

Research Methodologies in Sport Management

James Skinner

Introduction

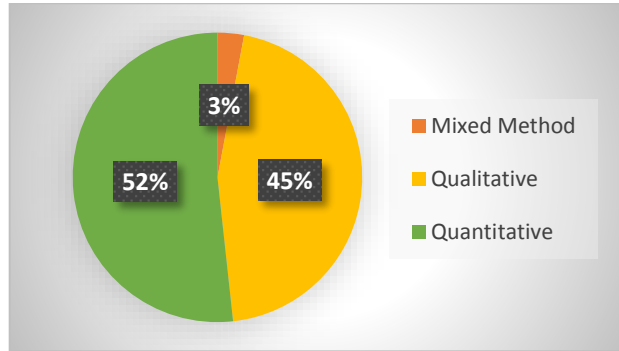
This section provides a summary of the ten sport journals consistent with the previous two volumes of Sport Management Digest. The papers were published between January and June 2022. Table 1 summarises the methodological approaches used in the respective journals:

Table 1: Summary of Methodological Approaches

Journals	Mixed	Qualitative	Quantitative	Total
Communication & Sport	-	17 (incl. three editorial essays)	12	29
European Sport Management Quarterly (excl. one Introduction)	-	5	17	22
International Journal of Sport Finance	-	-	8	8
International Journal of Sport Marketing and Sponsorship	-	5	17	22
International Journal of Sport Communication	1	13 (incl. five book reviews)	7	21
International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics	4	15	4	23
Journal of Global Sport Management	-	10	7	17
Journal of Sport Economics	-	2 (incl. one commentary and one response)	14	16
Journal of Sport Management (excl. one Introduction and one Lecture)	1	17 (incl. one perspective)	11	29
Sport Management Review	-	8	8	16
Overall Total	6	92	105	203

Similar to the previous Sport Management Digest volumes, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches is relatively balanced, though a greater presence of quantitative approaches is apparent in this volume, as seen in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Distribution of Methodological Approaches



Again, similar to the previous reviews, a mixed method design was limited in its application. The methodological approaches employed a variety of data collection and analysis techniques, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

Quantitative Approaches	Qualitative Approaches
Survey	(Semi-Structured) Interviews
Structural Equation Modelling	Content Analysis
Regression Analysis	Case Study
Experimental Study	Focus Group
Event Study	Thematic Analysis
Content Analysis	Ethnography
	Conceptual Review

From the above-mentioned journals, eight papers were selected for a detailed discussion. Another eight papers were additionally reviewed and an annotated bibliography has been created and is presented at the conclusion of the review.

Fair go? Indigenous Rugby League Players and the Racial Exclusion of the Australian National Anthem

In this Communication & Sport, 10(1) article, Cleland and colleagues (2022) investigated the implications of publicised national anthem protests by several Indigenous rugby league players in Australia. The foundation of the study is based on Australian society’s “fair go” principle which suggests that everyone is entitled to fairness by way of shared opportunity. This includes education, health, as well as social security and underpins a society that is not characterised by differences in wealth and living standards (Herscovitch, 2013).

In relation to the national anthem protests among Indigenous rugby players, the article focussed on two key moments: (1) the decision by the Australian National Rugby League (NRL) to include an alternative anthem alongside the national anthem during the Indigenous Round of matches in 2017 and (2) high-profile silent protests by Indigenous players during the playing of the national anthem at a game between the Indigenous All Stars of Australia and the Maori All Stars of New Zealand in February 2019, followed by similar actions in the three-match State of Origin series between Queensland and New South Wales in June/July 2019. With these two key moments, the authors aimed to evaluate the players' reasoning for the protests as well as reactions by commentators which ultimately could frame a debate around reforming the Australian national anthem.

The research design applied a critical race theory framework to do Indigenous players justice. The aim of the study was to listen and interpret the reasons behind the protests. The authors undertook an online search of relevant "national anthem" material covering the period from the creation of the Recognition in Anthem Project (RAP) in 2017 through to the high-profile national anthem protests that took place during 2019— specifically, the Indigenous All Stars game and the State of Origin series. The authors identified 74 online media reports taken from a variety of regional, national, and international media organisations, alongside the NRL's media department and the National Indigenous Television service. The reports covered the perspectives of players and rugby league officials as well as responses to the protests by journalists and politicians.

The reports were analysed by employing a textual analysis method, as it allowed them to explore and interpret implicit as well as explicit meanings within textual data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The authors used an inductive approach to open coding across first and second-order phases and identified thematic patterns and commonalities within the narrative of the reports (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Their process resulted in two dominant themes: (1) a racially exclusive national anthem and (2) responses to the player-led protests. The insightful findings, linked to the themes, indicated that the voices of Indigenous athletes in Australia are important in raising concerns about nationalist rituals and symbols that subjugate Aboriginal peoples.

Understanding Sport Sponsorship Decision-Making

In their *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 22(3) article, Schoenberner and colleagues (2022) investigated in the "Understanding sport sponsorship decision-making – an exploration of the roles and power bases in the sponsors' buying center" the roles of individuals involved in sponsorship decision-making and their power bases. The authors argue that sponsorship decision-making as group decision-making is largely underresearched despite the fact that sponsorship represents a vital revenue stream for sports organisations and sponsoring companies (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019). Indeed, sponsors invest large amounts annually in sponsorships, particularly in sport (IEG, 2018a). The authors highlighted that sponsorship decisions tend to be group decisions which involves the contribution and collaboration of several individuals. They, therefore, stressed the importance to investigate sponsorship decision-making as a group decision-making process.

Given the lack of studies, the authors employed a qualitative Delphi study method which is particularly useful for an exploratory nature of research (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). Day and Bobeva (2005, p. 103) defined the Delphi technique as 'a structured group communication method for soliciting expert opinion about complex problems or novel ideas, through the use of a series of questionnaires and controlled feedback'.

The authors designed the data collection iteratively and introduced the study with 17 semi-structured interviews. Their aggregated results were edited graphically and were returned to the participants as part of their second iteration. In the first round of data collection an online questionnaire with open-response questions was utilised and participants evaluated the results of the interviews. Following this round, the participants reached consensus about the roles involved in sponsorship decision-making and added no further roles. The authors therefore stopped the data collection with this sample. For their third iteration, they recruited another, independent sample as they aimed to increase the confirmability of the research by discussing the first-round interview results with unbiased members of the research population (Day & Bobeva, 2005). The authors again conducted semi-structured interviews and followed the same procedure as in the first round for their data analysis.

Their results indicated that sponsorship decision-making processes are guided by eight different roles: deciders, users, coordinators, experts, signatories, negotiators, initiators, and networkers. Their findings also revealed that individuals occupying the various roles fulfil different tasks and rely on different power bases.

An Ethnography of Basketball as a Communicative Act of Resilience

In his research published in the *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 15(2), Higgins explored resilience as a characteristic developed through basketball and its culture. His main goal was to better understand 1) What communication processes can be extracted from the way basketball participants express resilience and 2) How the basketball culture can serve as a site for resilience, as extracted from the expressions of basketball participants. Higgins suggested that participation in sport creates culturally specific habits of mind, judgment, and decision making (Blanchard, 1974; McLaughlin, 2008) which should encourage researchers to better understand how individuals in professional sport develop resilience as part of their socialisation in the respective environment.

He employed an exploratory ethnographic research design utilising purposive sampling to ensure participants were of particular and specific characteristics of a population (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The study focussed on professional basketball players or coaches. The sample consisted of 12 professional basketball players ($n = 8$) and coaches ($n = 4$), all playing basketball at the collegiate level. All participants were from a large city in the Southwest of the United States. At the time of the data collection, all participants, predominately male (11) were actively playing or coaching and all participants had been actively doing so for at least the previous 5 years, this was to ensure they had considerable experience within the basketball culture.

The author conducted 12 in-depth interviews to understand participants' own experiences of resilience. The interview covered questions such as: "Tell me about your basketball career"; "What do you think of the idea that basketball has its own culture?" and "What are some of the strengths of basketball culture?" Questions about resilience included: "Tell me about a difficult situation you had to overcome"; "What did you do to recover or bounce back?" and "What is resilience to you?". Higgins aim was to explore the individual experiences of resilience, what they did to overcome their adversity, and how they understand resilience as members of basketball culture.

The data was coded using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify key elements of basketball culture. The findings indicated that basketball culture limits discourse regarding adversity. The study therefore concluded that basketball players and coaches used their participation in basketball as an adaptive response to communicatively develop resilience.

Athletes' Subjective Evaluations of the Implementation of Dual Career Measures

Herold and colleagues paper in the *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 14(1) investigated athletes' perception of Dual Career (DC) environments. According to authors, DC environments of elite athletes is a topic that has received significant attention recently given its complexity (e.g., European Commission 2012, European Athletes 2016, Stambulova and Wylleman 2019, Stambulova et al. 2020). Herold et. Al, highlighted that here is a need to generate a holistic understanding of athlete environments to ensure athletes are appropriately supported.

Athletes face intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints when pursuing high-performance sport and a professional career (education and vocation). In response to these constraints, the 'EU Guidelines on Dual Career' were developed that support athletes' dual careers in European Union countries. To better understand athletes' perceptions of the provided support, the authors employed a qualitative research design to provide insights into the subjective and multiple realities as perceived by elite athletes. By doing so, they applied a social constructivist perspective to gain a broad understanding of how different athletes evaluate the implementations of the EU Guidelines' in their respective countries.

To assist the data collection, the authors developed an interview script based on four evaluation domains (1) programme theory and design, (2) programme process, (3) programme impact and (4) programme efficiency (Rossi et al. 2019). In total, they conducted 21 semi-structured interviews with professional athletes (12 male and 9 female) from six different EU countries. The athletes pursued different sports and were in various different stages of their athletic careers. Interview questions included: 'Do national DC guidelines exist? Do you attend a DC programme (if yes, how does it operate)? Do you receive specific funding (if yes, who is the funding entity)?'

The data analysis was guided by a structured qualitative content analysis. The findings indicated that athletes are struggling with their DCs particularly in relation to balancing their resources appropriately. The authors therefore concluded that EU DC Guidelines were insufficiently implemented. In particular, they noted the lack of coordinated governmental support. The authors claimed that this is the first international academic study assessing the EU Guidelines' implementation of DC athletes in different countries and should thus encourage EU policymakers and national authorities to facilitate more effective dual career environments.

Predicting Future Use Intention of Fitness Apps

In her *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship* 23(2) article "Predicting future use intention of fitness apps among fitness app users in the United Kingdom: the role of health consciousness", Damberg explored the drivers of future use intention of fitness apps among users. In particular understanding the drivers that influence the emergence of technologies in the health care sector.

The rationale for the study is linked to the steep increase in smartphone users throughout the world in the past decade (Newzoo, 2021). Along with the increase comes an increasing popularity for the use of apps for various purposes. This increasingly growing market that is expected to

generate US\$14.64bn by 2027 includes fitness apps that monitor daily exercise (Globenewswire, 2020). This growth co-exists with an increasing number of cases in health problems, as the World Health Organization stressed “the five leading global risks for mortality in the world are high blood pressure, tobacco use, high blood glucose, physical inactivity, and overweight and obesity” (WHO, 2009). The author’s motivation for the study was to explore if the growth in fitness apps is a response to the health needs of society or reflect a general trend in app use.

Damberg suggested that some of the above-mentioned health issues are particularly severe in the UK, and noted that one in four adults is obese. As such, undertaking this research in the UK context could help to identify patterns that could influence prevention measures. The study employed a quantitative research design and distributed an online survey to UK citizens. In total, 591 survey respondents were used to test and analyse their relationships in a partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM). The PLS-SEM methodology is a composite-based statistical analyses method that allows the assessment of causal-predictive relationships in models and, in turn, the development and testing of theories (Sarstedt et al., 2014).

The data of the study defined five drivers that further explain future use intention. These drivers are: (1) habit, (2) perceived playfulness, (3) health consciousness, (4) perceived performance and (4) price value. The author concluded that these findings have implications for sports marketing theory and practice, as well as for policymakers, in that health consciousness is important for fitness app adoption, which in turn has repercussions for health care systems.

Adapting to Local Context and Managing Relationships

AlKhalifa and Collison in their *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 7(2) paper employed a case study design of a multinational Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) event in Bahrain and investigated how SDP management and relationships are localised in this regional setting.

SDP refers to the involvement and use of sports to achieve various social development outcomes (Svensson & Woods, 2017). Given the diverse contexts in which SDP initiatives are operating, this study investigated local contextual influences of one initiative in a geographic area that has not been previously explored in the SDP literature. The investigation examined programme management processes as well as considering partnership dynamics within the region of Bahrain. In doing so, it contributes to a wider understanding of how SDP initiatives operate when multiple international organisations are involved in a project.

The authors employed an autoethnography research design in order to explore the personal experiences of participants joining the “Youthfull festival” in October 2018. The festival was held under the patronage of HM the King of Bahrain and was aimed at raising youth awareness across the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. Participants were between 12–15 years old at the time of the study and from backgrounds including; orphans, children with mental and physical impairments, and able-bodied private school students.

The primary investigator engaged in participant observations over 4 days and conducted interviews with leaders from different organisations to develop an understanding of how SDP management and relationships are localised in Bahrain. Through an analysis of narratives and interview scripts, the authors identified a number of thematical and contextual concepts. The findings related to topics such as funding, interests, roles, and contributions and indicated potential for further cooperation and expertise sharing between international organisation. The

authors noted there is a particular need to better understand roles and partnership structures as well as local contexts and needs.

Female Sports Officials and Mental Health: The Overlooked Problem

In their *Journal of Sport Management* 36(4), study, Tingle and colleagues explored mental health issues among female referees. The authors noted that some sport organisations have recognised the importance of mental health. Nevertheless, these considerations do not include or are not extended to the well-being of referees. They therefore suggested there is a need to understand, normalise and destigmatise mental health conversations and to respect the high-pressure environments referees are working in. Since the prevalence of stress-related issues is greater for women, this study focused on female referees' well-being by employing a phenomenological approach (Laverty, 2003).

Tingle et al., noted that phenomenology is considered particularly useful when a certain phenomenon is investigated and when common lived human experiences need to be explored within a specific social setting (e.g., Kellett & Warner, 2011; Nordstrom et al., 2016; Tingle et al., 2014). Guided by this methodology, the authors conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with female US basketball referees. Different questions around mental health were asked, such as: "What is your current knowledge of the term mental health (MH)?", "How do you maintain your mental health?", "What in your sport causes you to be happy/sources of happiness?", "What stigma/barriers are you aware of relating to MH in (your) sport?", and "Can you tell me about any experiences you have had with MH related issues as an official?"

The data analysis followed an inductive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and each of the four authors independently coded five different transcripts. As encouraged with interpretive phenomenology, three of the four researchers had referee experiences, which ensured a balance of both an insider and outsider perspectives throughout the coding process (Willig, 2007). Allen-Collinson (2009) highlighted that having insider and outsider perspectives allowed the research team to avoid "imposing their own meanings and constructs upon the accounts of the 'expert' participants" (p. 209). After coding the 20 transcripts, an iterative process was utilised to condense the most salient first level codes into emergent themes that best represented the participants' understandings of mental health in the officiating context.

The authors found that gendered aggressions negatively impacted the referees, mental health issues are stigmatised, and more resources and support are needed.

Sport League Sponsor Retention

In their *Sport Management Review* 25(1) article entitled "Investigating sport league sponsor retention: Results from a semi-parametric hazard model", Jensen and colleagues explored sponsorship retention across six North American sport leagues. According to the authors, investments in sponsorship is at an all-time high, surpassing investments of advertising and marketing promotions. Nevertheless, they argued it is unknown how sponsor retention varies across a range of sport leagues. This study therefore quantitatively analysed a dataset of nearly 500 "official product" sponsorships by utilising a proportional hazard model.

As a first step, the authors compiled a complete history of all "official product" sponsorships

across six major North American sport leagues: the NFL, MLB, MLS, NASCAR, the NBA, and the NHL. Sources consulted in the compilation of the dataset included analyses of each league's sponsorship programs by IEG (e.g., IEG, 2018b), research reports from the Sports Business Journal (e.g., Broughton, 2017), and league websites. Their dataset included a total of 3,759 observations, reflecting the total number of years the 488 agreements have been in place (an average of 7.7 years per sponsorship). Sponsors included in the dataset were global brands, such as Adidas, Nike, Under Armour, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, and Pepsi. Consumer brands and banks such as the Bank of America and Wells Fargo, tech firms such as Amazon Web Services, IBM, Motorola, and Yahoo!, as well as automakers Hyundai, Kia, and Toyota were also part of the dataset. In addition, firms represented in the dataset were headquartered in a wide variety of countries, including Austria, Canada, China, Germany, India, South Korea, Spain, the U.K., and the U.S. The two longest-running sponsorships in the dataset were Gillette's relationship with the MLB and Union 76 gasoline's relationship with NASCAR, both lasted for 50 years.

The authors used a proportional hazards model (Cox, 1972) to determine the probability of the sponsors being retained. Their results indicated that partnering with tech firms, sponsorship clutter, and lower level financial sponsorship reduces the probability that sponsors are retained. B2B sponsors are more likely to be retained. In addition, they highlighted the superiority of the NFL and the NASCAR in their ability to retain sponsors. The authors concluded that these findings strengthen managerial as well as theoretical understanding of sponsor retention and could support both sponsors and sponsees in developing longer-term relationships.

Conclusion

Overall, the methodological approaches used in these papers highlight the eclectic methods evolving within sport management research and display the robust methodological contribution that is being made. The selected papers discussed demonstrate how methodological designs provide a framework for rigorous investigation of the phenomena and reflects the methodological growth occurring in the discipline.

Annotated Bibliography

1. **Byun, J., Leopkey, B., & Ellis, D. (2022). Examining post-merger sociocultural integration in sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 22(2), 205-226.**

The researchers explored post-merger sociocultural integration in sport organisation. They investigated the merger of elite and mass sport organisations in Korea through a qualitative case study design including interviews and archival materials. In their findings, the authors highlighted sociocultural integration challenges, such as competing values, perceived unfairness, and human resource conflicts, in addition to antecedents and interventions related to post-merger sociocultural integration in complex multilevel sport organizations.

2. **Scott, O. K., Li, B. N., & Mighton, S. (2022). Gender Representation at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games From an Australian Broadcast Perspective. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 1(aop), 1-10.**

In this study, the authors examined differences in the Australian Seven Network's primetime coverage of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games across all of its channels. The authors analysed more than 102 hours of coverage in relation to clock time, name mentions, and the descriptions of athletes by announcers divided by gender. They found that male athletes received the bulk of the clock time; 13 of the top 20 most-mentioned athletes were men. They also found gender differences in the word for word descriptors of success, failure, physicality, and personality. The top three sports that were broadcast featuring women were ice hockey, freestyle skiing, and snowboarding, which they noted differs from other studies.

3. **Wicker, P., Orlowski, J., & Weimar, D. (2022). Referees' Card-Awarding Behavior and Performance Evaluation in Professional Football: The Role of Teams' Running Distance and Speed. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 17(2).**

This study examined the effect of football teams' distance covered and number of intensive runs on referees' card-awarding behavior and their performance evaluation. The analysis used data from the German Bundesliga (2011–2018), including a final sample of $n = 2,130$ observations on a match-game day basis. The authors' regression analyses showed that greater distance covered by teams is associated with significantly fewer yellow, yellow-red, and red cards and significantly better grades for referees. The higher the number of intensive runs, the fewer yellow-red and red cards are awarded. Referees receive significantly better grades when teams have covered more distance in the match. The authors also concluded that referees make biased decisions and the evaluation of their performance is also subject to biases.

4. **Hong, H. J., Morris, R., López-Flores, M., & Botwina, G. (2022). An international analysis of dual careers support services for junior athletes in Europe. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 14(2), 305-319.**

This study investigated existing support services/systems that support junior dual career athletes in seven different countries. The goal was to identify: (1) What support services/systems are available? and (2) Are there any similarities or differences between the seven countries? Research teams from seven countries collected data from websites of sports organisations, sports clubs and schools to identify any structured support services/systems used to help junior athletes manage their dual careers. The authors identified between 10 and 36 organisational support services/systems which support junior athletes manage their dual career. Many of the sports organisations across the countries provided financial support via a small grant to cover equipment costs, travel expenses, and sport science and medicine support (e.g. physio and sport psychology support). The authors concluded that holistic support for junior athletes is lacking at the secondary school level.

5. **Nam, B. H., Marshall, R. C., Love, A., Graham, J., & Lim, S. (2022). Fostering global sport leadership: A partnership between a Korean sport organization and a US university. *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 7(1), 199-225.**

The South Korean government has initiated a programme to assist elite athletes in transitioning to roles as international sport administrators, coaches, and scholars. The purpose of this study was to examine the success and challenges of this programme. The authors' employed a qualitative research design including qualitative document analyses and interviews. Their findings indicated that there have been positive outcomes of the programme in which a number of former athletes successfully transferred to career paths in education, administration, and coaching. However, they also found some programme challenges, such the covering of very broad topics, inappropriate development of English skills, and discrimination issues outside of the official partnership program (i.e. at the university facilities).

6. **Gasparetto, T., & Barajas, A. (2022). Wage Dispersion and Team Performance: The Moderation Role of Club Size. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 23(5), 548-566.**

In this paper, the authors analysed the relationship between wage dispersion and team performance. They used the clubs' payroll to represent the club's size (as it captures the financial strength) and used this value as a moderator. In their analysis, the authors employed Ordinary Least Squares regression with season and league fixed effects. Their outputs confirmed the quadratic relationship between wage dispersion and performance and highlighted that identical levels of dispersion have different impact on football clubs according to their financial strength.

7. **Behrens, A., Yang, Y., & Uhrich, S. (2021). Keeping It Real or Bridging the Gap? Brand Positioning of US Sport Teams in Germany and China. *Journal of Sport Management*, 36(2), 105-117.**

Professional team sport brands are increasingly striving to conquer markets abroad. The authors of this study suggested that little is known about promising brand positioning strategies in international markets. In the context of U.S. team sport brands efforts to attract oversea fans in two different target markets (i.e., Germany and China) was considered. The research used three experimental online studies to test the relative effects of two foreign brand positioning strategies (purely foreign vs. locally integrated foreign) on oversea fans' attitudes toward the strategy and brand interaction intentions. The authors' findings suggested that fans' responses depend on the target market. While German fans responded more favorably to purely foreign brand positioning, Chinese fans preferred local adaptations of the U.S. brands to Chinese customs. These diverse effects were explained by different underlying mechanisms: purely foreign brand positioning increases perceptions of authenticity among German fans, while locally integrated foreign brand positioning increases perceived customer orientation and pride among Chinese fans.

8. **Misener, L., Rich, K., & Pearson, E. (2022). Tensions and opportunities in researching social change in sport management. *Sport Management Review*, 25(2), 323-340.**

In this paper, the authors examined theoretical presumptions about social change and challenged scholars to critically consider their social change agenda. The authors drew from established theories of social change to articulate how the term has been discussed more broadly in academic literature. In particular, they distinguished between individual, organisational, and community or social level changes as well as the nature of the change in question. They further employed a critical interpretive synthesis to consider how social change has been addressed within sport management scholarship. As a result, they identified where the sport management literature has aligned with the broader social change literature as well as where it has not. The authors concluded with future considerations for sport management scholars interrogating social change should involve a critical consideration of both the level and nature of the change.