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Digital Marketing as an Approach to Achieving Competitive Advantage in Iraqi Football Academies

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Abstract

Study purpose. This study aims to identify the role of digital marketing as a gateway to achieve competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies on the following questions: What is the reality of digital marketing in Iraqi football academies? What is the reality of competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies? What is the role of digital marketing in achieving competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies?

Materials and methods. The research method using the descriptive method was used as the general framework for the study, with surveys as the primary tool for data collection. The research included a pilot sample of (50) individuals consisting of academy owners, coaches, and parents from outside the main sample, in addition to a main sample of (682) individuals, including academy owners, coaches, activity managers, and parents.

Result. results of research showed that academies heavily rely on social media platforms to promote their activities and training programs, and that digital marketing plays a significant role in enhancing the academy's image and strengthening its brand.

Conclusion. Concluded that the Academy relies on social media to promote its activities and training programs, the Academy uses an official website to present its services and communicate with the public, with a low degree, Football academies in Iraq do not provide advanced training programs that keep pace with world standards, Football academies in Iraq do not rely on qualified and experienced coaches to develop the skills of players**.**

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Competitive Advantage, Football Academies.

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Introduction

Marketing is one of the activities with increasing impact in today's changing, changing and rapidly developing world, it leads to the development of societies and raising the standard of living, and this development also leads to the complexity of the activity of the marketing function, whether in Developing Societies or others, marketing has become an urgent

necessity that all those who work in administrative activity should pay attention to (Mahmoud et al., 2025).

Recently, the internet has become an important advertising medium thanks to its easy access to the target group anywhere, compared to traditional means .in light of the rapid changes in the digital world, sport has become an important part of the concerns of governments, thanks to its effective role at the political, economic, cultural and social levels. this trend has contributed to increasing global interest in sport and the practice of physical and competitive activities, as it has become one of the main sources of support for the development and economy of countries (Nuriddinov, 2023).

Digital marketing has also become one of the key factors influencing the success of organizations in various fields, including football academies. Marketing is no longer limited to traditional means, but has evolved to include modern digital strategies, such as social media marketing, search engine optimization, paid advertising, and data analysis, which allow academies to reach their target audience in more effective and efficient ways.

Shareef points in his study of the great popularity of football worldwide and the resulting interest of individuals and the media, which requires the opportunity to practice and learn football (Shareef, Q.B., 2019). The existence of football academies has led to them being an outlet for practicing this activity, as such academies seek to attract large numbers to participate in them, which may help in selecting talented people and training and refining players (Mohammad Ramdani et al., 2023). The main goal of football academies is to encourage the practice of the game from an early age, increase the number of practitioners, as well as select the best players. Through these academies, players are taught the skills and arts of the game (Swaminathan et al., 2022).

The academies seek to achieve a competitive advantage by developing excellent training programs, improving the quality of services, and attracting young talents (Du & Yuan, 2021). However, many academies in Iraq face significant difficulties in promoting their activities and communicating with the target audience, which reduces their ability to compete with regional and international academies that make greater use of digital marketing tools (Umamaheswari, 2024). For this reason, studying the role of digital marketing has become vital for achieving competitive advantage, and its impact on the growth and sustainability of academies should be studied in an increasingly competitive sports environment (Torres et al., 2022).

In this context, the results of multiple studies, including the study of Salem, have concluded that scientific research in the field of football academies has seen increasing popularity in recent years. These studies confirmed that marketing techniques are one of the main pillars in sports business management, and also pointed out that there are difficulties in marketing the services of academies, which hinders the achievement of financial returns to support the sponsorship of young and talented people (Rojas-Torrijos & Ramon, 2021). These studies have recommended the importance of establishing effective foundations for marketing and sponsoring football academies to ensure their success and sustainability (Melnyk et al., 2021).

The study of Vasileva, also recommended that digital marketing is a crucial factor in enhancing the position of sports academies in the local and international market, as it can contribute significantly to increasing the number of subscribers and achieving sustainable profit that supports academies in achieving their educational and sports goals (Vasileva & Chumakov, 2024). Despite the growing role of digital marketing in the management and marketing of sports globally, many Iraqi academies have not made sufficient use of these tools, making it difficult to attract players, interact with fans, and achieve financial sustainability. To confirm the research problem, the researcher conducted a survey study that included (50) examiners from the owners and managers of football academies and parents in

Iraq, in order to identify the degree of use of digital marketing in Iraqi football academies, the results of the study resulted in a low level of use of digital marketing in academies, where 80% of the examiners confirmed this due to the following reasons:

1. Academies lack systematic digital plans.
2. Lack of budget allocated for digital marketing.
3. Lack of specialized expertise in digital marketing.
4. Rely on the use of traditional methods instead of digital.

Based on the above, and what the results of the survey study and the recommendations of previous studies have shown, the researcher seeks to study "digital marketing as a gateway to achieve competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies," which contributes to the development of marketing performance of academies, enhancing their ability to compete and sustainable growth.

The research aims to identify the role of digital marketing as a gateway to achieve competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies on the following questions:

1. What is the reality of digital marketing in Iraqi football academies
2. What is the reality of competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies
3. What is the role of digital marketing in achieving competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies

Search terms:

1. Digital marketing: using digital technologies to create integrated, meaningful and measurable Communications, which helps to win customers, build deeper relationships with them and maintain them (Drigas et al., 2022.).
2. Competitive advantage: it is the ability of an organization to stand out and differ from competitors in addition to achieving customer satisfaction.by achieving these two dimensions, the organization will achieve its goal of development, gaining a position in the market and increasing profitability (Gonjo & Olstad, 2021).
3. Football academies are scientific and technical educational institutions to prepare a football player for future professionalism, which possess all the components of the infrastructure that enable them to achieve their goals successfully, and these components are summarized in the administrative, technical and scientific system systematized in all types of programs related to sports science and football in particular (Fikret, A., & Leyla, 2020).

Materials and methods

Study participants

The researcher used the descriptive approach (survey studies), which provides an understanding of" digital marketing as an input to achieve competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies; this approach studies the research variables as they are among the sample members without the researcher having a role in adjusting the variables subject to measurement. The research community in Iraqi football academies consists of (7) Iraqi governorates, namely (Baghdad, Karbala, Basra, Maysan, Wasit, Salah al-Din, Dhi Qar).

The research sample was selected by a random stratified method from the owners of academies, coaches, activity managers, and parents of (130) Iraqi football academies at the level of (7) Iraqi governorates. Table 1 shows the statistical characterization of the research sample and its percentage

Table 1. Characterization of the research sample

Governorates	Iraqi football academies			
	Owners of academies	Coaches	Activity managers	Parents of children
Baghdad	24	31	12	82
Karbala	21	27	10	70
Basra	22	25	8	63
Maysan	18	21	6	53
Wasit	16	23	7	63
Salah al-Din	13	20	5	51
Dhi Qar	12	16	4	49
	126	163	52	341
682				

First: the honesty of the arbitrators

The researcher presented the axes reached to (9) experts attached (), who have a doctor of Philosophy Degree in sports education specializing in sports management, and their experience in the field is not less than(10) years, in order to express an opinion on their suitability and adequacy to build the questionnaire attached (2), and based on the opinions of experts, all axes were accepted, Table 2.

Table 2. The initial image of the questionnaire axes (N=9)

Topics of the questionnaire	Expert opinion		
	Agree	Disagree	Ratio
The reality of digital marketing for Iraqi football academies	9	0	100%
The reality of the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies	8	1	89%
The role of digital marketing in achieving a competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies	9	0	100%

The researcher formulated the sub-sentences listed under each of the axes that were identified to construct the questionnaire, where the number reached (46) sentences in the initial image, which were reached thanks to the information collected through the studies examined and the specialized references, where they were presented to (9) Appendix experts (3), holders of a doctorate in philosophy in sports education, specialization in Sports Management, and their experience in the field is not less than (10) years, in order to express an opinion on their relevance and suitability for constructing the questionnaire, and on the basis of the opinions of the experts acceptance of all the agreed agreements sentences amounting to (77%) or more, as well as the reformulation of a certain number of sentences in a Few axes according to the opinion of the experts, Table 3.

Table 3. The axes of the questionnaire and the number of sentences of each axis in its initial form (N=9)

Topics of the questionnaire	Number of sentences	
	Before the expert opinion poll	After a survey of experts

The reality of digital marketing for Iraqi football academies	15	13
The reality of the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies	13	12
The role of digital marketing in achieving a competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies	18	17
	46	42

The researcher used the triple estimation scale (yes, to some extent, no), to answer the vocabulary according to the following elements:
* Yes, yes: it is estimated at three degrees.
• Quite simple: it is estimated at two degrees.
* True no: estimated by one degree
Scientific transactions of the digital marketing questionnaire as a contribution to obtain a competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies:

Calculation of the honesty coefficient:

The veracity coefficient was calculated using the method of internal consistency with Pearson's correlation coefficient, finding the correlation coefficient between the degree of each sentence and the total degree of the axis to which the sentence belongs Table 4.

Table 4. The correlation coefficient between the degree of each sentence and the degree The totality of the axis to which the term belongs (N = 30)

The first axis		**The second axis**		**The third axis**	
No.	**Correlation coefficient**	**No.**	**Correlation coefficient**	**No.**	**Correlation coefficient**
1	0.620	1	0.631	1	0.698
2	0.602	2	0.618	2	0.729
3	0.598	3	0.563	3	0.636
4	0.540	4	0.574	4	0.297
5	0.319	5	0.693	5	0.753
6	0.629	6	0.636	6	0.734
7	0.701	7	0.461	7	0.653
8	0.736	8	0.323	8	0.682
9	0.612	9	0.611	9	0.730
10	0.638	10	0.554	10	0.342
11	0.740	11	0.339	11	0.646
12	0.667	12	0.490	12	0.498
13	0.658			13	0.698
				14	0.510
				15	0.678
				16	0.623
				17	0.639

* Tabular R-value at least (0.05) = (0.361) Studying Table (4), it becomes clear: based on the results of the validity of the questionnaire sentences, a group of non-statistically significant sentences was deleted, since the calculated value of (T) is less than its tabular value at a significant level (0.05) Table 5.

Table 5. Deleted phrases for men from the digital marketing questionnaire As an entry point to gain a competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies.

No.	Topics of the questionnaire	Deleted sentence numbers	the number of sentences after deletion
1.	The reality of digital marketing for Iraqi football academies	5	12
2.	The reality of the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies	8 ،11	10
3.	The role of digital marketing in achieving a competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies	4 ،10	15
Total			37

By studying Table (5), it becomes clear that: the total number of sentences in the questionnaire after the modification is (37) sentences, Appendix(4). - The researcher also used the honesty of internal consistency to calculate the honesty of the questionnaire, finding the correlation coefficient between the total score of each axis and the total score of the questionnaire, Table 6.

Table 6. Values of the correlation coefficient between the axes and the total score of the digital marketing questionnaire As an entry point for obtaining a competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies (N=30)

No.	Topics of the questionnaire	The value of T
1.	The reality of digital marketing for Iraqi football academies	0.619*
2.	The reality of the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies	0.598*
3.	The role of digital marketing in achieving a competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies	0.601*

* Tabular R-value at least (0.05) = (0.361).

By studying Table (6), it becomes clear that the values of the correlation coefficients between the score of each axis and the overall score of the questionnaire vary between (0.598) and (0.619), which indicates a high coefficient of honesty of the axes of the questionnaire.

Second: stability coefficients: The researcher used to calculate the constancy the cronbach's alpha coefficient for the axes and the total score of the questionnaire, and this method depends on the homogeneity of the scores of the questionnaire used, Table 7.

Table 7. Values of the Alpha-Alpha coefficient for the constancy of the axes of the digital marketing questionnaire As an entry point for obtaining a competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies (N=30)

No.	Topics of the questionnaire	**Values of the alpha coefficient**
1.	The reality of digital marketing for Iraqi football academies	0.650*
2.	The reality of the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies	0.563*

3.	The role of digital marketing in achieving a competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies	0.632*

* Tabular R-value at the significant (0.05) = (0.361) Looking at table (7), it becomes clear: the stability of the axes of the questionnaire, where the coefficient of stability by Cronbach's Alpha method reaches between (0.563) and (0.650), which indicates a high coefficient of stability of the axes of the questionnaire.

Field study:

After checking the parameters of honesty and stability, the two researchers applied the questionnaire to the basic research sample (682), and after completing the questionnaire application, the data were collected, classified, decompressed and tabulated to perform appropriate statistical processing, as in Table 8.

Table 8. Values of the axes of the digital marketing questionnaire in Iraqi football academies (N=30)

No.	Phrases	Iterations						Discretionary Diploma	The Discretionary Ratio	KA2
		Yes	The ratio %	To some extent	The ratio%	NO	The ratio %			
1	The Academy uses email marketing to send updates and offers to subscribers.	134	20	324	48	224	33	1274	62.27	79.47
2	The Academy uses an official website to showcase its services and communicate with the public.	179	26	330	48	173	25	1370	66.96	69.63
3	The Academy provides visual content (photos, videos) on a regular basis to enhance its digital presence.	132	19	344	50	206	30	1290	63.05	101.85
4	The Academy carries out paid online advertising campaigns to reach players and parents.	75	11	265	39	342	50	1097	53.62	166.16
5	The Academy reacts to public inquiries via social media platforms quickly and effectively.	183	27	262	38	237	35	1310	64.03	14.34
6	The Academy relies on social media to promote its activities and training programs.	196	29	311	46	175	26	1385	67.69	47.16
7	The Academy enlists sports influencers or famous players to promote its activities.	136	20	327	48	219	32	1281	62.61	80.70

No.	Phrases	Iterations						Discretionary Diploma	The Discretionary Ratio	KA2
		Yes	The ratio %	To some extent	The ratio%	NO	The ratio %			
8	The Academy analyzes follower data on digital platforms to improve its marketing strategies.	193	28	284	42	205	30	1352	66.08	21.50
9	The Academy allocates an annual budget for digital marketing and the development of its strategies.	175	26	282	41	225	33	1314	64.22	25.22
10	The Academy relies on educational content (such as informative articles and videos) to attract the target audience.	86	13	306	45	290	43	1160	56.70	132.36
11	The Academy uses mobile applications or electronic platforms to facilitate communication with players and parents.	159	23	383	56	140	21	1383	67.60	160.68
12	The academy periodically evaluates the effectiveness of its digital campaigns to improve its performance.	68	10	220	32	394	58	1038	50.73	234.10

The tabular value of KA2 is when (0.05)= (5.99)

Studying Table (8), it becomes clear that the relative weight of the first axis (the reality of digital marketing of Iraqi football academies) ranged from (50.73% to 67.69%), and it also becomes clear that the value of KA2 ranged between (14.34) and(234.10), which is a statistical function in all the phrases of the first axis.

The results of the study showed that the phrase number (6), which states that "the Academy relies on social media to promote its activities and training programs," was ranked first in terms of respondents ' responses, with a response rate of (67.69%), which indicates that social media is one of the most used digital marketing tools by Iraqi academies. This result reflects a clear awareness among these academies of the importance of these platforms in reaching the target audience. This result is consistent with the findings of the study of (Kooli, 2022), which confirmed that there is a great interest from sports marketing companies to use social media networks, due to the demand of sports consumers, which enhances their effectiveness as a marketing channel (Kooli & Abadli, 2022).

Torres et al (2022), also confirms that social media marketing relies on building social relationships with leads, with the aim of selling products and services in a way that each browser feels that the message is addressed to him personally. (Torres-Ronda et al., 2022) his method is not intended to deceive or mislead, but rather to achieve personal interaction that enhances the effectiveness of the marketing message. Since the number of visitors to social networks is estimated at more than one billion per month, marketing through these networks

effectively contributes to the promotion of the brand and its dissemination even among unexpected customers (Schneider et al., 2018).

On the other hand, the phrase number (12), which was "the Academy evaluates the effectiveness of its digital campaigns periodically to improve its performance," came in the last ranking with a response rate of (50.73%). The researcher attributed this to the weak reliance of academies on digital measurement and evaluation tools, or to the absence of clear mechanisms to track the performance of online marketing campaigns. This decrease indicates a gap in the digital marketing culture of academies, where attention is often focused on the implementation of campaigns without following up on their results or analyzing their effectiveness, which limits the opportunities for continuous improvement and strategic development. This finding highlights the importance of strengthening the academies ' capabilities in the field of digital analysis and data-driven evaluation, to ensure that the goals of marketing campaigns are achieved and increase their efficiency over time (Qutaiba Younus & Rashid, 2024).

In general, regarding the results of the first axis, the researcher believes that the low responses reflect the limited adoption of digital marketing practices by Iraqi football academies, despite its increasing importance in strengthening corporate identity and expanding the audience base. This is due to several factors, most notably the weak digital infrastructure, the absence of specialized marketing plans, the lack of qualified cadres, along with the possibility of ambiguity of the concept among some of the sample members. These results confirm the need to raise awareness and provide training support to academies in the field of digital marketing, which contributes to the development of their digital presence and achieving their strategic goals (Gustian et al., 2024).

The two researchers will present, interpret and discuss the results reached to answer the second question "What is the reality of competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies", through Table 9.

Table 9. Repetitions, estimated total, relative weight and KA2 value of the research sample responses For the second axis (the reality of the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies) (n=682)

No.	Phrases	Iterations						Discretionary Diploma	The Discretionary Ratio	KA2
		Yes	The ratio %	To some extent	The ratio%	NO	The ratio %			
1	Football academies in Iraq provide advanced training programs that keep pace with international standards.	28	4	78	11	576	84	816	39.88	807.64
2	Football academies in Iraq rely on qualified and experienced coaches to develop the skills of players.	11	2	196	29	475	70	900	43.99	480.00
3	Football academies in Iraq use modern technologies such as performance analysis and artificial intelligence to improve the	178	26	372	55	132	19	1410	68.91	142.74

No.	Phrases	Iterations						Discretionary Diploma	The Discretionary Ratio	KA2
		Yes	The ratio %	To some extent	The ratio%	NO	The ratio %			
	quality of training.									
4	The Iraqi football academies are characterized by an equipped infrastructure that includes modern stadiums and integrated training facilities.	181	27	265	39	236	35	1309	63.98	16.01
5	Football academies in Iraq are partnering with local and international clubs to enhance the players ' professional opportunities.	96	14	367	54	219	32	1241	60.65	161.99
6	Football academies in Iraq rely on effective marketing strategies to attract players and sponsors.	142	21	306	45	234	34	1272	62.17	59.45
7	Iraqi football academies provide individual development plans for each player based on his level and technical performance.	136	20	327	48	219	32	1281	62.61	80.70
8	Football academies in Iraq help players get professional opportunities locally and internationally.	115	17	163	24	404	59	1075	52.54	211.01
9	Iraqi football academies rely on diverse sources of income such as sponsorships and business partnerships.	97	14	372	55	213	31	1248	61.00	167.69
10	Football academies in Iraq periodically assess the level of their competitive services to develop their performance.	107	16	435	64	140	21	1331	65.05	286.95

The tabular value of KA2 is when (0.05)= (5.99)

Studying Table (9), it becomes clear that the relative weight of the second axis (the reality of the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies) ranged from (39.88% to 68.91%), and it also becomes clear that the value of KA2 ranged between(16.01) and (807.64), which is a statistical function in all the phrases of the second axis.

The results of the second axis, on the reality of competitive advantage in football academies in Iraq, showed generally low responses. The phrase number (3), which states that "football academies in Iraq use modern technologies such as performance analysis and artificial intelligence to improve the quality of training," came in first place with a response rate of (68.91%), indicating that there is partial awareness among some academies of the importance of using modern technology as a tool to enhance competitive advantage. However, at the same time, the percentage reflects the limitations of this use, which confirms the need to expand the scope of adoption of these technologies and activate them more deeply to develop the competitive capabilities of academies at the local and international levels.

This is consistent with the results of the study of Borges (2022), which confirms the need to use modern administrative methods in the implementation of work in football academies, and the importance of continuous work development and the adoption of new ideas that will improve the quality of service provided and achieve a competitive advantage. The use of electronic systems, modern methods and Means also improves and develops the work performance of academies (Borges et al., 2022).

The results of the study of Umamaheswari (2024) confirm that the competitive advantage has become a key strategic goal for all organizations to face the challenges and rapid changes that contribute to increasing the intensity of competition between them. This competition has pushed the institutions to continuously strive to achieve an outstanding competitive position, thus enabling them to provide high-quality and competitive services effectively (Umamaheswari, 2024).

In general, there were low responses about the reality of achieving the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies in the phrases of the second axis. In this regard, the researcher sees the need to focus on the development of training programs within football academies in Iraq, in line with modern international standards. These academies should strengthen the sports infrastructure, qualify coaches according to the latest advanced training methods. An educational and experimental environment should be provided that encourages innovation and the development of players ' skills in an integrated manner. Achieving these steps will contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of Iraqi academies and help raise the level of sports performance in line with global trends in the field of football.

Moreover, the researchers believe that improving the level of education and training within Iraqi football academies requires greater cooperation between academies and educational and sports institutions alike. The integration between the sports and educational sectors can provide an ideal environment for the scientific and thoughtful development of players ' skills. It is also important to have specialized training programs focused on the use of modern technologies in training players, as well as updating the curriculum in line with global technological and sports developments.

The researcher will present, interpret and discuss the results reached to answer the third question "What is the role of digital marketing in achieving competitive advantage in Iraqi football academies", through Table 10.

Table 10. Repetitions, estimated total, relative weight and KA2 value of the research sample responses For the third axis (the role of digital marketing in achieving the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies) (n=682)

No.	Phrases	Iterations						Discretionary Diploma	The Discretionary Ratio	KA2
		Yes	The ratio %	To some extent	The ratio%	NO	The ratio %			

No.	Phrases	Iterations						Discretionary Diploma	The Discretionary Ratio	KA2
		Yes	The ratio %	To some extent	The ratio%	NO	The ratio %			
1	The success of Iraqi football academies depends on digital marketing strategies in attracting talented players.	472	69	121	18	89	13	1747	85.39	397.23
2	Digital marketing contributes to improving the image of the academy and enhancing its brand.	490	72	175	26	17	2	1837	89.78	510.14
3	Social media platforms play a major role in promoting the services of Iraqi academies.	404	59	169	25	109	16	1659	81.09	213.86
4	Paid online advertising campaigns help academies reach a wider audience.	448	66	142	21	92	13	1720	84.07	326.79
5	Digital marketing is contributing to an increase in the number of players enrolled in academies.	488	72	131	19	63	9	1789	87.44	458.50
6	The use of visual content (Photos, Videos) enhances the attractiveness of academies for sponsors and players.	412	60	172	25	98	14	1678	82.01	237.06
7	The professional website of the academy helps to effectively display training programs and services.	425	62	197	29	60	9	1729	84.51	299.09
8	Digital marketing contributes to enhancing communication between academies and parents.	444	65	98	14	140	21	1668	81.52	313.63
9	Successful digital marketing strategies increase the Academy's chances of getting sponsorship contracts.	447	66	105	15	130	19	1681	82.16	319.76
10	The level of quality of published digital content affects the decision of players to join the Academy.	386	57	149	22	147	22	1603	78.35	166.12
11	Academies rely on the	227	33	170	25	235	34	1406	68.72	25.57

No.	Phrases	Iterations						Discretionary Diploma	The Discretionary Ratio	KA2
		Yes	The ratio %	To some extent	The ratio%	NO	The ratio %			
	analysis of digital data to understand the needs of the market and develop their services.									
12	Digital marketing helps Iraqi academies compete with regional and International Academies.	393	58	135	20	154	23	1603	78.35	181.89
13	Email marketing contributes to keeping players and parents up to date with the latest offers and programs.	274	40	182	27	226	33	1412	69.01	18.63
14	Digital marketing enhances players ' chances of professionalism by widely promoting their skills.	435	64	115	17	132	19	1667	81.48	285.19
15	Digital marketing helps to raise the level of professionalism in the management of academies and increase their attractiveness in the market.	296	43	168	25	218	32	1442	70.48	36.61

The tabular value of KA2 is at (0.05)= (5.99)

By studying table (10), it becomes clear that the relative weight of the third axis (the role of digital marketing in achieving the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies) ranged from (68.72% to 89.78%). It also turns out that the value of KA2 ranged between (18.63) and (510.14), which is statistically a function of all the terms of the third axis.

The results showed that the statement Number (2), which states that "digital marketing contributes to improving the image of the academy and enhancing its brand", received a response rate of (89.78%), which reflects a high awareness by the members of the research sample of the importance of digital marketing in developing the Academy's attendance and reputation.

This indicates a growing awareness of the importance of using digital tools and electronic platforms in highlighting the identity of the Academy, effective communication with the public, and expanding the base of those interested and beneficiaries of its services. This is a positive indicator of recent trends towards investing in digital marketing as a means of achieving competitive advantage in a sports environment that is witnessing increasing rates of competition and media openness.

McCalman (2022) also points out that the excellence of services, products, equipment, stadiums, amenities, and staff performance is significantly reflected in the overall performance and quality of the Football Academy, contributing to subscription renewal, continuity, and sustainability by the beneficiary customers (McCalman et al., 2022).

Schwiter (2021) consider that all elements of sports marketing are essential, but some of these elements play a more influential role in supporting competitive advantage by enhancing customer and beneficiary satisfaction. For example, effective pricing is one of the decisive factors, as it depends on an accurate understanding of the customer segment and their economic level, which helps in making offers tailored to their needs. It also highlights the importance of the element of "individuals" – that is, service providers-whose training and qualification is one of the key keys to improving the customer experience, thereby enhancing the organization's ability to stand out in a competitive market (Schwiter et al., 2021).

Nuriddinov (2023) argue that competitive advantage may arise as a result of internal or external factors, such as changes in customer needs or technological, economic, or legal changes. These factors may contribute to the creation of a competitive advantage for some organizations that are quick to react to these changes. For example, it can be argued that an enterprise that imported modern technology in demand on the market more quickly than others was able to achieve a competitive advantage thanks to its rapid response to technological developments to keep pace with progress (Nuriddinov, 2023).

Phrase number (5) came in the second place in terms of the highest response rates among the members of the research sample, which states that "digital marketing contributes to increasing the number of registered players in academies", by 87.44%. This result is attributed to the effective role that digital marketing plays in reaching a wider segment of parents and potential players, through advertising campaigns through social media, attractive visual content, and constant interaction with the audience. Digital marketing also contributes to enhancing public confidence in the Academy by displaying its achievements, training plans, and experiences of former players, which encourages the decision to enroll. This result indicates a growing awareness of the effectiveness of digital marketing as a strategic tool in attracting players and increasing the beneficiary base in Iraqi football academies.

Although the results of the axis showed a high level of responses from the research sample in general, phrase number (11) came in last place in terms of response rates, which stated: "academies rely on the analysis of digital data to understand the needs of the market and develop their services," with a percentage of (68.72%). This is due to the fact that many Iraqi football academies are still in the early stages of systematically using digital analysis tools, as some of them lack the appropriate technological structure or specialized data analysis cadres. This may also reflect a lack of awareness of the importance of data in guiding marketing decisions and developing services in accordance with market variables and the needs of players. This finding points to the need to strengthen digital culture within academies, and adopt analysis strategies based on accurate data to support competitive advantage and achieve effective and sustainable growth.

In general, the results of the third axis on the role of digital marketing in achieving the competitive advantage of Iraqi football academies indicate an increased awareness of the importance of digital marketing in promoting excellence and increasing the number of registered players. However, the actual reality reflects that this type of marketing has not been used to a large extent so far, which is a start and a hope to reach future best practices in this area. The results of the competitive advantage, based on the responses of the research sample, showed that achieving competitive advantage has become significantly related to excellence in the use of digital marketing, especially in Iraqi football academies.

Conclusions

Based on the research results, the methods used, and the limitations of the sample and data collection instruments, the researchers concluded that digital marketing in Iraqi football academies has been implemented through social media and official websites, although it is still limited. However, football academies in Iraq do not yet provide training programs that

meet international standards and are not fully supported by qualified coaches. Digital marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing the competitive advantage of the academy, including through improving the academy's image and brand, attracting talented players, and increasing the number of applicants.

Based on the research results and conclusions obtained, the researchers recommend that owners of football academies in Iraq be more active in utilizing social media to interact with the public and promote their programs, as well as developing more professional websites. They are also advised to adopt innovative digital marketing strategies such as SEO, email marketing, and paid advertising, and maintain intensive communication with players and parents through digital platforms. Meanwhile, the Iraqi Football Federation is advised to support the use of technology in training and performance analysis, conduct training for coaches on the latest digital methods, organize conferences and seminars to share experiences, and provide financial and technical support to academies in developing digital marketing strategies.

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