

eISSN: 2981-1554

Original Article (Qualitative)

Designing a Customer Relationship Management Development Model and the Role of Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Sports Clubs in Guilan Province

Seyed Sadegh Mir Jalali¹ , Masoud Imanzadeh² , Mehrdad Moharramzadeh³ ,
Robab Mokhtari¹ 

1- Department of sport management, Ard. C., Islamic Azad University, Ardabil, Iran

2- Department of Physical Education, Ardabil Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ardabil, Iran

3- Department of Sports Management, Ardabil Branch, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran

Receive:

16 September 2025

Revise:

21 October 2025

Accept:

12 November 2025

Keywords:

Organizational environment, customer relationship management, sustainable competitive advantage, sports clubs, interactive marketing

Abstract

The aim of this study is to design a customer relationship management development model and the role of sustainable competitive advantage in sports clubs in Gilan Province. The research method is applicable in terms of its purpose, qualitative in terms of its implementation method, and exploratory in nature. The statistical population of the study includes 20 faculty members of universities in the field of sports management and managers of sports clubs in Gilan Province, selected using theoretical sampling. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. In analyzing the data, the grounded data method was used in the form of open, axial and selective coding. The results of the study showed that 469 indicators can be effective in customer relationship management with an emphasis on sustainable competitive advantage in sports clubs in Gilan Province. Then, in axial coding, the indicators were classified into 105 concepts and 41 categories. The data obtained from the interview was conducted with a grounded theory approach. The results showed that seven main categories including marketing, organizational environment, infrastructure, performance, management and planning, service quality and relationship management are important for optimizing the customer relationship management system to develop customer relationship management with an emphasis on sustainable competitive advantage. Sports club managers can use the identified symbols, concepts and categories in their future planning to communicate effectively with customers.

Please cite this article as (APA): Mir Jalali, S. S., Imanzadeh, M., Moharramzadeh, M. and Mokhtari, R. (2025). Designing a Customer Relationship Management Development Model and the Role of Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Sports Clubs in Guilan Province. *Journal of New Approaches in Management and Marketing*, 4(3), 229-251.



<https://doi.org/10.22034/jnamm.2026.566724.1226>



Authors retain the copyright and full publishing rights.

Published by Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business. This article is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Publisher: Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

Corresponding Author: Masoud Imanzadeh

Email: masoud952@iau.ac.ir

Extended Abstract

Introduction

In the era of globalization, the business world is facing different sports clubs in different business areas. In order for us to be able to continuously examine them; sports clubs must have the ability to compete for their survival (Mohammed et al., 2024). This competition must be provided using quality services and reasonable prices. If clubs cannot be successful in this market, they will not be able to survive in today's dynamic market (Ashill et al., 2021). To stay competitive, sports clubs must focus on their key and profitable customers. One of the techniques that help sports clubs in this regard is customer relationship management, which strengthens customer relationships (Bahramzadeh & Miskin Nawaz, 2025). Today, with the increasing competition among sports clubs, the importance of using new technologies to identify customers and measure the value of each customer to the organization has become more apparent than ever (Wagh & Shahare, 2024). Currently, how to attract and retain customers has become the most important issue for sports clubs (Alenazi & Alanazi, 2023). Sports clubs have realized that customers have different economic values and are adapting their customer communication strategy accordingly (Ali et al., 2023).

In modern society, customer relationship management has become an essential part of marketing strategies, as it helps to understand customer needs and better manage relationships with them (Gamage et al., 2023). The goal of customer relationship management is to retain current customers, attract new customers, and reduce marketing and customer service costs (Salehi et al., 2022). Therefore, sports clubs are increasingly paying attention to technologies as a way to overcome obstacles to the effective implementation of customer relationship management plans (Harrigan et al., 2023). Relationship quality is a strategy for attracting, maintaining, and increasing customer relationships, which consists of three factors: satisfaction, trust, and commitment. In today's business environments, which are characterized by increased competition, no business; whether manufacturing, service, etc., can continue its journey without satisfied and loyal customers. More important than that, the demands and expectations of consumers are increasing day by day and this trend will be accompanied by increasing growth (Kurniawan et al., 2025). Therefore, this research seeks to answer the question: How is the design of the customer relationship management development model and the role of sustainable competitive advantage in sports clubs in Gilan province?

Theoretical framework

Customer relationship management

Customer relationship management includes collecting, analyzing data, and using this information to improve customer experience and increase their loyalty. In this regard, the use of customer relationship management systems allows organizations to interact with customers in a more personal and effective way (Hossain et al., 2020).

Sustainable competitive advantage

Competitive advantage is the ability of a company to achieve a superior market position. Competitive advantage includes a set of factors or capabilities that consistently enable a company to perform better than its competitors and is not easily imitable by competitors. Recent definitions of sustainable competitive advantage emphasize concepts such as information and communication technology, innovation, value creation, and entrepreneurial marketing in conjunction with traditional concepts of competitive advantage in the present century. Sustainable competitive advantage emphasizes a set of distinctive characteristics of the organization that cannot be easily copied and is also consistent with economic, social, and environmental goals (Denga et al., 2022).

Asadi et al. (2025) investigated the identification of primary elements and components affecting electronic customer relationship management. The results showed that variables related to causal factors; including human factors; technology factors; support factors; and contextual factors including cultural factors and industry factors; organizational factors including organization design factors and customer factors; were identified and categorized as variables affecting electronic customer relationship management. Also, satisfaction and loyalty were identified as the consequences of using electronic customer relationship management. (Emami et al., 2025) investigated the design of an artificial intelligence-based customer relationship management model in digital marketing of services in the health tourism industry. The results of the study showed that the causal conditions in the study included promoting market competition, improving relationships, automatic data analysis, empowerment, and contextual conditions including customer data management, intelligent services. Also, the intervening conditions included efficient planning, saving resources, and managing customer behavior. The strategies in the research include solving the integration problem, solving the information management problem, solving the planning problems, and the outcomes include increasing customer satisfaction, increasing financial strength, customer loyalty, and saving time. The results of structural equations show that the dimensions are well loaded on the research variables and can provide a suitable description of the variables.

Research Methodology

The research method is applicable in terms of its purpose, qualitative in terms of its implementation method, and exploratory in nature. The statistical population of the research includes 20 university faculty members in the field of sports management and sports club managers in Gilan province, selected by theoretical sampling. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data.

Research findings

In analyzing the data, the data-driven method was used in the form of open, axial, and selective coding. The results of the study showed that 469 indicators can be effective in customer relationship management with an emphasis on sustainable competitive advantage in sports clubs in Gilan province. Then, the indicators were classified into 105 concepts and 41 categories in the axial coding. The data obtained from the interview were conducted with a grounded theory approach. The results showed that seven main categories including marketing, organizational environment, infrastructure, performance, management and planning, service quality and communication management are important for optimizing the customer relationship management system for developing customer relationship management with an emphasis on sustainable competitive advantage. Sports club managers can use the indicators, concepts and categories identified in their future planning for effective communication with customers.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of designing a customer relationship management development model and the role of sustainable competitive advantage in sports clubs in Guilan province. The results of this research are aligned with the results of Asadi et al. (2025), Emami et al. (2025), Dermawan Sembiring et al. (2025), Awad & Muhanad (2024), Hosseini et al. (2024), Nikbin (2023), Hamdi et al. (2023), Bagherian Kasegari & Kamali Koloochani (2023), Arabshahi & Abbaszadehgaretekan (2023), Ashurzadeh Yasuri et

al. (2022), Heydari et al. (2021), Sardjono et al. (2021), Bakhtiari & Bakhtiari (2020), Amer & Abdulwahhab (2020), and Sun (2020).

Hosseini et al. (2024) showed that the majority of variables have a positive and significant effect on the level of profitability, and the influence of variables has increased with the movement from high prosperity to deep recession. As a result, it can be said that profitability in a recession has a higher sensitivity to explanatory variables. Amer & Abdulwahhab (2020) showed that customer satisfaction and customer value have a positive and significant relationship with competitive advantage strategies such as cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy, and focus strategy. These results indicate that increasing interest in eliminating customer relationship management will increase competitive advantage in telecommunications companies.

According to the results of the study, it is suggested:

By introducing information technology to companies under the protection of customer relationship management, it is proposed that a basis be provided for traditional companies to move towards smart and knowledge-based companies and reduce information processing costs by using customer relationship management software.