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# DESIGNING AN ELECTRONIC MARKETING MODEL FOR SPORTING VENUES IN IRAN'S MEGALOPOLISES

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# ABSTRACT

Every advanced technology engenders new opportunities and threats for organizations. The increasing access of the public to the Internet has given importance to do business through the Internet. The characteristics of e-commerce, such as globalizing business, removing time and place restrictions, reducing the price of resources for purchasing, increasing the percentage of sales and many other benefits of e-commerce have brought on its significant growth. The current research designs an electronic marketing model for sporting venues in Iranian cities. This applied research has used the database theory and the Glazer's method. Its statistical population was the staff secretaries, vice presidents of sports organizations, employees with over 10 years of experience, and faculty members in sports management in five Iranian megalopolises (Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Tabriz, and Shiraz). The number and quantity of the sample was information saturation, which we achieved by interviewing 11 people. The data collection tool was an interview and a researcher-made questionnaire. The reliability of the tool was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha (0.82) after reviewing and verifying the validity of the tool by 15 sports marketing management experts. Descriptive statistics were drawn upon to describe the demographic status of the respondents and their answers to the research questions, and PLS structural equation modeling tests were used in the inferential statistics section. The findings led to the identification and ranking of electronic marketing components with a favorable fitting.

Keywords: venues, Electronic marketing, Model design, Megalopolis

#### INTRODUCTION

Various institutions are competing to make use of the latest innovations in their organization and business management because of the significant progress of information and communication technology (ICT) (1). The tremendous changes and developments of the business world have a deep impact on the development and management of business plans of organizations. Leading organizations and managers always seek to study, discover and choose new methods for managing the market. Because they always believe in the existence of thoughtful and strong competitors. Therefore, all efforts, plans and capacities of their organization are directed to identify their weaknesses and competitors' strengths so that they can capture more markets and attract a higher percentage of customers in the complex commercial competition (2).

Nowadays, the ever-increasing expansion of the size and population structure of cities, the many problems of movement and the subsequent unforeseeable problems such as lack of time make inevitable to resort to new ways of providing services in all spheres. One most essential issue of the people is to feed the daily needs of life with the easiest, fastest, most suitable and least expensive method even from home or workplace (3).

Sporting venues are an effective factor in improving the quality of sports activities, and the lack of these venues and spaces makes to slow down the progress of athletes and leads to their lack of success at various national and international levels. As a brief look at the bulletin of the championship medals of different countries shows, most of the transnational honors belong to the countries that have more suitable sporting venues and facilities. The lack of sports facilities and spaces is among the issues and problems that emerge in the country's physical education and sports and worthy of paying special attention. Thus, their optimal and cost-effective use should be the priority of sports organizations' programs in order to keep these places alive and dynamic. Every wise person wants to do the best work and get the best benefit. This reveals the truth of productivity. Since life in today's complex and dynamic world is accompanied by two key features of limited resources and facilities, and unlimited needs and demands, productivity is worthy of increasing attention in the contemporary era (4).



Organizations during the last decade have made over their business practices with the emergence of electronic commerce and Internet technologies. E-commerce has expanded open communication and created a virtual interactive environment where suppliers and customers can exchange information and products (5).

As Smith (2011) states, the access of sports organizations to the target markets through the Internet will be much more favorable, and this justifies the movement of organizations towards online presence in the markets. Especially since the demographic characteristics of internet users are like sports fans (6).

It is difficult for companies and organizations to achieve the desired performance in today's competitive and dynamic situation, and it requires companies to take advantage of core capabilities such as marketing capabilities and to be equipped with new information technologies in marketing operations such as electronic marketing. Marking capability is to differentiate products and services, research the market and satisfy customer needs, create new ideas, introduce new products quickly, and coordinate the company's operations with rapid changes in the market. It is a set of distinctive skills, complementary assets and procedures that provide a basis for a company's competitive capabilities and desirable performance in a particular business. Companies have no choice but to gain and continuously improve these capabilities in order to stay safe from the waves of environmental consolidation and adapt to competitive requirements (7).

The era we live in has been called "e-everything" because electronic phenomena has brought abundance, including e-learning, electronic banking (e-banking), electronic government (e-government), electronic citizenship (e-citizenship), Electronic Costumer Relationships Management (e-CRM), Electronic Logistics (e-logistics), and finally e-commerce and electronic life (e-life) (8).

Nowadays, the number of Internet users is so large that we can name it a mass communication medium. Currently, the global Internet network has become the most extensive and complex communication medium in the world. This immense collection of documents and web pages has handed over access to a wide range of documents and information, products and services (9).

Digital marketing takes in promoting products and services through a wide range of digital channels to reach customers at the right time through their preferred channel. Digital marketing has become an essential path in the activity of business organizations and companies, and they are trying to maximize the income of business organizations for every single innovation that can be added to modern business. The effect of the increasing growth of electronic commerce on the competitiveness of the business environment is completely clear. Mass marketing for selling goods will no longer be sufficient, and an enterprise needs an electronic supply of goods or services to achieve success and leave behind competitors in today's customer-oriented competitive market. E-commerce in this century is supposedly an indispensable necessity and is no longer an option but a necessity for business success in the future. A simplest definition of e-commerce is: finding resources, evaluation, negotiation, order, delivery, and paying and providing support services electronically. Therefore, electronic commerce is a method based on which information, products and services are bought and sold through computer communication networks (10).

Majdi and Shaghaig (2021) in their research identified and ranked the effective factors on electronic marketing in promoting the brand of health tourism destinations. The results of their research identified 13 effective factors in electronic marketing for promoting the brand of health tourism destinations, including word-of-mouth advertising to users, designing websites with content, managing knowledge and expertise, raising awareness and providing information about health tourism destinations, tourists' mental image of the destination, technological infrastructure, creating a sense of trust and confidence in tourists, tourists' loyalty to the destination, establishing interaction and communication, innovation in providing services, using educational videos in the web environment, organizational factors, and environmental factors (11). Mzee, Ogweno & Irene (2015) in their research, Factors in the Adoption of Electronic Marketing by Small and Medium-sized Institutions, found that management factors such as the skill and education level of managers are among the factors influencing the adoption of electronic marketing by small and medium-sized institutions (12). Yazdanfar et al. (2018) in their research, "Designing Marketing Strategy Content for Digital Businesses in the Service", extracted 31 components, and then they focused on five elements: customer, platform, networking, fast and replaceable competitive advantages, and branding (13). Schwarzl and Grabowska (2015) state that traditional marketing strategies currently exist widely and are drawn upon by companies and marketing organizations around the world; they question whether the Internet and electronicization has led to a change in marketing paradigms and even marketing mixes. As their results show, these cases absolutely require attention, examination and extraction of digital strategy content (14). Gholampour Yazdi (2018) in his research investigated the effect of electronic service quality and customer satisfaction on customer relationship management and life cycle value. Their results showed that electronic service quality and customer satisfaction in Shahr Bank affect customer relationship management and life cycle value. The mediating role of customer relationship management in the effect of

electronic service quality and customer satisfaction on customer life cycle value was confirmable (15). Arshian (2021) investigated the role of electronic communication management in customer satisfaction. This research showed that customer relationship management has a positive and significant effect on the satisfaction of the customers of the National Bank of Shiraz branches (16). Ant et al. (2014) examined the effect of electronic marketing on implementing customer relationship management in ski slopes in Tehran. Research findings showed a positive and significant relation of creating and promoting websites, improving access through search engines and social networks with customer relationship management (17). Chong, Bian & Zhang (2016) in their research, *e-marketing services and e-marketing performance*, discussed the role of innovation, knowledge complexity and environmental turbulence in communication effectiveness. Their research made known that the customer relationship management component, including marketing activities, and delivery of tools and techniques through the Internet-based business, with a special goal of improving customer service and getting more profitability, has a positive effect on electronic marketing performance (18).

Mansouri and Ganjkhanlou (2015) in their research, "Supply chain management in implementing electronic business" have evaluated as very important the role of supply chain management in a wide and dynamic global environment and have expressed the benefits and challenges of supply chain management in electronic business by examining the structure and characteristics of the supply chain, the place of supply chain management in e-commerce implementation (19).

Adam et al. (2020) delved into the role of digital marketing platforms in supply chain management for customer satisfaction and loyalty in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia. The results showed that digital marketing for the supply chain (online media) significantly affects consumer satisfaction. So the digital supply chain has a significant impact on consumer satisfaction (20). El-Gohary (2012) (effective factors of adoption and implementation of electronic marketing) has stated that the cultural orientation towards electronic marketing influences the adoption and implementation of electronic marketing in tourism companies (21). Daisy Lee and Peggy (2021) in their research inquired into the effective factors in the adoption of electronic marketing and its effect on performing non-profit organizations. They surveyed 54 nonprofit organizations and used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test research hypotheses based on resource dependence theory and e-marketing orientation. The results clarified that the emphasis of senior management's attitude on e-marketing does not lead to the acceptance of e-marketing (22). Mehrani et al. (2016) investigated the effect of electronic word-of-mouth advertising on brand and consumer purchase intention. The results showed that electronic word-of-mouth advertising has a positive effect on brand image and consumer purchase intention with 95% confidence. The effect of electronic word-of-mouth advertising on purchase intention increases with an intervention of the brand image variable as a mediating variable (23).

Delivering services and receiving related feedback is possible easily in the virtual space with the development of information and communication technology. Taking advantage of the capabilities of electronic marketing is necessary toward the proper productivity of sporting venues, the development of public sports and the possibility of choosing and creating equal



conditions to provide the desired wide and comprehensive sports services. Various researches have been conducted in recent years on the sports marketing, but there have been very limited works on identifying effective factors in the development of electronic marketing in the sporting venues. Sports electronic marketing in Iran relies currently on selling or advertising a few sports products in only a few limited sports fields. Production and sale of sports goods and the sale of tickets for various competitions are some examples. The spread of the corona virus in February 2018 and the subsequent severe crises in the economy and the sports industry can raise this type of marketing (electronic marketing) and trade as a strategic factor and competitive advantage more than before. The sports organizations and venues of the country need the cooperation of experienced researchers, specialists and managers to get rid of such conditions, so that the country's sports industry can reduce the costs of the organizations and venues and ultimately increase the productivity by studying and analyzing the complexity of the marketing. Thus, the sports organizations and venues of our country do not pay a sufficient attention to marketing activities through electronic and virtual spaces despite the increasing importance of electronic marketing activities in the sports industry of advanced countries. Since the final goal of the current research is to design a model to expand e-commerce, e-business and e-marketing in sports organizations and venues, and that the country's sports officials and managers do not give importance sufficiently to the category of e-marketing in order to achieve higher income and create a more appropriate relationship with customers, so the researcher designed an electronic marketing model of sporting venues in the country's megalopolises. This research hopes to identify the factors of electronic marketing and provide an appropriate feedback to create a model and determine the necessary and valuable factors for the caretakers and officials of sporting venues in the country.



#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is an applied research and used a qualitative method in order to answer the basic research question and extract the principal items. It operated with database theory and Glazer's method (1992). This method emphases on the process of analyzing and compiling theoretical categories instead of focusing only on research findings. A distinction between data collection and analysis steps, emphasized in traditional research methods, is intentionally ignored in a data-driven theory. Its advantage is that it first scrutinizes the phenomenon under study completely and gets the dimensions and constituent components of the phenomenon.

The statistical population is elites or experts. Elites or experts mean in this study the staff managers and deputy directors of sports organizations, employees with over 10 years of experience, and faculty members in sports management in five Iranian megalopolises, including Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Tabriz, and Shiraz. The number of samples according to the research population, its type and its purpose, that continued until information saturation was 11 interviews. Theoretical saturation criterion is determined for identifying electronic marketing indicators in sporting venues; so when the researcher concluded that conducting more interviews with the elites does not provide him with more information and is merely repeating the previous information, the researcher stopped collecting information. We investigated firstly the theoretical foundations and background of the subject in order to collect information through the library method including the review of documents, documentary reports, scientific

articles, and authoritative websites. We conducted in the next stage the qualitative interviews with a statistical sample. We also analyzed and coded the interviews, considering the theoretical foundations of qualitative research, so that the analysis of each interview along with the previous findings was a guide for data collection and a criterion for selecting and interviewing the next sample. The coding process took place continuously in three stages of open coding, central coding, and selective coding. A sports management doctoral student was asked to take part as a research partner (coder) in order to calculate the reliability of the interviews through the intrathematic agreement method of two coders (evaluators). The training and techniques for coding the interviews were transferred to him. Then, the researcher, together with this colleague, coded the three interviews and calculated the percentage of intra- thematic agreement through the following formula:

reliability percentage = 
$$\frac{\text{number of agreements} * 2}{\text{total codes}} * \%100$$

Interviews were coded into components and categories. The collected information was analyzed in the sections of descriptive and inferential statistics on an interval scale using SPSS 21 software. Partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modeling was used in the inferential part.



# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analytical statistics are an analysis in two ways: the first stage deals with the descriptive analysis of the data, and the inferential statistics with the variables in the conceptual model of the research.

Table 1 discloses the frequency distribution and frequency distribution percentage of the respondents according to their age. As you can see, the average age of the respondents is 46.07 and their average work experience is 17.35 years. 45.45% of the interviewed of them had relevant organizational responsibilities. They had BSc by 45.45%.

**Table 1.** Frequency distribution and frequency distribution percentage of age, education level, work experience and occupation of the respondents

Number	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
11	11.35	13	22
11	17.35	13	22
		Number	Frequency (percentage)
BS	Sc	5	45.45
MS	Sc	4	36.36
Ph	D	2	18.18
	11 11 BS	11 11.35	11 11.35 13   11 17.35 13   Number   BSc 5   MSc 4

	Faculty member	2	18.18
Occupation	Manager of sporting venues	4	36.36
	Organizational position	5	45.45

The next stage got 76 open codes, 8 core codes and two optional codes for electronic marketing. Various factors such as external and composite reliability, convergent and divergent validity, and confirmatory factor analysis have been usable for examining the research questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis was not done for this questionnaire because of the discovered number of factors of the interviews. Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability criterion (CR) were tools for evaluating the reliability of the external model. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is a factor whose value varies from 0 to 1. Cronbach's alpha value higher than 0.7 (Cronbach, 1951) evinces acceptable reliability. Of course, Moss et al. (1998) have introduced the value of 0.6 as the limit of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for variables with a few questions. The table below estimated the value of this coefficient for each of the factors.

The standards for the 8 structures in question according to Table 2 are higher than 0.7, so all the structures have the required reliability.

#### Structural Model

A most basic criterion for measuring the relationship between constructs in the model (structural part) is the significance numbers T. If the value of these numbers exceeds 1.96, it shows the correctness of the relationship between the constructs and, in conclusion, the confirmation of the research hypotheses at the 95% confidence level. Figure 1 shows the structural model.

**Table 2.** Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire of factors in electronic marketing

Component	Cronbach's alfa
Development strategies	99.
Branding indicators	97.
Increasing the speed of exchanges	98.
Organizational norms	94.
Management indicators	82.
Systematic interaction with customers	98.
Cognitive improvement	97.•
Electronic space architecture	99.•

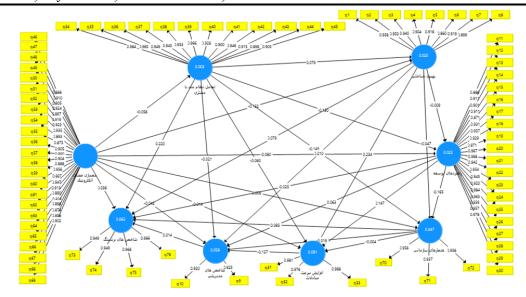


Figure 1. Standard coefficients in the model

As you see in Figure 2, the standard coefficients are in all cases over 0.4 and the t index is more than the critical value of 1.96 in all cases. Therefore, the questionnaire items are suitable for measuring the desired variable. Figure 3 revels that cognitive improvement is the most important component of electronic marketing and the component of branding indicators is the least important component among the components.

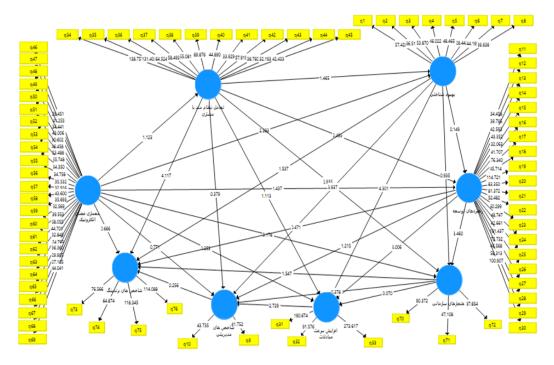


Figure 2. Standard coefficients in the model in the t index mode



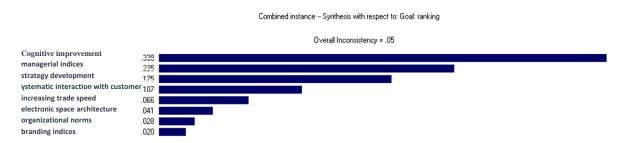


Figure 3. Ranking of components based on standard weight

Cognitive improvement, managerial indices, strategy development, systematic interaction with customer, increasing trade speed, electronic space architecture, organizational norms, branding indices

# **CONCLUSION**

This research dispenses an electronic marketing model for sporting venues in the country. The results showed up that all the equations of the conceptual model of the research are greater than 0.4, so all the equations of the conceptual model are statistically significant. The collected data led to the identification of electronic marketing components; the prioritization of the components, namely cognitive improvement, management indicators, development strategies, systematic interaction with customers, increasing the speed of exchanges, electronic space architecture, organizational norms and branding indicators were the most important core components of the electronic marketing model.

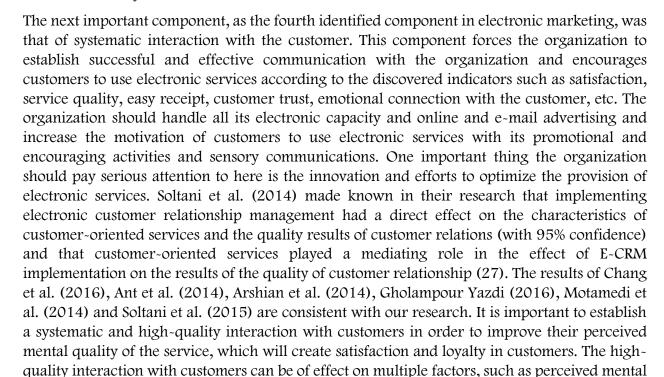


The most important component in e-marketing was seemingly cognitive improvement. Nowadays, knowledge and information have become a determining factor in the success and competitiveness of organizations. Important indicators such as more awareness, effective exchange of information, more access to documents and information, increased reliability, and a database for organization marketing lead to a faster and structured decision-making. A systematic use of information in marketing is accompanied with an identification of weak points and their analysis, and possibly provides a quick solution to the marketing challenges of the organization. Structuring information has been one new organizational issue in management science. Organizations have to use this system to maintain existing knowledge, learn new knowledge and to improve their competitive position in the market. The organization must consciously abandon its knowledge sometimes in order to improve its performance and replace it with new knowledge. Marketing units in any organization are also one of the most important users of information. Therefore, the development and systematization of marketing information can help to improve decision-making, strengthen creativity and adapt to changes. The results of research by Jafari et al. (2017) have proved a positive and significant relationship between knowledge management and competitive intelligence and electronic marketing, and knowledge management and competitive intelligence could explain 57% of the variance (24). The results of research by Jafari et al. (2017) and Majdi and Shaghaig (2014) are consistent with this research. Thus, cognitive improvement can identify strengths and weaknesses well.

The second component in electronic marketing rested on management indicators. Seemingly, the interest and willingness of managers of sports organizations for activities through electronic

marketing should be high. The managers of these organizations must have the relevant skills, expertise and education to effectively direct the organizations towards implementing activities of electronic marketing. The results of research by Zali Jildani and Karnia Shafaroud (2021) have also shown that there is a significant relationship between management factors and the dimensions of management factors and the development of electronic marketing in the sports education. All five dimensions of management: communication, and management strategy of the knowledge and management of production and supply are statistically significant (25). The results of the present research are consistent with those of Zali Jildani et al. (2021), and Mezi et al. (2015). Management indicators in this research have been very important components in formulating an electronic marketing model. It states that understanding of and ability to use electronic activities and the depth of management decisions influence the adoption of electronic marketplaces.

The third identified component in electronic marketing was the component of marketing development strategies. As this component illustrates, businesses wield the Internet and information technology as a tool to reduce costs by improving quality. Tools such as data mining, customer information files, etc. renders them an information profile of customers. As reveal the indicators of this component, such as organizational goals and missions, there should be alignment and compatibility between the organization's strategies and electronic marketing development strategies, so that the organization can guarantee the most productivity and success for itself. The results of the research of Rady and Elshreef (2010) have unveiled that electronic marketing influences improving the quality of sports club services (26). The results of the present research are consistent with those of Shur Zol et al., Yazdanfar (2019), Rady and Elshreef (2010) and Shoeybi et al. (2018).





quality and customer loyalty, and can lead to competitive advantage for organizations, especially in the service sector.

The fifth identified component of electronic marketing was increasing the speed of transactions. Increasing the speed of exchanges is the process and activity of providing raw materials or organizational components that the company needs to engender a product or service and provide it to customers. The organization and sports clubs can reduce additional activities according to the characteristics of this component, such as product customization, proper planning, appropriate and specific distribution according to customer needs and elimination of middlemen, and this increases the productivity of the organization. Amin Khah et al. (2017) have laid out in their research that implementing electronic supply chain management has a positive and significant impact on company performance, financial, market and operational performance (28). The results of the present research are in line with the research results of Adam et al. (2020), Amin Khah et al. and Mansouri and Ganj Khanlou (2016).

The sixth component of electronic marketing was electronic space architecture. Sports organizations and clubs should design a website with easy access as its most important feature according to the characteristics of this component such as being up-to-date, transparency, innovation, flexibility, easy payment, eliminating the time and space, the possibility of tracking the order and product, etc., so that it can further dole out this website with high usefulness for the organization and the customer, and cost reduction for both parties. A website should be able to mete out very accurate and high information from users to the organization. The privacy of the customers should also be preserved and their site purchase should be done easily and conveniently. Hassanzadeh et al. (2010) also evinced that the content dimensions of the website are effective in the effectiveness of electronic marketing ( $\beta$ =0.062) and electronic trust  $(\beta=0.682)$ . The two dimensions of information  $(\beta=0.594)$  and design  $(\beta=0.276)$  are of effect on trust, and their effect coefficients on the effectiveness of electronic marketing are almost equal to 0.5, which reveals the relatively equal effect of these two dimensions on the effectiveness of electronic marketing. The mediating role of electronic trust was showed and the indirect effect of content dimensions through electronic trust on the effectiveness of electronic marketing is greater than its direct effect (29). The research results of Chakherlouy and Ghahari (2014), Baradarane Nikoo et al. (2016) and Hasanzadeh et al. reveal that they are consistent with ours. They all emphasize that the above feature is a most important feature of the web environment architecture in electronic marketing and attracting more customers.

The seventh identified component of the researcher in the electronic marketing of sports organizations and clubs rested on the organizational climate component. Thus, managers of sports organizations and clubs, according to the most important indicators such as organizational culture, education (retraining) culture, etc., must possess a suitable culture and a positive attitude to accept and carry out marketing activities through electronic services. The values and interests of the employees must be shared in order to develop this capability, and the cultural orientation by the managers of the selected organizations and clubs should be done favorably for their customers. Maghsoodi et al. (2017) also spelled out the relationship between electronic marketing, organizational culture, and organizational performance among food companies with websites. They laid out that there are significant relationships between



electronic marketing, organizational culture and organizational performance, organizational culture mediates the relationship between electronic marketing and organizational performance (30). As previously said, the results of the present research are in line with those of the research of Daisy Lee and Peggy (2021), Maghsoudi et al. (2018) and El~ Gohary (2012).

Finally, the last identified component in electronic marketing was branding indicators. Brand indicators, brand trust, brand satisfaction, and brand value were the most important indicators of this component, and organizations can induce, by developing and increasing them, a favorable image of their brand in the minds of customers. The starting point in marketing of brands is often distinguishing between the products and offered services and the products and services competing so that this plays a vital role in the success of organizations. Brand innovation is defined as an improvement in brands that leads to fundamental changes in existing activities and markets. Saliani et al. (2013) laid out in a research that brand factors such as reputation and trust, loyalty and commitment, geometric shape, balanced colors, and meaningfulness of the brand show off an effect on customers' willingness to buy online (31). The results of the present research are consistent with those of Nowrozi et al. (2014), Mehrani et al. (2016), Ghorbani and Azadi (2016), Saliani et al. The influence of this electronic marketing component on the organization leads seemingly to the improvement of the organization's brand according to its indicators and considering that individuals with university education in organizations are familiar with the brand concepts, values and facilities of this component.



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