

The Geography of Sport Management Research in 2023

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Introduction

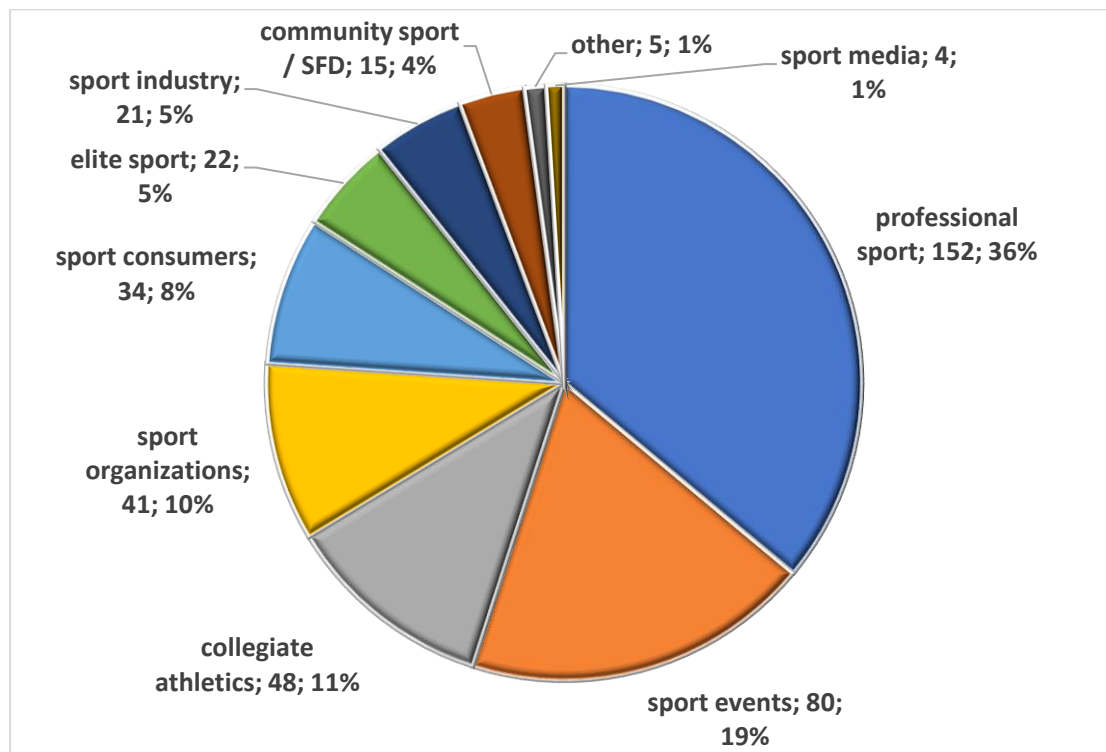
This analysis explores the geographical landscape of sport management (SM) research based on empirical articles published in the 10 target journals in 2023. The 508 articles published in 2023 comprised 422 empirical studies and 86 non-empirical pieces such as reviews, conceptual works, commentaries, editorials, and interviews. This analysis specifically focuses on the 422 empirical articles. The coding protocol employed remains consistent with previous reports on the geography of SM research in past issues of the Sport Management Digest (SMD). Concluding observations are offered at the end, integrating insights gleaned from the 2022 analysis, given the ongoing nature of this examination.

Geography of the SM research settings

We examined the settings of SM research by concentrating on sport domains or specific sports. Geographic distributions of these two setting dimensions were then mapped by correlating sport domains or specific sports with the continents where the study settings were located. To recap, the 10 sport domains are professional sport, collegiate athletics (also school sport in general), sport events (including all types such as mega-events, major-events, and mass participant sport events), sport organizations (including non-profit sport clubs, national and international sport organizations), community sport/sport for development (SFD), elite sport (also competitive sport), sport industry (also commercial sport), sport consumers (including spectators, participants, and consumers of a general nature), sport media (mainly the sport media sector), and others.

Among the 422 empirical articles, 36% pertained to the domain of professional sport, followed by sport events (19%), collegiate athletics (11%), sport organizations (10%), sport consumers (8%), elite sport (5%), sport industry (5%), community sport/SFD (4%), and 1% each in the sector of sport media or others (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The distribution of sport domains



Additionally, approximately 15% of the empirical articles (63) utilized media content data, such as social media posts, to investigate research questions across various sport domains, including professional sport (25), sport events (21), collegiate athletics (6), elite sport (5), sport organizations (3), sport industry (2), and community sport/SFD (1).

Articles in each domain were situated in specific continents. As illustrated in the last row of Table 1, the highest number of articles were located in North America (40%), followed by Europe (22%), Asia (16%), and Oceania (4%). Additionally, 9% of the articles were conducted in cross-continental settings, and 7% in international settings.

Africa (2%) and Central and South America (1%) had the fewest number of articles among the continental settings.

Table 1. Sport domains across continental contexts

Continental context									
Sport domain	NA	EU	OC	AS	AF	CSA	CC	IN	Total
professional sport	69	35	6	20	2	0	12	8	152
	45%	23%	4%	13%	1%	0%	8%	5%	100%
sport events	13	17	4	22	3	2	9	10	80
	16%	21%	5%	28%	4%	3%	11%	13%	100%
collegiate athletics	44	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	48
	92%	0%	2%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
sport organizations	10	14	3	6	2	0	1	5	41
	24%	34%	7%	15%	5%	0%	2%	12%	100%
sport consumers	18	6	0	6	0	0	2	2	34
	53%	18%	0%	18%	0%	0%	6%	6%	100%
elite sport	0	9	1	2	0	0	6	4	22
	0%	41%	5%	9%	0%	0%	27%	18%	100%
sport industry	7	2	0	6	0	0	4	2	21
	33%	10%	0%	29%	0%	0%	19%	10%	100%
community sport / SFD	6	6	1	0	1	0	1	0	15
	40%	40%	7%	0%	7%	0%	7%	0%	100%
sport media	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	5
	20%	20%	0%	20%	20%	0%	20%	0%	100%
other	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Total	170	92	16	66	9	2	36	31	422
	40%	22%	4%	16%	2%	1%	9%	7%	100%

Note: NA = North America; EU = Europe; OC = Oceania; AS = Asia; AF = Africa; CSA = Central and South America; CC = Cross-continental; IN = International.

Table 1 also presents the distribution of domains across continental contexts. The following patterns emerge. Firstly, the North American setting contributed the highest number of articles in the domains of professional sport, collegiate athletics, sport consumers, and sport industry. Secondly, the European setting produced the greatest number of articles in the domains of sport organizations and elite sport. Thirdly, the Asian setting featured the highest number of articles in the domain of sport events. Fourthly, North America and Europe shared the number of articles in the domain of community sport/SFD. Lastly, studies conducted in cross-continental or international

settings tended to focus on the domains of professional sport, sport events, and elite sport.

When considering the **specific sport(s)** linked to the identified sport domain in a given study, football (soccer) continued to hold the top spot in popularity, followed by multi-sport events like the Olympic Games and Pan-American Games, basketball, American football, baseball, e-sport, and others. At the other end of the spectrum, 13 sports were featured in only one or two articles this year. These sports include golf, wrestling, car racing, biathlon, swimming, handball, skiing, badminton, volleyball, wheelchair rugby, surfing, skateboarding, and darts. Finally, nearly 40% of the articles were situated in a multi-sports context or did not specify the specific sports associated with the identified sport domain (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The distribution of specific sports

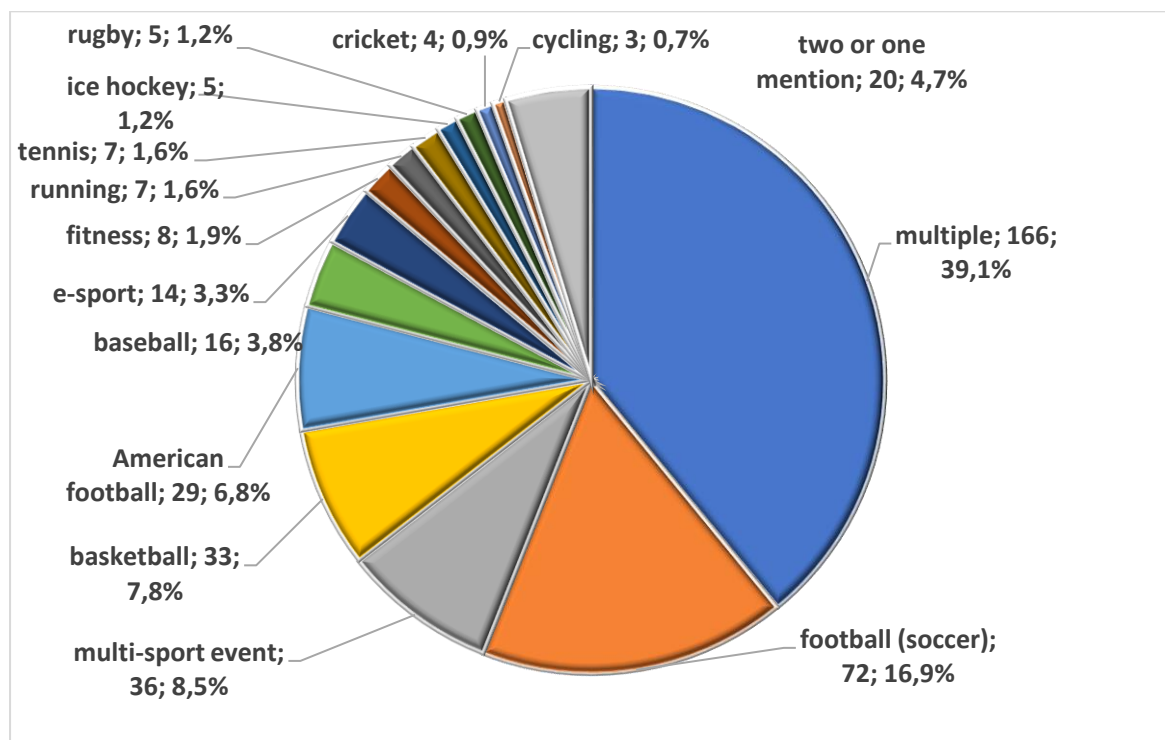


Table 2 plotted the top 11 sports against continent contexts, yielding the following insights. Firstly, the largest number of articles spotlighting the sport of football (soccer) contextualised in Europe, followed by North America and Asia. Secondly, North America boasted the highest number of articles featuring sports such as American football, baseball, basketball, and ice hockey. Thirdly, a notable number of articles highlighting multi-sport events were discovered in Asia. Lastly, in less frequented continental settings, Africa featured 3 articles on football (soccer) and 1 article on running, while Central and South America housed 2 articles on multi-sport events.

Table 2. Specific sport by continental context

Continental context									
Sport	NA	EU	OC	AS	AF	CSA	CC	IN	Total
football (soccer)	10	41	2	10	3	0	2	4	72
	14%	57%	3%	14%	4%	0%	3%	6%	100%
multi-sport	8	5	2	12	0	2	5	2	36
	22%	14%	6%	33%	0%	6%	14%	6%	100%
basketball	22	0	0	7	0	0	4	0	33
	67%	0%	0%	21%	0%	0%	12%	0%	100%
American football	28	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	29
	97%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
baseball	11	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	16
	69%	0%	0%	31%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
e-sport	4	2	0	2	0	0	3	3	14
	29%	14%	0%	14%	0%	0%	21%	21%	100%
fitness	2	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	8
	25%	25%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
tennis	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	7
	29%	14%	0%	14%	0%	0%	14%	29%	100%
running	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	7
	14%	14%	0%	14%	14%	0%	14%	29%	100%
ice hockey	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
rugby	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	5
	0%	0%	20%	40%	0%	0%	20%	20%	100%

Note: NA = North America; EU = Europe; OC = Oceania; AS = Asia; AF = Africa; CSA = Central and South America; CC = Cross-continental; IN = International.

Geography of SM knowledge production

Each empirical article examined was authored by a research team and published in a specific journal. This information provides insights into the geographical distribution of SM knowledge production. Subsequently, two sets of analyses were reported: (1) the association between the continental contexts of the articles and the continental location of the authors' institutional affiliations, and (2) the distribution of the continental contexts of the articles published by the ten targeted journals.

Regarding the geographical location of authors' institutional affiliations, the following patterns emerged (Table 3):

Firstly, the majority of articles set in North America (88%) were produced by author teams affiliated with North American institutions.

Secondly, author teams with European institutional affiliations produced the majority of articles situated in the European context (83%).

Thirdly, for articles in the Oceania context, 56% of them were authored by researchers affiliated with institutions based in the same continent.

Fourthly, the majority of articles in the Asian context were either produced by research teams affiliated with Asian institutions (35%) or by collaborative teams drawing authors with affiliations spanning continents (30%).

Finally, cross-continental research teams were not only responsible for the highest number of articles in both cross-continental (72%) and international contexts (55%), but also contributed to the greatest number of articles situated in the Africa context (67%).

Table 3. Continental context versus author institutional affiliation

Continental context	Author institutional affiliation						
	NA	EU	OC	AS	AF	CC	
NA	150	6	1	2	0	11	170
	88%	4%	1%	1%	0%	6%	100%
EU	4	76	1	0	0	11	92
	4%	83%	1%	0%	0%	12%	100%
OC	1	4	9	0	0	2	16
	6%	25%	56%	0%	0%	13%	100%
AS	6	10	5	23	2	20	66
	9%	15%	8%	35%	3%	30%	100%
AF	1	2	0	0	0	6	9
	11%	22%	0%	0%	0%	67%	100%
CSA	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	50%	100%
CC	5	3	1	1	0	26	36
	14%	8%	3%	3%	0%	72%	100%
IN	1	11	1	1	0	17	31
	3%	35%	3%	3%	0%	55%	100%
Total	168	112	19	27	2	94	422
	40%	27%	5%	6%	0%	22%	100%

Notes: 1. NA = North America; EU = Europe; OC = Oceania; AS = Asia; AF = Africa; CSA = Central and South America; CC = Cross-continental; IN = International. 2. Author institutional affiliations in cross-continental authorships covered all six continents.

An analysis of the geographical distribution of continental contexts across the 10 targeted journals reveals the following patterns (Table 4):

To begin, 8 out of the 10 journals—JSM (71%), SMR (52%), IJSMS (49%), IJSF (38%), IJSC (52%), JSE (51%), C&S (39%), and JGSM (36%)—published their highest number of articles within the North American context. However, this pattern was somewhat anticipated, considering that 40% of the 422 empirical articles were situated within this geographical sphere.

Secondly, ESMQ (36%) and IJSPP (29%) published the greatest number of articles set against backgrounds in Europe, likely owing to the journals' European origin.

Thirdly, out of the 66 articles rooted in the Asian context, 19 were featured in IJSMS, followed by ESMQ (12), C&S (8), IJSPP (6), and JGSM (6).

Fourthly, ESMQ boasted the highest number of articles either applying a cross-continental context (7 out of 36) or an international context (8 out of 31), underscoring its global outlook.

Finally, it is worth noting that while articles situated in African or Central and South American contexts were generally evenly distributed across the journals, IJSPP contributed to 3 out of 9 articles focusing on the African context.

Table 4. Continental contexts of articles from the 10 journals

Continental context									
	NA	EU	OC	AS	AF	CSA	CC	IN	Total
JSM	22	2	2	2	0	0	3	0	31
	71%	6%	6%	6%	0%	0%	10%	0%	100%
SMR	15	2	3	4	1	0	2	2	29
	52%	7%	10%	14%	3%	0%	7%	7%	100%
IJSMS	27	7	0	19	0	0	1	1	55
	49%	13%	0%	35%	0%	0%	2%	2%	100%
ESMQ	20	30	3	12	2	1	7	8	83
	24%	36%	4%	14%	2%	1%	8%	10%	100%
IJSF	6	5	0	2	0	0	1	2	16
	38%	31%	0%	13%	0%	0%	6%	13%	100%
IJSC	16	4	1	4	1	0	5	0	31
	52%	13%	3%	13%	3%	0%	16%	0%	100%
IJSPP	6	11	3	6	3	1	4	4	38
	16%	29%	8%	16%	8%	3%	11%	11%	100%
JSE	21	8	0	3	0	0	3	6	41
	51%	20%	0%	7%	0%	0%	7%	15%	100%
C&S	21	12	3	8	0	0	6	4	54
	39%	22%	6%	15%	0%	0%	11%	7%	100%
JGSM	16	11	1	6	2	0	4	4	44
	36%	25%	2%	14%	5%	0%	9%	9%	100%
Total	170	92	16	66	9	2	36	31	422
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Concluding observations

Drawing from the analyses of the 342 empirical articles published in 2022 and the 422 articles in 2023, we present the following observations regarding the geography of sport management research over the past two years.

Firstly, within the 10 domains contextualising sport management research, professional sport stands out as the most frequently utilized setting by researchers, followed by the domain of sport events. Notably, there has been a significant decrease in the number of articles contextualized in the sport media sector, dropping from 5% in 2022 to just 1% in 2023. However, it is crucial to highlight that this decline does not diminish the importance of media in sport management research. Indeed, a considerable number of articles across domains (13.5% in 2022, 15% in 2023) have chosen to address their research questions by analysing content arising from the media sphere.

Concerning the continental distribution of sport management research contexts, North America and Europe emerged as the most popular locations for studies, followed by Asia. Notably, there has been a reduction in the number of empirical articles contextualized in Oceania, declining from 7% to 4% over the two years. Meanwhile, articles applying a cross-continental context have increased from approximately 4% to 9%, indicating a growing trend of global collaboration in sport management research.

In terms of sport settings, the greatest number of sport management studies have been associated with settings involving multiple sports. Among studies focused on a single sport in their contexts, football (soccer) emerged as the most popular, followed by basketball and American football. Notably, more than a dozen sports appeared in only one study each over the two years. These sports include badminton, boxing, darts, disc golf, drag racing, free diving, gymnastics, horse racing, netball, parkour, skateboarding, softball, taekwondo, wheelchair basketball, and wheelchair rugby.

Regarding the geographical distribution of authors' institutional affiliations, the majority of empirical articles have been conducted by author teams affiliated with institutions based in North America, followed by those based in Europe. Additionally,

a significant number of empirical articles have been completed by research teams with institutions located across different continents. It is encouraging to note that in 2023, 72% of the empirical studies contextualized in cross-continental settings were achieved by cross-continental research teams, which is a significant increase from the approximately 40% observed in 2022.

Finally, the 10 journals have shown variation in the distribution of continental settings among the articles they publish, with articles set in North American contexts taking up the largest portion of publishing space. Meanwhile, the two journals rooted in Europe (ESMQ, IJSP) tend to accept the greatest number of articles set in European contexts while maintaining a broad global perspective by showcasing a fair number of articles contextualised in the Global South. Articles set in Asian contexts, though fewer in number compared to those set in North America and Europe, have primarily found their publishing home in IJSMS, followed by ESMQ and JGSM.