumers' psychological attachment to the brand, leading to increased loyalty and purchasing intent. An example of this is the study "The Impact of Sport Sponsorship Perceptions and Attitudes on Purchasing Decision..." (2019) showed that the attitudes of the masses towards sports sponsorship significantly influence purchasing decisions as well as the study 'Impact of Sports Sponsorships on Brand Recognition and Loyalty' (2024) which showed a positive relationship between sports sponsorship and brand loyalty. Investment in sponsorship and sports advertising is not only for direct promotion, but also to create a long-term relationship between the brand and the audience.
- **Media-marketing integration increases the symbolic and economic value of the brand.** The combination of media channels and sports marketing creates added value for the brand, both symbolically (i.e., message and identity) and economically (revenue, market share). According to Elyts Advertising, sports sponsorship – especially when combined with digital media promotion and audience experiences – generates a "stronger emotional connection" that leads to a greater impact on the brand than traditional advertising. A simplified study in the Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences confirmed that sports media coverage enables brands to "reach a large audience across multiple platforms", which enhances the brand's position in the market.

Chapter Four: The Proposed Theoretical Concept of the Study

First: Justifications for Building the Proposed Theoretical Concept for the Study

In light of the contemporary developments in the fields of sports, media and marketing, and to address the gaps identified in the previous literature, several justifications emerge for the need to build an interpretive model to build bridges between media and sports marketing on the one hand, and the brand on the other hand:

1. **The need for a model that connects media, sports marketing, and branding.** Multiple studies have highlighted the separate dimensions of sports media, sports marketing, and brand building, but have rarely combined these dimensions into an integrated interpretive framework. For example, a study by Khan et al. (2022) pointed to the impact of social media on sports marketing, but did not delve into how media contributes to the promotion of sports brand and corporate branding. On this occasion, it becomes necessary for the proposed theoretical perception to provide an "interpretive model" It shows how media interacts with sports marketing to promote a brand, which previous research has not adequately covered.
2. **The growing overlap between media and sports as a marketing platform.** With the widespread spread of digital platforms and new media, the status of sports has changed from an entertainment activity to a media-industrial entity. Therefore, any model that addresses sports marketing today must take into account the variables of media and communication as actors that manage the relationship between sport and brand. In this, Zheng and Mason (2018) emphasize that sports brands need a "platform" It includes digital media and sports fans – for sports brand building and sustainable growth.
3. **Greater focus on sports brand and relationship with the audience.** Building a brand in a sports context requires viewing audiences not only as consumers, but also as participants in the media-marketing and media communication process. For example, Ross's (2006) Spectator-Based Brand Equity (SBBE) framework shows how a sports brand is formed through awareness, relationships, and mass experiences, but does not fully cover the role of media and digital media in this construction. Accordingly, it is necessary to build a model that integrates the media dimension and mass interaction with marketing Athlete and brand.

4. **In response to the limitations of research in Arab and regional contexts.** Although several studies have confirmed that sports marketing, sponsorship, and brand are gaining increasing importance, Arab research linking media, sports marketing, and branding is still limited. Hence, this proposed theoretical concept comes to fill this research gap, by providing a framework that contains media, marketing, and brand variables in a local and regional environment.

5. **The importance of measurability and practicality.** Building a theoretical model is not an end in itself, but its goal is to enable researchers and practitioners to use it in evaluating sports marketing strategies, and measuring the impact of media and marketing on the brand. Therefore, one of the justifications for building a concept is that it is testable and applicable in real-world situations, which enhances the feasibility of the study from a theoretical and practical point of view.

Second: The main axes of the perception

1. *Media activity (independent variable 1)*

Media activity is one of the most important factors influencing the effectiveness of sports marketing, as it forms the bridge between sports institutions and the fans, and contributes to building the mental image of the sponsoring brands. Media strategies have evolved in recent years thanks to digital transformation, which has enabled sports institutions to communicate directly with their audiences through digital platforms and social media networks (Zheng & Mason, 2022).

A. Digital Media Strategies

Digital media strategies rely on **interactive content**, such as short videos, live streams, and the use of sports influencers. Recent studies suggest that direct interaction between the audience and sports institutions enhances the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and increases engagement rates across digital platforms (Khan, Aslam, & Burki, 2022, p. 376). The analysis also shows that media activities based on "comics" and "visual icons" achieve higher reach rates than traditional advertising, due to their emotional impact and ability to create a link to the brand (Mahmoud, 2024, p. 112). Recent findings in the field of digital sponsorship support this proposition, as Almainan (2024) showed that activating sponsorship through digital platforms not only increases purchase intent, but also improves brand value indicators such as loyalty and emotional attachment. This highlights that digital media is an essential interactive medium for increasing marketing sponsorship returns, not just an advertising channel.

B. Media Coverage

Media coverage affects the amount of public awareness of products or sponsors, as it creates a positive mental image about the brand. The more extensive and professional the coverage, the more trust the audience has, and the stronger the emotional attachment to the brand becomes (Al-Qadi, 2023, p. 58). Researchers point out that sports media is no longer just conveying the event, but has become an active element in shaping the marketing narrative that links the brand to sports values such as passion, competition, and achievement (Zheng & Mason, 2022).

c. Communication through digital platforms

Through digital platforms, clubs and sponsors are able to communicate with the public in real time and interactively. Studies (Bagoura & Jlid, 2024, p. 44) show that audiences are more likely to engage with content that includes personal experiences and sporting challenges or human content that reflects shared values between athletes and fans. The expected impact of this axis is that the more interactive and personalized the media strategy, the more effective the marketing campaigns will be, especially when they are tailored to the platforms used by the target audience.

2. *Sports Marketing and Sponsorship (Independent Variable 2)*

Sports marketing of all kinds – sponsorship, advertising, and event organization – is one of the main drivers of the contemporary sports economy. It is not limited to supporting sports activities, but also represents a strategic investment in building the brand and enhancing its reach by linking to sports and cultural icons (Mouzari & Nechad, 2018, p. 22).

A. Sponsorship and Advertising

Sports sponsorship has become an effective way to achieve corporate marketing goals, as it allows organizations to reach large audiences through major sporting events. Research confirms that sponsorship associated with high-follower events achieves a marketing return over traditional advertising in terms of building trust and belonging (Mouzari & Nechad, 2018, p. 25). Also, the repeated appearance of the mark in sporting events enhances the public's awareness of the mark and creates a kind of unconscious loyalty as a result of repeated exposure (Mahmoud, 2024, p. 117).

B. Use of Sports Stars

Sports stars are effective marketing tools, influencing the audience thanks to their credibility and positive image. A study (Khan et al., 2022, p. 382) suggests that using famous athletes in advertising campaigns increases purchase intent by up to 35% compared to ads that do not include celebrities. This is due to the so-called "halo effect" where consumers project the positive qualities of an athlete onto the product itself.

C. Organizing sports events

Major sporting events are one of the most impactful forms of marketing, combining field experience with interactive advertising. Every sporting event is a direct platform for brand-audience interaction, and research shows that professionally organized events lead to a significant increase in purchase intention and loyalty (Boumediene et al., 2019, p. 91). Expected impact: The more investments are made in marketing, sponsorship, and event organization, the higher the brand awareness and the higher the audience loyalty.

3. *Brand (dependent variable)*

Branding is the focus of any media or marketing activity, reflecting consumers' perception of the value of an organization or product. The strength of the brand is measured by three main indicators: awareness, mental image, and loyalty.

A. Brand Awareness

Awareness is the first step towards building a relationship between the consumer and the brand, and is directly influenced by media frequency and multi-channel promotion (Keller, 2013). In the sporting context, awareness of the brand is increasing through ongoing sponsorship and extensive media coverage of company-sponsored events.

B. Mental Image

The mental image represents the cognitive and emotional impression that the audience makes of the sign. A study (Mahmoud, 2024, p. 119) suggests that a brand's interaction with sports values – such as fair play or an insistence on success – creates a lasting positive image in consumers.

c. Loyalty and emotional attachment

Brand loyalty is the result of repeated positive experiences with the product or sporting event. Research has shown that media campaigns that focus on the human stories of athletes and fans increase emotional attachment to the brand by up to 28% (Bagoura & Jlid, 2024, p. 47).

Expected Impact: The integration of media and marketing leads to a tangible enhancement of brand power, by raising awareness, improving mental image, and building sustainable loyalty.

Third: Interactive Relationships between Variables

- **Media activity directly affects the effectiveness of sports marketing.** Media activity, whether through traditional or digital media, is a pivotal factor that affects the success of sports marketing, as it enables fans to access and interact with sports content, thus increasing the chances of converting this interaction into consumption or support for the sports brand or sponsor. For example, a study in Iraq showed that the use of social and digital media in the context of football contributed to enhancing the audience's attachment to the brands of the sponsoring companies (Obaid & Kumar), This means that the media is not just a medium for transmitting sporting events, but a key driver for marketing sports effectively.
- **Media-supported sports marketing raises the public's perception of the brand.** When sports marketing is combined with media support, it raises the level of awareness and public perception of the brand. Media-marketing relationships allow the sponsor or company to appear in a sporting context of emotional and audience value, thereby enhancing the brand's credit (Divsalar, Mousavi, & Emami, 2022). In other words, media support enables the brand to reach the "minds of the public" and thus facilitates the process of sports marketing and not just the other way around.
- **The integration of media and sports marketing creates a synergistic effect.** It is not just a combination of media and sports marketing, but the integration between them generates a synergistic effect that transcends the sum of the parts. In other words, the combination of a well-rounded media strategy and thoughtful sports marketing makes the result greater than the sum of the impact of each element alone. According to the literature, sports marketing that invests in digital media as a platform for direct interaction with audiences generates greater dynamism to promote the brand, personalize content, and convert the interaction into sales or support (Ahmed, Hamza, & Shareef, 2023). Thus, this synergistic effect is a key focus in understanding the interactions between variables in this research.

Fourth: Graphical Description of the Conceptual Model

The proposed conceptual model reflects the structural interaction between media activity and media-marketing integration, as two key inputs towards enhancing the effectiveness of sports marketing and commercial sponsorship, leading to building a strong and influential brand in the sports market. This path can be illustrated in four interrelated stages:

1. Media Activity (Media Strategies – Digital Communication – Media Coverage)

Media activity is the first rule of the model, as it includes all communication efforts that contribute to the dissemination of sports content, whether through traditional or digital channels. Media strategies here are the plans adopted by organizations to target messages to a specific audience in a way that achieves the desired impact. Smith (2023) points out that sports media "is no longer just a tool for conveying an event, but has become a strategic tool for shaping the public image of clubs and players" as he explains (p. 214). Hutchins and Rowe (2012) argue that the shift towards digital media has "brought about a paradigm shift in the nature of the relationship between the public and sports, making media engagement a key factor in creating marketing value" (p. 85).

Media activity also includes digital communication through social platforms, which has allowed clubs and sponsoring companies the opportunity to build direct and interactive relationships with audiences (Pegoraro & Scott, 2021, p. 39). Media coverage is an essential element in maximizing public awareness of

a sporting event, as it leads to higher viewership and thus enhancing the market value of the content provided (Billings et al., 2019).

2. *Media-Marketing Integration*

This stage refers to the systematic interaction between media tools and marketing strategies in order to achieve common economic and promotional goals. The integration of media content and marketing messages is the cornerstone of building a coherent mental image about the product or sporting event. Cornwell and Kwon (2019) argue that this integration "contributes to increasing marketing efficiency by activating the relationship between sponsorship and media content, so that the marketing message becomes a natural part of the sports experience" (p. 114). Mahmoud (2024) also noted that communication-marketing integration allows organizations to "employ digital analytics to understand and accurately target audience behavior in sports campaigns" (p. 52).

Media-marketing integration is the link that transforms media efforts into measurable marketing value, and creates synergies between the two parties that support the next stage of the model: marketing and sponsorship. This integrated interaction between media and sponsorship can be explained through the approach of token value; as Almainan (2024) argues, modern sponsorship is no longer just aimed at raising awareness, but also at building sustainable brand value that translates into loyalty and long-term economic returns.

3. *Sports Marketing & Sponsorship (Advertising – Sponsorship – Star Marketing)*

Sports marketing and sponsorship are the executive focus of the model, with media efforts and marketing integration translated into concrete activities such as advertising, corporate sponsorship, and brand marketing through celebrity athletes. Mullin et al. (2014) defines sports marketing as "the process of designing and implementing marketing activities aimed at meeting the needs of consumers through sports-related products and services" (p. 21). Studies by Zheng and Mason (2022) suggest that sports sponsorship has become "more effective than traditional advertising, as it integrates the brand into the emotional experience of fans" (p. 5).

Star marketing has become a key strategic tool, with Spry et al. (2011) showing that the use of famous athletes "enhances credibility and strengthens the emotional relationship between the consumer and the brand" (p. 887). In this way, the player or team becomes a communication symbol that reproduces the marketing message through the media and the audience at the same time.

4. *Brand Enhancement (Awareness – Loyalty – Positive Image – Financial Returns)*

This stage represents the end result of the model, translating media and marketing efforts into tangible results at the brand level. Aaker (1996) emphasizes that brand building requires "creating a cohesive identity that supports loyalty and ensures excellence in the minds of consumers" (p. 114). In the context of sports, Gladden and Funk (2002) have shown that brand awareness and public loyalty are directly related to "the extent of public engagement in the sporting event and the quality of media interaction" (p. 61).

Keller (2013) adds that the positive image that the brand builds through sponsorship and media "reflects on the long-term financial returns of the sponsoring companies and clubs" (p. 72). Thus, integrated sports marketing in the media leads to enhancing awareness, consolidating loyalty, improving mental image, and increasing revenue, which are the four dimensions covered by this model.



We say that media activity forms the basis on which the later stages are built, as it leads to media-marketing integration that translates into effective marketing and sponsorship practices, which ultimately lead to brand reinforcement. This sequence represents a gradual causal relationship, starting with the media and ending with the economic and moral added value of the sports brand.

Fifth: Objectives and Hypotheses of Theoretical Perception

This theoretical concept aims to build an analytical framework that clarifies the role of media and communication in supporting sports marketing, by integrating the concepts of mass communication and modern marketing in the context of sports activity. Digital transformation and the growth of specialized sports media platforms have made it necessary to understand the causal and interactive relationships between the elements of the media process (message, medium, audience, sender) and the elements of the marketing process (product, market, brand, communication strategy).

Based on this, the objectives of the theoretical conception are defined as follows:

1. Formulate an analytical vision that clarifies the mechanisms of media work in supporting sports marketing, by studying how media channels (traditional and digital) can be used as strategic tools to promote brands and enhance public engagement.
2. Clarify the causal and interactive relationships between the elements of the media and marketing process, allowing to understand the mutual role between sports communication and commercial sponsorship, and their combined impact on consumer behavior and brand loyalty.
3. Developing a theoretical basis for future field studies based on field-tested hypotheses, which contributes to the development of research in the fields of media and sports marketing.

To achieve these goals, a set of hypotheses has been formulated that reflect the complementary relationship between media and sports marketing, and highlight how sponsorship and communication can become an economic and strategic lever for brands.

Key Hypothesis: Businesses that invest in sports marketing through sponsorship, media, and communication achieve a significant increase in the success of their marketing campaigns and the effectiveness of their brands.

This hypothesis represents the applied extension of the goal of the first concept, as it links media as a strategic support tool with the marketing results achieved, in line with Smith and Stewart (2015, p. 135) that the marketing value of sport is manifested in its ability to enhance the symbolic and emotional capital of brands. Recent studies also confirm that the combination of sports sponsorship and multi-platform media coverage achieves a communicative impact beyond traditional advertising towards establishing an impactful and sustainable brand identity (Bühler & Nufer, 2020, p. 72).

Sub-hypotheses associated with the objectives of the visualization

1. Innovative and targeted media strategies increase the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. It is a hypothesis stemming from the first goal, as it shows that the creation of media content and the use of analytical data contribute to improving sports marketing results (Khan, Aslam, & Burki, 2022, p. 382). Boumediene, Heiba et al. (2019, p. 144) have shown that the media's inadequacy in the use of digital technologies is one of the most prominent obstacles to sports marketing in the Arab context.

2. Collaboration between commercial companies and sports media enhances the credibility of brands and increases their impact on the public. It is an extension of the second goal, as the positive interaction between media content and advertising messages deepens public trust and increases brand empathy (Bühler & Nufer, 2020, p. 72; Al-Qadi, 2023, p. 90).

3. High costs and poor awareness of sports marketing are among the most prominent obstacles facing companies, and they can be overcome through the development of strategies and professional training. This hypothesis is in line with the third goal in terms of developing the theoretical and field foundation, as it points to the need to invest in human competencies to activate the relationship between media and marketing (Mozari & Nashad, 2018, p. 53; Wang & Zhou, 2021, p. 117).

4. The impact of sports marketing varies depending on the size of the company and the nature of its business. This hypothesis is related to the analysis of variables in the causal relationship between media resources and the size of the organization, as explained by Popp, Woratschek (2017, p. 291), and Mahmoud (2024, p. 108).

5. The impact of marketing campaigns can be measured via sales indicators and brand awareness data. This hypothesis is a direct application of the third goal, by proposing quantitative and qualitative measurement tools to evaluate the effectiveness of campaigns (Kunkel et al., 2020, p. 149; Boumediene, Heiba et al., 2019, p. 145). Standard studies in marketing show that brand value is the link between financial performance and campaign effectiveness.

Conclusion:

This perception suggests that the integration of media and sports marketing is the primary lever for promoting brands in the digital age. Media embodies the medium that communicates marketing messages more effectively, while sports marketing provides the compelling content and excitement needed to attract audiences, resulting in a positive and sustainable interaction between the brand and the consumer. In this context, a number of researchers point out that digital media and social media platforms have fundamentally transformed the way clubs, athletes and brands communicate with their fans, which has provided sports marketing with broader tools to reach audiences and build an interactive relationship. He also explained that media combined with sports marketing strategies allows brands to create valuable content and enhance audience loyalty, through storytelling and digital engagement experiences.

On the other hand, studies confirm that a brand in the field of sports is not only built on achievements on the field or on the backs of players, but also on the ability to create an integrated sports-commercial-media

product. As De Toro pointed out in the context of the "FC Barcelona" team, it is necessary to "create a product" and then work on building a strong brand, which includes the sporting activity, the socio-emotional base, and the commercial aspect. This media-marketing product is a way to connect the brand with consumers not only as spectators, but as part of an ongoing and escalating experience. A recent analysis also indicates that digital empowerment strategies, media transformation, and participatory relationships with audiences have become key elements of sports branding. Without the use of media – in its broadest sense: television, internet, communication networks – sports marketing loses one of its most important elements: effective reach and dynamic engagement with the audience.

Therefore, the proposed theoretical concept believes that the relationship between media and sports marketing is not an incidental or secondary relationship, but rather an integrative relationship: media provides the platform and the field, sports marketing provides content and message, and players, clubs, or brands are the mediator between the platform and the content. The integration of these elements leads to building a strong brand that can invest in mass interaction, enhance loyalty, and achieve the desired economic return. This is supported by Keller (1993) in *the Journal of Marketing*, where he explained that building loyalty and mental image depends heavily on the symbolic and emotional interaction generated by the media around the brand, which explains the transformations that digital platforms have brought about in deepening engagement with audiences.

The elements of this theoretical conception can be derived as follows:

- Media Platform: Where it displays marketing content, including traditional television, the Internet, social media, live broadcasting, and others.
- Sports-marketing content: It is generated by sports marketing, such as events, sponsorships, campaigns, and interaction with audiences.
- Mass interaction: Engagement, loyalty, consumption, and self-promotion through social media.
- Brand and economic return: This is what the brand or sports institution achieves and the financial or mental benefit from it.

Understanding this complementary relationship between media and sports marketing is fundamental to any research or applied effort in this field, especially in light of the digital environment in which the rules of public access, publication and participation have changed.

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