

Exploring the Future of the Sports Industry Through an Economic Lens in 2031

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of the current research was to explore the future of the sports industry through an economic lens in 2031.

Methodology: This study was applied in purpose and survey in method. The population of this research consisted of all experts in the sports industry, from whom 16 experts were sampled using purposive and snowball sampling methods. To collect data, semi-structured and in-depth interviews were employed. Initially, the researcher reviewed literature and theoretical foundations related to the sports industry. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts to identify influencing factors (16 interviews were conducted until data saturation was achieved). For analyzing mutual effects, a matrix questionnaire constructed by the researcher based on qualitative findings was used. For data processing, the Delphi technique was utilized in the first part of the study, and in the second part, the analysis of mutual effects was conducted using the Mircmac software.

Findings: Variables such as government financial sustainability, political stability, and human resource development were identified as influencing variables. Economic diplomacy, technology growth, management strategies, sports commerce, economic structural reform, investment networking, and exports were recognized as influenced variables. Economic security was seen as a dual-aspect variable and finally, variables such as hosting international events, legal and regulatory factors, economic infrastructure, competitiveness, media growth, and social networking were identified as independent variables.

Conclusion: In this context, actions such as the development of economic sectors capable of creating jobs and promoting entrepreneurship, pricing of sports industry products, formulation of production indices, commitment to a resistance economy, listing sports clubs on the stock exchange, and combating economic corruption in sports must be prioritized by managers to assist the economy of the sports industry.

Keywords: Future, sports industry, sports economy, 2031 horizon

1 Introduction

Today, the sports industry has become increasingly important for all governments because various objectives in the direction of economic, political, cultural, welfare, and health improvements are pursued through sports, and these objectives can be achieved with proper management and structure. In other words, the widespread adoption of the sports industry today serves as a tool for development in political, economic, social, cultural, and other dimensions. Moulin (1983) was the first to refer to sports as an industry (Rezaie & Salehipour, 2018). Due to its positive social, cultural, and economic impacts, the sports industry has become one of the largest global industries and serves as an important source of economic activity, income generation, employment, and international trade for most countries (Rezaie & Salehipour, 2018). This industry, by having a stimulant such as major sporting events, provides the opportunity to benefit from advertising opportunities in the media, creating the necessary platform for interaction between industry, commerce, and sports (Kazerroni et al., 2019). The macroeconomic impacts of the sports industry, such as its contribution to gross domestic product and national income, or its role in creating employment and improving public health, prompt countries to assess the effects of the sports industry on their economies annually and systematically.

In Iran, state-owned clubs have grown more, and the private sector is unable to compete with the government sector. In each of the government agencies, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Ministry of Cooperation, Labor and Social Welfare, and the Armed Forces, sports hold various organizational positions from the department level to deputy and are engaged in the development of educational, mass, professional, and championship sports among their target communities (Naghiloo et al., 2020). Various research findings indicate that there is a lack of transparency in financial matters in Iran's sports industry, and financing for all sectors of the sports industry is mostly through government financial resources (Pourkiani et al., 2017; Rezaie & Salehipour, 2018). On the other hand, many have identified the sports industry as one of the leading industries in the coming decade (Duan et al., 2022; Guo et al., 2023; Uddin et al., 2017; Vitolla et al., 2022), also recognized the development of the sports industries as an important factor in reducing unemployment and increasing regional and national incomes

(Ahmed & Pulok, 2013; Badini & Forouzan Boroojeni, 2020; Cui et al., 2023; Refah Kahriz et al., 2019; Zare et al., 2022).

Given what has been said, it seems necessary to create a platform for the increasing progress of the sports industry. Unlike the world where sports are referred to as an industry and used to advance economic objectives, in Iran, it is still viewed as entertainment. In line with the vision document of the Islamic Republic of Iran by 2025, achieving the leading position in economic, scientific, and technological aspects; with an emphasis on the software movement and science production, it seems that the sports industry in Iran, with a focus on the sports economy through the creation of scientific, industrial capabilities, and having a world-class production mindset, can play a role in achieving the country's vision. Therefore, for targeted, systematic, and effective movement towards the development of the sports industry, research of this kind with a world-class approach should be the basis of decisions in this industry. Considering the above, the researcher tries to explore the future of the sports industry through an economic lens in 2031.

2 Methods and Materials

The objective of the present study is to identify the futurology of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031, therefore, this research is applied in nature. The study is exploratory, aimed at gaining knowledge about the future of the sports industry from an economic perspective. The research population included all experts in the sports industry, accessed through researchers and knowledgeable individuals in the field (sports industry) and relevant organizations, including the Ministry of Sports, sports federations, and the General Directorate of Sports and Youth. The sampling method used was non-probabilistic and purposive, utilizing a snowball technique. Based on this, an initial group selected through targeted and mental judgment was asked to refer relevant experts. For collecting qualitative data, semi-structured and in-depth interviews were employed. Initially, the researcher reviewed literature and theoretical foundations related to the sports industry. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts to identify influencing factors. Initially, explanations related to the research topic were provided, and participants were asked to express their opinions on each factor and mention other factors they considered relevant. Interviews continued until data saturation was achieved (16 interviews were conducted until data saturation). According to Speziale,

Streubert, and Carpenter (2011), saturation means that continuing data collection results in the repetition of previously collected data, and no new information is obtained. Therefore, the number of participants is not determined before the study and the decision regarding the next participant depends on information from previous participants, continuing until new factors are identified and the obtained information is not repetitive. For analyzing the conducted interviews, a coding method was employed. In the first stage of the research, after transcribing the interviews into text, open coding was performed as key concept coding. Consequently, from the initial open coding of 16 interviews, 185 codes were obtained, and after summarizing similar codes, 92 final open codes were generated. In the second stage, axial coding was conducted. In this stage, the researcher worked on relating categories and linking them at the level of properties and dimensions, thus these categories, properties, and dimensions obtained from open coding were organized to generate increasing knowledge about the relationships. In this stage, all final open codes were reviewed again and compared with the research literature. In the third stage of selective coding, 17 factors were identified. These identified factors were then weighted based on the Delphi technique. Accordingly, after determining the indices and components that influence the sports industry with an emphasis on economics, questionnaires designed in a "two by two" matrix format were again distributed among the statistical sample. For data processing, the Delphi technique and cross-impact analysis based on the Micmac software were used to understand and explain the drivers of the sports industry in the country with an emphasis on economics by

2031. The Micmac method is designed for performing complex matrix calculations of cross-impacts. The process of this method involves first identifying important variables and components in the relevant field, then entering them into a matrix for impact analysis. Experts then determine the degree of relationship between these variables and the related field. Variables in the rows impact those in the columns; thus, row variables are influencing and column variables are influenced. The degree of relationship is measured with numbers from zero to three, where "zero" means "no impact," "one" means "weak impact," "two" means "moderate impact," and "three" means "strong impact." Therefore, if the number of identified variables is n , an $n \times n$ matrix results, where the impacts of variables on each other are specified. Based on this, for data analysis, in the first stage, the main factors were ranked using the Delphi method. In the second stage, with the designed questionnaire, data related to the impact matrix factors were collected from the same experts and used in the analysis. In this stage, direct and indirect effects were differentiated, with direct effects derived from the analysis of the impacts of factors on each other, and indirect effects calculated through powers of 2, 3, 4, etc., of the factors.

3 Findings and Results

After reviewing the literature and conducting interviews with experts, 17 key factors were identified. Subsequently, these factors were distributed in the form of a questionnaire to the interviewees to determine the importance of each.

Table 1

List of Influential Factors on the Sports Industry with an Emphasis on Economics

Government Financial Stability	Human Resource Development	Political Stability
Social Networking	Sports Management Strategies	Legal and Regulatory Factors
Economic Security	Economic Diplomacy	Hosting International Events
Investment Networking	Sports Commerce	Economic Infrastructure
National Production Export Development	Technology Development	Competitiveness
Media Growth	Economic Structural Reform	

After identifying the list of influential factors, to recognize and rank them, the variables were entered into a cross-impact analysis matrix, and a standard questionnaire for cross-impact analysis was provided to the experts. Then, the average of the collected responses for input into the Micmac software is as follows. Once the questionnaire data was entered into the software, the direct and indirect impacts

of the influential factors on the future studies of the sports industry with an emphasis on economics by 2031 were calculated. Below is the matrix of the impacts of factors shown directly and indirectly, with the score of each factor in the matrix columns and rows displayed.

As observed in [Table 2](#), based on the number of variables, the matrix dimensions were 17. The number of repetitions

considered was four, and the matrix fill rate is 13.2%, which indicates a high coefficient due to the extensive impact and interrelationship of the variables.

Table 2

Initial Research Data

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Stability	0	2	3	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2
Human	1	0	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	0	1	2	1	2	1	2
Political Stability	0	2	0	1	2	1	3	1	1	3	3	1	2	1	2	0	1
Networking	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Strategy	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	3
Legal	1	2	1	1	1	0	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Security	1	1	2	1	2	1	0	2	2	2	1	3	2	1	1	2	1
Diplomacy	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	3	1	0	0	1	1
Investment	0	1	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	2	0
Commerce	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	2	1	1
Infrastructure	1	1	2	1	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	2	1	1	2	1
Exports	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	2	0	2	1	0	1	2	1	0	0
Technology	1	1	0	1	2	1	2	0	1	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	1
Competition	0	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	1	1
Media	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
Events	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	0	1
Reform	1	2	1	0	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0

As mentioned, 17 factors were analyzed. The matrix dimensions were 17×17. The matrix fill rate was 83.04498%, indicating that the selected factors had significant and widespread effects on each other, and the system was in a state of instability. Out of a total of 240 assessable relationships in this matrix, 49 relationships were

zero, meaning the factors had no effect on each other or were not influenced by each other. On the other hand, the matrix, based on statistical indices, had data rotation twice and achieved 100% suitability and optimization, indicating high validity of the questionnaire and its responses.

Table 3

Preliminary Data Analysis of the Matrix and Cross-Impacts

Index	Value
Matrix Dimensions	16x16
Number of Iterations	2
Number of Zeros	49
Number of Ones	159
Number of Twos	70
Number of Threes	11
Total	240
Fill Rate	83.04498%

The results indicated that the variables of government financial stability, political stability, and human resource development are influential variables. Economic diplomacy, technological growth, management strategies, sports commerce, economic structural reform, investment, and exports were identified as influenced variables. Economic security was seen as a dual-aspect variable, and finally, variables such as hosting international events, legal and

regulatory factors, economic infrastructure, competitiveness, media growth, and social networking were identified as independent variables.

The results also confirmed that the variables of government financial stability, political stability, and human resource development are influential. Economic diplomacy, technological growth, management strategies, sports commerce, investment, and exports were recognized as

influenced variables. Economic security was considered a dual-aspect variable, and finally, variables such as hosting international events, economic structural reform, legal and regulatory factors, infrastructure, competitiveness, media growth, and social networking were identified as independent variables.

After determining the status of each of the influential factors, the relationships of these factors were analyzed in the Micmac software, which displayed the direct and indirect impacts in the diagrams below. The nature of the relationships among the influential factors was categorized into five levels of impact, ranging from very weak to very strong, weak to very strong, relatively strong to very strong, strong to very strong, and very strong impacts.

Based on the output of the Micmac project, the level of influence of each of the direct and indirect matrices has been determined based on rank. In examining the direct influence of variables in the sports industry with an emphasis on economics, the variables of government financial stability were ranked first; political stability second; and human resource development third.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

Today, sports play a crucial role in the production and consumption of goods, sports services, and economic development of various societies, both from practical and spectator perspectives. Just as sports are fundamental in human development, they are also a source of economic impact. The economic potential of sports is highlighted due to its economic function. Results showed that the variables of government financial stability, political stability, and human resource development are identified as influential. Variables such as economic diplomacy, technological growth, management strategies, sports commerce, economic structural reform, investment networking, and exports have been recognized as influenced variables. Economic security is considered a dual-aspect variable, and finally, variables such as hosting international events, legal and regulatory factors, economic infrastructure, competitiveness, media growth, and social networking have been identified as independent variables.

Government financial stability has been identified as one of the influential variables in the futurology of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. The findings of this research are consistent with the prior results (Akalpler, 2023). They have also emphasized the impact of government financial stability on the economy in their

research. This is especially significant in Iran's oil-dependent economy, where oil revenues are finite, highly volatile, unpredictable, and largely affected by external economic conditions. In modern societies, fiscal policy is a crucial tool for economic growth and development, and fiscal stability is a major concern for economic policymakers worldwide because unstable fiscal policies can limit investment and, consequently, sustainable economic growth. Therefore, to achieve fiscal stability, government officials should invest energy revenues in the production sectors to leverage these proceeds for sustainable growth and development of the country. In this context, it is essential to develop an effective tax system to replace debts with taxes, guiding the long-term fiscal policy towards sustainability and stability (Akalpler, 2023). Overall, the findings indicate that all deficits and debts in Iran have been monetized, and an irresponsible fiscal policy has been adopted.

Political stability has been identified as one of the influential variables in the futurology of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. The findings are consistent with prior research (Campos et al., 2012; Kazerroni et al., 2019). In line with the research by Uddin et al. (2017), they examined the impact of political stability on economic growth in developing countries from 1996 to 2014, using data on economic freedom, political risk, political stability, corruption, and regulations (Uddin et al., 2017). Ahmed and Pulok (2013) state in their findings that political stability has long-term negative effects and short-term positive effects on economic performance (Ahmed & Pulok, 2013). Campos et al. (2012) examined the relationship between instability and economic growth using indices of official political instability, unofficial political instability, and financial development. Their results show a long-term negative causality and correlation between political instability and economic growth. Societal expectations due to political instability, through labor strikes and job insecurity, impact the labor market, reducing productivity and consequently decreasing investment (Campos et al., 2012). Additionally, political instability can significantly affect government public expenditures in the form of security, military, and police costs. In other words, political instability can influence government fiscal behavior, replace economic priorities with political ones, and thereby increase budget deficits and reduce economic growth. Given the positive and significant relationship between political stability and economic growth found in this research, governments should consider political stability in designing and implementing economic policies and strive

for higher political stability. Governments can create conditions conducive to economic growth by establishing political stability among domestic parties and groups, as well as in international relations.

Human resource development has been recognized as one of the influential variables in the futurology of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. As long as the trend of utilizing modern methods continues, progress will always be possible. Modern methods do not merely involve having new tools. In fact, modern methods will lead to the emergence of innovative and modern ideas, often originating from humans. For this reason, human capital plays a central and fundamental role in providing the appropriate environment for economic growth, particularly when investment in human capital occurs in response to the increasing needs for using the latest scientific achievements.

In such circumstances, it must be recognized that achieving economic capability and, consequently, economic development will not occur except in the shadow of effective and constructive interaction with the global economy. Therefore, it is essential for governments to consider a series of requirements for each of their institutions and decision-making loops to secure a better position in the global economy. This is achieved in the realm of foreign policy through the definition and implementation of economic diplomacy. Currently, given the unsatisfactory condition of the domestic economy and its unsuitable position in the global economic arena, as well as the emphasis of the country's top-level documents, particularly the vision document on enhancing the economic and technological position of Iran in the region, prioritizing constructive and effective economic interaction with the world through economic diplomacy, which has the capacity to leverage benefits from the global economy, has become an unavoidable necessity. In the current situation, where the country is under international pressure through economic sanctions, adopting a developmental foreign policy and active engagement at regional and trans-regional levels can reduce the security perception of Iran through trust-building in foreign relations, leading to stability in trade relationships and attracting foreign investment. This, through the transfer of new technologies and knowledge-based expertise, can have a positive impact on the country's growth and development process.

Technological growth was identified as one of the influential variables in the future forecasting of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. The findings are consistent with the prior research (Guo et al., 2023).

Optimal technology management at the macro societal level leads to increased productivity, growth in production, and exports. New technologies enhance the mobility of production factors and create greater diversity in products. Additionally, technology changes the relative cost of production and also increases the comparative advantage of firms and ultimately countries. Access to new technologies allows economic enterprises to enhance their production capabilities, which in turn leads to growth in capacity, cost reduction, improved quality, and increased speed in the delivery of goods, boosting the country's economic growth. The use of information technology can play a significant role in all dimensions of sports (services, industries, manufacturing, sports organizations at all levels, events, sports venues, sports clubs, health, etc.) (Guo et al., 2023); thus, it is recommended that all organizations and sports managers and practitioners utilize these systems and technologies to succeed in their planning, programming, services, and productions, thereby achieving their desired goals through the development of both the quantity and quality of their activities.

Management strategies were identified as one of the influenced variables in the futurology of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. Currently, the role of managers in facilitating the maximum use of minimum resources to enhance welfare is significant. In this context, actions such as the development of economic sectors capable of creating jobs and promoting entrepreneurship, pricing of sports industry products, formulation of production indices, commitment to a resistance economy, listing sports clubs on the stock exchange, and combating economic corruption in sports must be prioritized by managers to assist the economy of the sports industry.

Sports commerce was recognized as one of the influenced variables in the futurology of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. Consistent with the prior findings (Alapartanen & Kelly, 2016), a study on the impacts of the sports industry in the UK and the US was conducted. This study showed that political influence plays a role in the commercialization of sports in these countries, and commercialization requires more regulations to utilize its economic impacts effectively. Commercialization encompasses various arrays of significant technical, commercial, and financial processes that transform new technology into useful products or services and can generate revenue when entering the market. Thus, modern sports organizations and clubs can cover their development and advancement costs through commercialization, creating

better and more advanced investment opportunities for themselves. Sports commerce or the commercialization of sports also includes the aspect of sports that involves the sale, display, and advertising of part or all aspects of sports to generate revenue. Sports have the capability to generate significant income from sources like ticket sales, television rights, internet rights, sponsorships, merchandise, and licensing rights.

Economic structural reform was identified as one of the influenced variables in the futurology of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. The necessity of economic structural reform in Iran to reduce socio-economic inequalities is very important. Increasing inequalities in the distribution of wealth and income in Iranian society causes dissatisfaction and social tensions, endangering social balance. Economic structural reform and addressing imbalances to create income equilibrium, increasing income participation in society, and reducing economic inequalities can contribute to social stability and economic stability of the country. On the other hand, the necessity of reforming Iran's economic structure for financing and attracting domestic and foreign investment is very important. Financing plays a significant role in the growth of fixed capital and economic growth in the country's economy; attracting investment can lead to job creation and increased production. Economic structural reform includes improving investment regulations, reducing government interventions in the economy, enhancing transparency and rule of law, and offering facilities and incentives for investors. These reforms will increase investors' confidence and attract domestic and foreign capital to Iran, which is crucial for economic growth and development.

Investment networking was identified as one of the influenced variables in the futurology of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. Through this, by increasing capital in the sports sector and further development of clubs at various levels and disciplines, we can see an increase in revenue and profits for them. As the economy and sports investment flourish, economic transformations will also occur in the construction and promotion of sports infrastructure projects, and one can expect infrastructure development to follow the economic boom in sports, which is another consequence of the development of the sports economy.

Exports were recognized as one of the influenced variables in the futurology of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. The discussion on the role of exports in the economic growth of developing countries has

traversed a notable path, moving from import substitution to export development and increasing the degree of economic openness. In a free-trade economy, international trade acts as a powerful engine of growth, increasing income across all strata and narrowing the income disparity between wealthy and poor countries. Generally, any country participating in global trade will be in a better position than operating in a closed economy. Trade has effects on economic growth. Firstly, assuming complete resource mobility and price elasticity, according to Ricardo, there are fixed allocative gains from trade that elevate per capita income levels. The allocative gains from trade may be substantial, especially if exports allow the use of economies of scale in cases where the domestic market is small due to low per capita income. Even in populous Third World countries, domestic market demands may not be sufficient to employ economies of scale in many stages of industrial production. In such cases, exporting allows countries to benefit from increasing returns. Secondly, assuming that the marginal propensity to consume is not one, an increase in the level of investment will be accompanied by an increase in income levels.

Economic security was identified as a dual-aspect variable in the futurology of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. Economic security is one of the most important dimensions of national security and fundamental infrastructure for achieving economic development and enhancing social welfare, and therefore it has always been a focus of policymakers and economic planners in countries. The lack of security for economic activity is distinct from the concept of risk and uncertainty. In risky situations, economic actors face two probabilities in their economic movement, one of higher profit and the other of lower profit. In an uncertain environment, an economic actor faces more than two options, none of which clearly indicate the probability of success or failure. But in insecure conditions, the situation is more complicated than the previous two, as in this case, governments are incapable of creating the public good of security, and the outlook for any economic activity hardly anticipates any profit. Considering organizations as open systems, identifying these factors can be very effective and useful in formulating appropriate strategies aligned with environmental needs. Many business thinkers and experts have emphasized the coordination of economic firms' activities and policies with the environment and have validated the prominent role of this coordination and alignment in achieving success.

Hosting international events was identified as an independent variable in the future forecasting of the sports

industry with an economic approach by 2031. The findings align with the research by Nasehi et al. (2023). Gholamian et al. (2022) agree with these findings, stating that entrusting the organization of national or international competitions to various cities in the country initially requires the existence of basic infrastructure and subsequently is essential for the growth and development of sports in those regions. Typically, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increases seasonally in countries that win bids to host significant events. Thus, the feel-good factor after winning an event may be a catalyst for economic growth. Overall, it can be stated that events are an excellent way to advance the economy of the host city. With the influx of visitors from other cities to participate in the event, a temporary economic boom occurs in local businesses. For example, cities like Manchester in Tennessee and Indio in California, which are small towns with local residents and usually host passersby on their way to bigger destinations, see significant revenue from tourism and hosting nearly 100,000 music enthusiasts during their annual music festivals.

Legal and regulatory factors were identified as an independent variable in the future forecasting of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. The findings are consistent with prior research (Badini & Forouzan Boroojeni, 2020). In fact, the development of legal matters, which constitute a set of legal rules and principles, ensures that all actions and situations in the sports industry, such as the production of products and services, fall within the legal governance of companies and sports organizations. Compliance with these regulations is mandatory and essential for all entities and individuals in the sports sector to enter the global level. Therefore, in this context, sports managers should pay special attention to issues such as economic transparency in sports, drafting protective laws for the presence of the private sector, creating economic governance between the government, the private sector, and the public, drafting and passing copyright laws in the country, and enhancing transparency and the rule of law.

Economic infrastructure was identified as an independent variable in the future forecasting of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. Economic infrastructures play a fundamental role in the growth and development of countries, especially for developing countries, impacting all aspects of individual and societal life. Each piece of economic infrastructure can cause growth or weakness in a country and society. Today, many countries have not achieved growth in their economic infrastructures. Some have grown in one infrastructure, while others have in

several. The growth and advancement of any society depend on the existence of physical infrastructures for the production and distribution of goods and services among the general public and businesses, such that the strength of the national economy depends on the ability and stock of its infrastructure. The quality and efficiency of these infrastructures affect the continuity of business and economic activities, quality of life, and social health. Generally, infrastructures are indicative of a foundation and basis for growth and advancement. Infrastructure can aid growth in a specific area. The infrastructure of any country consists of public facilities, funded by private or public investment, which enable the provision of essential services and standard living conditions. If infrastructures are absent in a society or not well established, the society experiences weaknesses and failures and cannot grow properly. According to experts, infrastructure is introduced as a resource that simultaneously has the characteristics of a public good and a capital good, in that it exhibits the feature of "publicness" both in its production and consumption. For this reason, characteristics such as non-excludability, immobility, and indivisibility typically apply to infrastructures. Infrastructures stimulate economic activities, increase the efficiency of private institutions, improve economic performance, and consequently lead to sustainable economic development, increased public welfare, and better distribution of sports income.

Competitiveness was identified as an independent variable in the future forecasting of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. This aligns with prior findings (Naghiloo et al., 2020; Refah Kahriz et al., 2019), stating that strengthening economic competitiveness should be one of the main priorities for planners and policymakers of countries today. In a competitive economy, producers and companies continuously compete to attract more customers, thereby constantly monitoring each other's behaviors and adopting various strategies to succeed (Naghiloo et al., 2020; Refah Kahriz et al., 2019). Thus, competitiveness ensures that firms operate optimally, produce goods of the highest quality, and offer services at the lowest cost. Given the results, it may be stated that identifying the factors affecting Iran's poor economic position and the weaknesses of the components of competitiveness could be the first step towards improving competitive conditions.

Media growth was identified as an independent variable in the future forecasting of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. In line with research findings, it can be stated that today, capitalists' attention has also

turned towards the media, as they can create a suitable market for their products by dominating public opinion. In the past, whatever producers offered was sold, but as the number of producers increased, the market moved towards competitiveness, and in this scenario, the media were used as a tool to introduce manufactured products, thus establishing advertising as a profession and a communication bridge between the media and the economy. Employing theoretical media thinking in economics, the role of media in interactions among various economic actors is analyzed. The media themselves act as a platform where productions and demands meet in impersonal markets. From the cuneiform script of the Babylonians to the bits of the internet, the media have had the ability to make non-personal contracts and trade. Thus, the media have always been an essential, albeit taken-for-granted, part of the modern economy. Market failure indicates that terms like citizen, political equality, and the public sphere are concepts with fundamental contradictions in classical economic theory. Because ultimate value is provided only by the market, and all domains (even culture) verify their competence and incompetence from the market. Ultimately, the market notion becomes not a theoretical tool but an ideological tool claiming to answer all aspects of human life, turning culture into a collection of goods and services convertible to money and serving the market.

Social networking was identified as an independent variable in the future forecasting of the sports industry with an economic approach by 2031. Economic development through the application of social networking leads to innovation and internal competition among companies, and these factors cause the elimination of wastefulness and increase in productivity. Providing necessary education and financial environment and supporting them are also related to the economic development of the sports industry. Social networks play a very determining role in specifying economic behaviors, developing business networks, and political dealings. They allow businesses to have direct interactions with sports stakeholders such as customers, athletes, spectators, producers, etc. In the field of sports industry, it can be said that these networks, by creating online sales networks and informing about advancements in sports equipment, pave the way for the development of this industry.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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