

## Mechanism for Investing in Sponsorship Rights for Youth Football Players in Professional Clubs.

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### ABSTRACT

*The research aims to develop mechanisms for investing in the sponsorship rights of young football players for professional clubs in Iraq by identifying (the importance of nurturing and developing talented people in football, applying scientific innovations in developing and nurturing talent to create young professional players in football in a professional manner and culture, motivating investors to establish investment companies in the field Sponsoring and nurturing football players in sports bodies and academies, commercial and media rights in nurturing and nurturing talent in football, the role of the state in providing development and investment projects, and ways and means of expanding the base for discovering and selecting talent in football. The researcher used the descriptive approach, and the research sample included a sample of (103) members of the boards of directors of some clubs, some employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and a group of investors and businessmen interested in the sports field. One of the most important results was increasing the technical level of the national teams and helping to develop the clubs, providing external professional training for outstanding talents upon reaching the permissible age. To transfer abroad, 18 years through a marketing network to be supportive of the Iraqi teams*

Keywords: Investment; Sponsorship Right; Professional Clubs.

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan mekanisme untuk berinvestasi dalam hak sponsor pemain sepak bola muda untuk klub profesional di Irak dengan mengidentifikasi (pentingnya memelihara dan mengembangkan orang-orang berbakat dalam sepak bola, menerapkan inovasi ilmiah dalam mengembangkan dan memelihara bakat untuk menciptakan pemain profesional muda dalam sepak bola dengan cara dan budaya profesional, memotivasi investor untuk mendirikan perusahaan investasi di lapangan. Mensponsori dan memelihara pemain sepak bola dalam olahraga badan dan

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akademi, hak komersial dan media dalam memelihara dan memelihara bakat dalam sepak bola, peran negara dalam menyediakan proyek pengembangan dan investasi, dan cara dan sarana untuk memperluas basis untuk menemukan dan memilih bakat dalam sepak bola. Peneliti menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif, dan sampel penelitian mencakup sampel (103) anggota direksi beberapa klub, beberapa karyawan Kementerian Pemuda dan Olahraga, dan sekelompok investor dan pengusaha yang tertarik pada bidang olahraga. Salah satu hasil yang paling penting adalah meningkatkan tingkat teknis tim nasional dan membantu mengembangkan klub, memberikan pelatihan profesional eksternal untuk talenta luar biasa setelah mencapai usia yang diizinkan. Untuk pindah ke luar negeri, 18 tahun melalui jaringan pemasaran untuk mendukung tim Irak

Kata Kunci: Investasi; Hak Sponsor; Klub Profesional.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The sports field represents an appropriate arena for sponsorship because it reaches a wide segment of the public. Regardless of the motives and objectives behind practicing sports, as well as the motives and goals of sports sponsorship, sports sponsorship constitutes significant financial support within the sports sector (Mahmoudabadi et al., 2019; Mlakar et al., 2024). Despite the differences in reasons for practicing sports some engage in sports purely for the sake of sport itself, while others practice it for competition, winning events, and achieving moral and material gains (Kilpatrick et al., 2005; Li & Saibon, 2025).

Sports sponsorship represents a fundamental pillar for those who practice sport for its own sake, as well as for those who practice sport in pursuit of moral and material gains. For sports sponsorship to have a positive impact on sport and athletes, it is essential to establish frameworks, regulations, and legal legislation that provide legal protection for both athletes and those involved in the process of sports sponsorship (Özer et al., 2025).

Sport has come to be managed from an industrial perspective, and the term sports industry has become widely used. Major corporations have entered the world of sport to open new markets that were not previously available. Sport has become a rich medium for promotion and marketing, and sports heroes have appeared at the forefront of commercial advertisements. According to a recent statistic by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the annual income of the sports sector reached 212.5 billion US dollars, generated from advertising, sponsorship rights, the internet, publishing, and video (Darwish & Hassanein, 2013: 5).

Sport sometimes constitutes an important source of income for the national economy if it is invested in properly. Many developed countries have noted that certain types of sports can be one of the pillars of tourism activity. For sports activity to keep pace with development processes, investment and sponsorship must be regarded as key means of development and financing for sport. To achieve this, investment procedures and processes must be facilitated and restrictions lifted, until a stage is reached where investment and sponsorship become the most important sources of funding for most sports expenditures ([www.thawra.alwehada.sy](http://www.thawra.alwehada.sy)).

Discussion of the future of sports economics now requires analyzing sports business or the sports market, which attracts increasing amounts of capital through

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sponsorship rights, television and radio broadcasting rights, spectatorship, professional sports, competitions, and global sporting events. All of the above represents only a small part of the overall sports market. The revenues of sports clubs have increased because of their reliance on sports sponsorship rights. Despite the financial crisis in 2008, the value of sports clubs rose; for example, the value of FC Barcelona increased by approximately 22%, the value of Manchester United reached 1.416 billion US dollars, and the value of Arsenal reached 909 million euros (Al-Alqami, 2012: 16).

Sports investment is essential in football to maintain its value and level. It has many fields, including player marketing, club merchandise, broadcasting rights, and others. This means that the availability of multiple investment opportunities will generate substantial funds, enabling clubs to compete with other clubs (Al-Mahrouqi, 2013: 5).

The development of football has contributed significantly to the development of the concept of sports sponsorship and has strengthened the link between sponsors and sporting events. The connection between football and technology has also helped to expand its global reach. Statistics confirm that one billion people work directly or indirectly in football, and the game has become an integral part of the fabric of societies (Darwish, 2013: 105).

For the future of football, it is imperative to establish a broad base of football players who possess the necessary skills and motivation to become professional players. Therefore, youth development programs must be encouraged to attract a larger number of educated young people and girls to football not only those who play the game, but also those who support it. According to the sporting criteria of professional club licensing regulations established by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), this includes investing in youth programs up to higher levels, promoting sports culture, supporting uneducated young players, providing medical care for youth players, and promoting fair play on the field (Zhang, 2024).

The primary fundamental advantage of the sporting criterion is the annual production of football talents for first teams within clubs. Naturally, it becomes easier and faster for these players to be integrated into first-team squads, as they have partially trained with them, become familiar with their tactics, and communicate in the same footballing language; they are youth players who lack only experience. Moreover, under FIFA's transfer system, clubs that have trained players under the age of 23 who later transfer to other clubs are entitled to financial compensation. Thus, clubs can generate financial returns on their investments by training youth and implementing programs that improve relationships and mutual respect among coaches, administrators, and players. On the other hand, disciplinary sanctions and fines may also be reduced (Al-Mahrouqi, 2013: 229).

In this context, Articles 20 and 21 of the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players issued by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) stipulate that training compensation must be paid to the former club or clubs that trained the player when the player signs his first contract as a professional, and on each occasion the player is transferred as a professional until the end of the season in which he reaches the age of twenty-three. The obligation to pay training compensation is fulfilled once the transfer is completed, whether during the term of the contract or upon its expiration. If a professional player is transferred before the expiry date of his contract, any club that

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has contributed to his training, qualification, preparation, and development is entitled to receive a percentage of the compensation paid to the player's former club.

Recently, the researcher has observed a significant increase within the Iraqi sports community in the establishment of private academies responsible for the care and development of football players. In addition, investment companies have emerged that sponsor these academies, invest in talented players, and provide proper care and development to reach the highest levels, while also working to market these players at both the local and international levels (Mashhoot et al., 2025).

At the same time, private football academies affiliated with certain clubs have begun to appear, conducting trials for youth players under the names of major clubs within an illegal, unregulated, and unauthorized framework, without being licensed by the state or its representative in this matter, namely the Football Association. The latter should play a central role in granting appropriate licenses to these private academies and to the branches of club academies, and they must be monitored by the Association in a legitimate and regulated manner (Skille et al., 2023). Under the professional system, football has become an investment project managed with an economic mindset aimed at achieving financial profits, especially after the implementation of the professional league system, which works to discover and nurture athletically talented players. In addition, professional clubs must comply with the international standards for professional club licensing established by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) (Chatziparaskevas et al., 2024; Holzmayer & Schmidt, 2020). The sporting criterion within these standards emphasizes the necessity of paying due attention to youth players in terms of care and training across all age categories, which the applicant for a license undertakes to implement and must substantiate with information and documentation. This includes the development and training of promising players, as well as youth development programs covering administrative and technical aspects and infrastructure, in addition to providing medical services and organizing their contracts.

Such programs benefit the club through the compensation it receives for the transfer of players under the age of 23 to professional clubs. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish different age categories within the youth sector. From this perspective, the idea of this research emerged to link investment-oriented thinking with the discovery, care, and development of talented youth football players, in line with the international requirements of professional club licensing standards, through achieving the objectives of the research.

Research Questions: 1) What is the importance of nurturing and developing talented players in football?. 2) What are the scientific innovations in the development and care of talent for producing professional youth football players using a professional approach and culture?. 3) What are the ways to encourage investors to establish investment companies in the field of nurturing and developing football players within sports organizations and academies?. 4) What are the commercial and media rights involved in the sponsorship and development of talent in football?. 5) What is the role of the state in providing developmental and investment projects, and the methods and means of expanding the base for discovering and selecting football talent?

The research aims to establish mechanisms for investing sponsorship rights for youth football players in professional clubs in Iraq by identifying the following:

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1) The importance of nurturing and developing talented individuals in football. 2) Applying scientific innovations in the development and care of talent in order to produce professional youth football players using a professional approach and culture. 3) Encouraging investors to establish investment companies in the field of nurturing and developing football players within sports organizations and academies. 4) Commercial and media rights in the sponsorship and development of talent in football. 5) The role of the state in providing developmental and investment projects, as well as the methods and means of expanding the base for discovering and selecting football talent.

## METHOD

The researcher used the descriptive method with a survey approach, as it is suitable for the nature of the study. A random sample of 103 individuals was selected from the boards of directors of the following clubs: Al-Zawraa, Al-Jawiya, Al-Shorta, Al-Talaba, Erbil, Al-Minaa, and Al-Karkh, in addition to some employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and a group of investors and businesspeople interested in the sports field. The sample was divided into: (1) Exploratory Study Sample of 23 individuals for standardizing the questionnaire; and (2) Main Study Sample of 80 individuals for applying the research questionnaire.

**Table 1.** Total Research Sample Distributed According to Exploratory and Main Samples

Category	Total N	Exploratory N	%	Main N	%
Board members of clubs (Al-Zawraa, Al-Jawiya, Al-Shorta, Al-Talaba, Erbil, Al-Minaa, Al-Karkh)	63	15	23.81%	48	76.19%
Employees of Ministry of Youth and Sports	23	5	21.74%	18	78.26%
Businessmen and investors in the sports field	17	3	17.65%	14	82.35%
Total	103	23	22.33%	80	77.67%

The researcher designed a questionnaire consisting of five main axes with 57 items: Axis 1 (importance of caring for and developing talented footballers, 10 items); Axis 2 (applying scientific innovations in developing and nurturing talent, 13 items); Axis 3 (encouraging investors to establish investment companies, 14 items); Axis 4 (commercial and media rights in nurturing and developing talent, 6 items); and Axis 5 (role of the state in providing development and investment projects, 14 items). The questionnaire was validated by 10 specialized experts (PhD holders in Sports Management) with approval rates between 80% and 100%. Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients ranging from 0.794 to 0.901. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 2020, employing percentage, Pearson correlation, Cronbach's Alpha, arithmetic mean, and chi-square test.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

Scientific Validity of the Questionnaire:

Validity:

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The researcher presented the axes to a group of specialized experts in the field of sports management, all of whom hold a PhD in Public Administration or Sports Management. The total number of experts was (10), to seek their opinions on the appropriateness of the axes and proposed items, and to assess their relevance in achieving the objectives of the research.

The results indicated that the experts agreed on the validity of the axes designed by the researcher, with approval rates ranging between 80% and 100%. Therefore, no modifications were made to the axes or items of the questionnaire.

Internal Consistency Validity:

The validity of the questionnaire items was verified by calculating the correlation coefficient between the score of each item and the total score of the questionnaire, as illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Correlation Coefficient Between the Score of Each Item and The Score of The Axis to Which the Item Belongs.

S	Axis	Series of phrases	Co. phrases	Correlation coefficient between the statement and the axis degree	Correlation coefficient between the axis and the total score of the questionnaire
1	First axis: The importance of nurturing and developing talented footballers	1-10	10	-0.874 0.565	0.754
2	The second axis: applying scientific innovations in developing and nurturing talent to create professional young footballers with a professional style and culture	11-23	13	-0.802 0.685	0.801
3	Third axis: Encouraging investors to establish investment companies in the field of sponsoring and nurturing football players in sports bodies and academies	24-37	14	-0.913 0.723	0.836
4	Fourth axis: Commercial and media rights in nurturing and developing football talent	38-43	6	-0.901 0.574	0.695
5	Fifth axis: The state's role in providing development and investment projects,	44-57	14	-0.894 0.632	0.791

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and ways and means of  
expanding the base for  
discovering and selecting  
football talent

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Based on the results of the analysis in Table 2, the correlation coefficient between the score of each item and the axis score it represents shows a high and positive range of values in all dimensions. On the first axis, namely the importance of coaching and developing the talent of football players, the correlation coefficient of the item ranged from 0.565 to 0.874, with the correlation between the axis and the total score of the questionnaire being 0.754. These values indicate a strong level of internal consistency, so that each statement in this axis has a significant contribution in representing the construct of talent development conceptually and empirically.

The second axis, which emphasizes the application of scientific innovation in the development of talents towards professionalism, shows a range of item correlations between 0.685 and 0.802, as well as an axis correlation with a total score of 0.801. This high coefficient indicates that the dimension of scientific innovation is very closely related to the overall research construct. These findings are in line with previous studies in sports management that the integration of sport science, training technology, and data-driven approaches are key determinants in shaping competitive and professionally oriented young players.

On the third axis, which is related to the encouragement of investors to build investment companies in the field of football coaching, the highest item correlation range is obtained, which is 0.723–0.913, with the axis correlation to the total score of 0.836. This value indicates a very strong relationship and indicates that the investment aspect has a dominant contribution in the overall talent development model. Theoretically, these findings support the view that the sustainability of modern sports coaching is heavily influenced by private sector involvement and professional funding mechanisms.

The fourth axis that deals with commercial and media rights shows a range of item correlations between 0.574 to 0.901, with a correlation to the total score of 0.695. Although slightly lower than the rest of the axis, it remains in the strong category. This shows that the dimension of commercialization and media exposure remains an important element in the football coaching ecosystem, especially in creating economic added value and increasing the visibility of young talents.

Meanwhile, the fifth axis highlighting the role of the state in the development of investment projects and the expansion of the talent search base showed a correlation range of 0.632–0.894 with a correlation to the total score of 0.791. These results confirm that public policy, infrastructure, and regulatory support are closely related to the overall coaching system. Previous studies have also shown that structured state interventions can expand access to coaching and create a more equitable talent selection system.

#### Reliability:

Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha. Table (3): Reliability coefficients of the questionnaire axes.

**Table 3.** Reliability coefficients of the questionnaire axes.

S	Axis	Co. phrases	Axis stability	Form stability
1	Axis 1: The importance of nurturing and developing football talents	10	0.901	
2	The second axis: applying scientific innovations in developing and nurturing talent to create professional young footballers with a professional style and culture	13	0.849	
3	Third axis: Encouraging investors to establish investment companies in the field of sponsoring and nurturing football players in sports bodies and academies	14	0.794	0.904
4	Axis Four: Commercial and media rights in nurturing and developing football talent	6	0.836	
5	Fifth axis: The state's role in providing development and investment projects and ways and means of expanding the base for discovering and selecting football talent	14	0.794	

Based on the results in Table 3, the reliability coefficient of each axis of the questionnaire shows a high level of stability. In the first axis, namely the importance of coaching and developing football talent, a stability coefficient of 0.901 with form stability of 0.904 was obtained. This value is well above the generally accepted minimum limit in social research ( $\geq 0.70$ ), so it can be categorized as having very high reliability. This indicates that the instrument in this dimension is consistent in measuring the same construct repeatedly and is relatively free from random measurement errors.

The second axis which focuses on the application of scientific innovation in talent development shows a reliability coefficient of 0.849. This value indicates a strong level of internal consistency and shows that the indicators in the axis are in stable relationships with each other. Methodologically, the high reliability of the dimension of scientific innovation reinforces the conceptual validity that the science and technology-based approach is a systematically measurable construct in the context of the development of young professionals.

In the third axis, which is related to the investment incentive in football coaching, a reliability coefficient of 0.794 is obtained. Although slightly lower than the previous two axes, it remains in the reliable category. This shows that the statements in the investment dimension have sufficient consistency in describing the role of the private sector and professional financing models in the sports coaching system.

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The fourth axis, which deals with commercial and media rights, has a reliability coefficient of 0.836. This value shows that the dimensions of commercialization and media exposure are a stable and consistently measurable construct. In the context of the modern sports industry, media aspects and commercial rights are indeed an integral part of the coaching system, so the consistency of the instruments in this dimension reinforces their empirical relevance.

The fifth axis highlighting the role of the state in the development of investment projects and the expansion of the talent search base showed a reliability coefficient of 0.794. This value confirms that indicators related to public policy, infrastructure support, and regulation have a strong uniformity in measuring the construction of the state's role. This stability is important given that policy dimensions are often complex and multidimensional.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results from Axis One align with Al-Kurdi (2014), who identified key economic fields related to the implementation of the Egyptian Professional Clubs League and proposed general frameworks to maximize the economic return from applying the league. The results of Farouk (2009) also indicated that sports sponsorship positively affects the components of advancing Egyptian sports. The high agreement rates across all items of this axis confirm that club officials, government representatives, and investors in the Iraqi sports context share a unified vision of the importance of youth development as both a sporting and financial priority.

The findings of Axis Two are supported by Ahmed Abdel Fattah (2013), which highlighted the availability of standards for club professionalism including coaching license requirements from the African Football Confederation, and emphasized the role of sports satellite channels in helping the public and players understand rules and new amendments in football. The strong endorsement of scientific talent classification and professional lifestyle acculturation from early ages reflects global best practices in elite player development.

For Axis Three, Mohamed Abdullah (2011) emphasized the importance of unifying the vision of sponsorship between the sponsoring company and the sports club before implementing a sponsorship program and establishing laws and regulations for sports sponsorship that ensure the rights of the sponsor, the club, and all parties involved in the sponsorship contract. The relatively lower agreement (75%) on establishing an annual investor forum reflects a practical gap in current Iraqi sports governance that this research aims to address.

The study by Mohamed Rifaat Salem Al-Mahrouqi (2013) recommended separating the football activity budget from other sports activities within the club, establishing a professional clubs association, and promoting a culture of sports investment through all media outlets. The overwhelming agreement on contractual and media rights in Axis Four confirms that stakeholders recognize the legal infrastructure as a prerequisite for sustainable sports investment in Iraq.

The results of Buhler (2006) confirm the importance of sponsorship, its effect on income, the motivations and objectives of sponsoring entities, and the significance of their relationship with clubs. The study also provided analyses of sponsorship and marketing in the league and identified companies interested in entering the professional

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football sponsorship market in England and Germany. These international findings strongly parallel the aspirations of Iraqi football stakeholders reflected in Axis Five results, underscoring the universality of the proposed mechanisms.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research establishes the following key mechanisms for investing sponsorship rights for youth football players in professional Iraqi clubs: (1) Enhancing the technical level of national teams and increasing club financial resources through sponsorship and training compensation from player transfers. (2) Providing external professional opportunities for elite talents at age 18 through a marketing network, classifying and developing promising talents scientifically, ensuring coaches hold certified accreditations, and applying the latest technological systems in training. (3) Attracting sponsors and investment companies, protecting investments through legislation, activating public-private sector partnerships, and highlighting successful global sports investment models. (4) Drawing up written contracts for all youth player categories covering all commercial rights, intellectual property rights, and media rights, documented with the football association. (5) Establishing fixed-term contract systems for youth players, creating a national framework for youth football development, and seeking cooperation with major European clubs through professional contracts for youth players.

It is recommended that officials of sports clubs and the Iraqi Football Association: (1) organize seminars on sports investment and marketing culture under the supervision of specialists in marketing, investment, and contract drafting to encourage companies and businesspeople to enter the field of sports investment and development; (2) assign a dedicated management unit within the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Iraqi Football Association to oversee private academies and investment companies operating in football by monitoring the required licenses and providing the necessary resources to meet operational standards; and (3) establish an integrated organization to discover talent, provide sponsorship and development rights, invest in them scientifically, and equip them with the best marketing strategies locally, regionally, and internationally.

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