

# Research Methodologies in Sport Management

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## Introduction

This section presents a summary of the ten sport journals from the previous three volumes of Sport Management Digest. The papers were published between July 2022 and February 2023. Table 1 summarises the methodological approaches used in the respective journals:

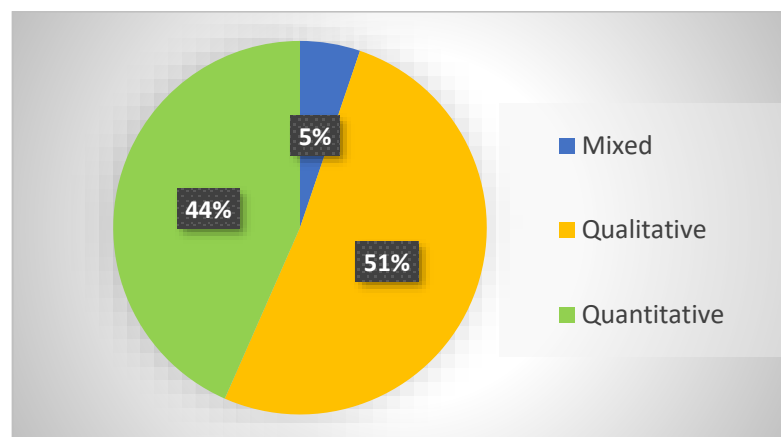
*Table 1: Summary of Methodological Approaches*

<b>Journals</b>	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>	<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Communication &amp; Sport</b>	4	30 (incl. four editorials)	9	<b>43</b>
<b>European Sport Management Quarterly</b>	2	8 (incl. one editorial)	10	<b>20</b>
<b>International Journal of Sport Finance</b>	-	2 (incl. one reiteration of an award ceremony)	12	<b>14</b>
<b>International Journal of Sport Marketing and Sponsorship</b>	3	5 (incl. one editorial)	22	<b>30</b>
<b>International Journal of Sport Communication</b>	2	14 (incl. one book review)	5	<b>21</b>
<b>International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics</b>	-	34 (incl. one editorial and two book reviews)	5	<b>39</b>

<b>Journal of Global Sport Management</b>	-	15 (incl. one editorial)	21	<b>36</b>
<b>Journal of Sport Economics</b>	-	8 (incl. one commentary and one response)	20	<b>28</b>
<b>Journal of Sport Management</b>	-	18	9	<b>27</b>
<b>Sport Management Review</b>	4	14	12	<b>30</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>288</b>

Though the application of qualitative and quantitative research approaches is quite balanced, qualitative research articles have utilised more in this volume, as visualised in Figure 1:

*Figure 1: Distribution of Methodological Approaches*



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

*Table 2: Overview of Most Common Data Collection and Analysis Techniques*

<b>Quantitative Approaches</b>	<b>Qualitative Approaches</b>
<b>Survey</b>	Case Study
<b>Panel Data/ Public Available Data</b>	(Semi-Structured) Interviews
<b>Experimental Study</b>	Focus Group
<b>Event Study</b>	(Critical) Commentary
<b>Content Analysis</b>	Thematic Analysis
<b>Structural Equation Modelling/ Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling</b>	Content Analysis
<b>Ordinary Least Squares</b>	Conceptual Review
<b>Regression Analysis</b>	Ethnography
<b>Content Analysis</b>	(Critical) Discourse Analysis
	Systematic Review
	Textual Analysis

From identified journals, seven papers were selected for a more detailed discussion. Another seven papers were additionally reviewed and an annotated bibliography has been created at the end of this review.

**‘Going the extra mile’ in resource integration: evolving a concept of sport sponsorship as an engagement platform**

In this paper, published in the European Sport Management Quarterly, the authors Buser and colleagues have deployed the Delphi Method to conceptualise sport sponsorship as an engagement platform on which the sponsee grants access and both sponseses and sponsors integrate resources. Their motivation stemmed from the importance of sponsorship as a useful marketing tool for companies as well as a fundamental way to finance sport organisations. Given the importance, the authors argued that there is a need to understand the complex relationships between different parties involved. The objective of the research was to conceptualise sport sponsorship as an engagement platform theoretically, to contribute to a better understanding of sponsorship engagement, and to present a more precise concept of sport sponsorship as an engagement platform based on collected empirical insights.

The Delphi Method was employed as an iterative, multi-stage approach to

qualitative research to answer their research questions and fulfil their research objectives. The Delphi Method requires two or three rounds of questioning and re-evaluating insights of participating experts (Day & Bobeva, 2005). The benefit of the different iteration stages is that researchers can utilise anonymised feedback provided by participants after each round. This assists in informing and improving participants' insights and judgments and enables researchers to co-create insights whilst reaching consensus within a new field of study. This ultimately increases validity, as assumptions are challenged and strengthened by experts' reasoning over multiple rounds. It also increases reliability, as industry experts are proactively involved. In this study, a total of 61 sport sponsorship experts engaged in sponsorship practice from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland were recruited for a total of three iterative rounds.

The authors' findings indicated that multiple sponsors as well as the sponsee integrate resources beyond the sponsorship contract, which include *management competencies, technical competencies, networking skills, innovative ideas, and products and services*.

### **Extractives Companies' Social Media Portrayals of Their Funding of Sport for Development in Indigenous Communities in Canada and Australia**

This paper was published in the journal of *Communication & Sport* by Latino and colleagues and explored how the extractive industry (mining, quarrying, oil, and gas) leverages CSR activities, in the form of funding sport initiatives, aims to improve the lives of Indigenous people. In their research, the authors adopted a settler colonial studies lens which is defined as "a persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous peoples that are there" (Arvin et al., 2013, p. 12). With that in mind, the research objective was to examine how three extractives companies portray their funding of Sport For Development (SFD) in Indigenous communities in Canada and Australia through social media and how it ultimately contributes to settler colonialism.

In order to empirically contribute to this topic, the authors deployed netnographic methods and discourse analysis. They utilised Facebook and Twitter as means of analysis given their prominent and widespread use. The companies BHP, Newmont Corporation, and Rio Tinto were selected as organisations of interest including their subsidiaries. The authors applied Kozinets' (2010) procedures for netnographic data collection, where a role of an internet "lurker" (Williams et al., 2012) was exploited on

each social media site. This involved the creation of pseudonym lurker accounts on Facebook and Twitter to observe, gather, and extract data from these sites over a period of four months. To collect data to address the research question, the authors searched for key terms and hashtags including mining, Indigenous peoples, Indigenous relations, Aboriginal Torres Straits Islanders, reconciliation, corporate social responsibility, and sport for development. Posts from the past 10 years were examined to ensure sufficient data was collected. A total of 191 posts and tweets were analysed with NVivo using appropriate labels. The authors then employed critical discourse analysis to investigate how the selected extractive companies present their funding of SFD in Indigenous communities on social media. In order to do so, they read and re-read the data to identify overall patterns. The codes that have emerged were then used to identify the broader discourses in each national context.

Their findings showed that there are two main discourses that extractive companies use: i) Extractives companies “help” and “partner” with Indigenous communities to enable Indigenous youth’s access to the transformative power of sport; ii) longevity is strategically associated with such “help” and “partnership.” The paper concluded that the production of these discourses enables extractives companies to downplay their contributions to settler colonialism through land denigration and colonial authority.

### **Fields of corruption: heritage and politics in Brazilian football**

This research paper by Bertazzo, Tobar and Ramshaw, published in the International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, investigated how and why political stakeholders influenced by the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) have rejected football-based heritage nominations in the Brazilian National Congress (BNC) since 2005. According to the authors, heritage nominations have been proposed at the Legislative branch by politicians which is often considered an administrative decision made by heritage experts at Heritage Committees following technical criteria. In this context, this research presented nine proposed legal recognitions of football and the Brazilian National Team as part of the nation’s cultural heritage. The authors also further discussed how and why these proposals were rejected. By doing so, the authors employed a qualitative and longitudinal study by applying document and observational analysis to discuss the disputes concerning the heritagisation process of Brazilian football and its National squad

at the BNC.

The scope of the study involved all proposed legislative recognitions of football as well as the Brazilian National Team as part of the nation's cultural heritage from 5 October 1988 (the date of the publication of the current Brazilian Constitution) until 10 December 2018, the date of the last proposed legislation introduced at the BNC. In addition, the authors explored the database of the Brazilian National Congress between February 2015 and October 2021 and utilised the term 'football,' as well as the terms 'heritage,' 'culture,' and 'cultural heritage,' respectively, to guide the collection of legislative proposals presented either at the Chamber of Deputies and at the Senate. Every type of legislation proposed (e.g., Bill, Constitutional Amendment, Provisional Measure, and Legislative Decree) was reviewed, which resulted in a total of 178 generated results. Documents filtered by the BNC search tool also included requirements for public audiences and other ordinary requests made by politicians involved in legislative proposals in progress or already archived.

The results of this study demonstrated that national identity discourses linked to football on heritage nominations can be activated and manipulated for political gain but also neglected if they pose a risk to football directors in power.

### **Innovation from sport's entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship: opportunities from a systematic review**

In this research paper, published in the International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship, the authors Lara-Bocanegra and colleagues explored innovation in entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in sport, reviewed latest study trends, and detected possible research niches. With sport being one of the most globalised industries in the world, sport managers need to generate new ideas in order to sustain growth and diversity and eventually maintain competitiveness in the sector.

In order to answer the research questions, the research employed a systematic review of different databases. All suitable articles were exported to a tool assisting with systematic reviews. In total, 1,391 articles among the databases Web of Science (n = 404), Scopus (n = 436), PsycINFO (n = 68), ERIC (n = 23), SPORTDiscus (n = 400) and Dialnet (n = 60) were found. The authors carried out a first screening through the title and abstract and removed the articles that were unrelated to the subject (n = 554). The next step included to review the remaining articles by reading them in full which further led to

the elimination of 229 articles. A total of 49 articles were then selected for a final review based on five inclusion criteria:

1. The sample of the different studies are students of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences (hereinafter PASC), professionals from sports organizations and/or professional athletes;
2. Antecedents/precursors of entrepreneurship/ intrapreneurship in sports;
3. Attitudes toward entrepreneurship/intrapreneurship in sport;
4. Results/effects of entrepreneurial/intrapreneurial behavior in sport, and
5. Promotion of entrepreneurial/intrapreneurial behavior from the perspective of the sport.

The authors categorised the entrepreneurship articles into the subthemes: precursors of entrepreneurship, intention/orientation of entrepreneurship, different perspectives of entrepreneurship in sport and social entrepreneurship in sport. However, only seven articles dealt with intrapreneurship and could not be classified into subthemes given their scarcity, diversity, and exploration of disparate themes. The research therefore concluded that the topic of entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship shows deficiencies on precursors/antecedents of entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial behavior, especially in relation to innovation. They also highlighted the importance of the political perspective on entrepreneurship in sport and formulation of behavior training programs for intrapreneurs.

### **‘Sport as a Resource Caravan’: Understanding How Adults Utilize Sport as a Developmental Tool**

This paper, published in the Journal of Global Sport Management, explored how adults utilise sport as a development tool. The authors, Walsh and colleagues, focused on sport for development (SFD) research and explored the aggregate value of sport in development particularly across the lifespan.

In more detail, the authors examined the role of sport participation on transitions occurring across the life course to understand sport’s capacity to impact development. They applied a qualitative, life-history design as it enables participants to describe their past lives and how it was related to sport and other memorable life transitions. A total of 15 participants aged 50 and older and with previous experience in playing sports were recruited and interviewed for this study. Specifically, in order to be included in the study, respondents: (1) must have participated in at least one sport in their life, (2) must have

been available for 1-3h for a face-to-face interview, and (3) must have completed the required demographic, consent, and life-event/sport participation chart. The authors stopped recruiting participants as soon as saturation has been reached.

The data analysis followed a thematic approach and the authors started the process by reading the transcripts multiple times. They performed an iterative, deductive-inductive analysis in order to identify the transition to adaptation process and the “role” sport participation played over the participants’ life. Different categories were deductively prescribed which served as a basis for placing data deductively into 1<sup>st</sup>-order categories. After the completion of this initial deductive stage, an inductive approach was utilised that developed 2<sup>nd</sup>-order categories. This allowed the data to drive the category formation instead of dictating the analysis. As a last step, themes were differentiated from categories in that they were identified by analysing common threads through the categories and all of the data, which were expected to overlap and contain several categories that helped explain the emergent patterns of the themes (Morse, 2008).

With this research, the authors aimed to contribute to innovative sport designs and intentional sport management strategies that ultimately influence developmental trajectories in adults by not only providing empirical data but also deriving practical implications.

### **Sport for social cohesion: exploring aims and complexities**

This research paper, published in *Sport Management Review* by Katherine Raw, Emma Sherry and Katie Rowe, investigated how social cohesion is defined in the context of a sport for development (SFD) initiative, the complexities of defining social cohesion, and how this influences management practices. According to the authors Raw and colleagues, the field of SFD has seen a substantial growth over recent years, translating into a number of initiatives that leverage sport to promote social development outcomes. However, despite the theoretical and empirical progress made in this field, social cohesion in SFD has been somewhat underresearched, according to the authors. They further argued that social cohesion is a term often used as a catch-all to describe research and programming that focuses on a broad range of sociological concepts.

To answer the research question, an ethnographic approach was adopted. The SFD initiative examined was founded in 2010 within a national sporting organisation (NSO) headquarters and was developed as a result of a joint initiative of an NSO and two NGOs. The aim of the initiative was to foster cohesion among refugee and migrant young people of Melbourne’s inner north west. For more than two years, The lead author was



based in the SFD initiative's office to collect data through research observations, reflexive journal entries, organisational documents, and semi-structured interviews. The data analysis followed a qualitative analysis approach in which the data were firstly compiled into a database using NVivo. The authors then used a combination of both deductive and inductive coding processes to develop preliminary codes. By doing so, emergent and more detailed codes were established in line with common themes within the data. The authors also considered existing literature (e.g., Coalter, 2006) to develop a-priori codes but also employed open coding to break apart data, examine it, and assign themes to the data. After the themes have developed, axial coding and reassembly was used to build links between relevant concepts. The authors noted that even though they employed a combination of data collection methods they predominantly focussed upon data from interviews with staff and managers of the initiative, as well as organisational documents. Nevertheless, research observations and interviews with program participants played a secondary role in informing the research findings.

The research's findings indicated that the initiative struggled to define social cohesion, and this had ramifications upon managerial practices and strategy. Further, this had a flow-on effect to programs, contributing to deteriorations in social networks and issues with socio-cultural assumptions

### **What Makes Sport Spectating Family-Friendly? A Phenomenological Study of Mothers' Sport Fan Game-Day Experiences**

This paper, published in the Journal of Sport Management by Sveinson & Toffoletti, investigated how women, as mothers and fans, experience fandom. The motivation for this research stemmed from the increasing initiatives of family-friendly sport spectator events to boost engagement and sales to parents and children. They argued that given the increasing number of women attending sport events it was timely to explore how mothers experience sport events. According to the authors, this is linked to maternal geographies which focusses on the spatial aspects of mothering, contending that space and place fundamentally shape mothers' experiences of caregiving as a social practice. In taking a maternal geographies approach, this research attempted to understand mothers' experiences of space which centralises the care work that mothers do.

In order to address the research objective, 15 self-identified women, 18 years or older, living in either Australia or North America, who were mothers (one or more child), and were current or former fans of a major professional or collegiate team/sport/ athlete

were recruited for this study. The authors followed an interpretative phenomenological approach to investigate how mothering as a spatially informed care practice shapes the perspectives of what constitutes a family-friendly sport spectating experience. Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions were utilised to contextualise the participants' perspectives and experience and to further apprehend the phenomenon of fan experience. Lastly, participants were asked to clarify the phenomenon which involved to express "varying aspects of the experience" (Bevan, 2014, p. 142). To analyse the data an interpretative phenomenological analysis was employed that utilised a double hermeneutic lens. Through this approach "the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them" (Smith, 2011, p. 10). This method involved approaching the participant empathically as well as critically whilst probing for meaning that participants might not have acknowledged. The analysis followed a three-step data coding process, which involved searching for themes in individual interviews, followed by making connections between the themes and clustering together conceptually related themes under an overarching "identifier" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 72). The final step in coding involved extending the analysis to the remaining interviews (Smith & Osborn, 2008), which resulted in an overview of themes that account for individual cases whilst promoting a generalised view of the experienced phenomenon.

The findings of this research identified key components of the physical, structural, and social environments of women's experiences of family-friendly sport fandom, as well as exposing that what is presumed to be family-friendly is not the same as mother-friendly.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

**Liang, X., Chen, S., Liu, D., Boardley, I., & Shen, L. (2022). Strategic thinking and planning behind the development of a sporting event portfolio: the case of Shanghai. *Sport Management Review*, 25(4), 679-699.**

The researchers contributed to the topic of sport events by examining the purpose of sporting event portfolios and the process of their strategic planning in an Asian context – Shanghai. By applying strategic planning theories, the authors explored, through a single case study methodology, how Shanghai's sporting event portfolio was developed and why. Empirically, the study draws on extensive data and specifically policy and strategy documents and interviews with key sport policymakers and sport experts in Shanghai. The results suggest that Shanghai's event portfolio benefited from more than 20 years of planning and development. Twelve commercial sporting events were carefully handpicked and cultivated to promote destination branding, to advance Shanghai's reputation as a global city, and to serve other social and economic development agenda.

**Chadwick, S. (2022). From utilitarianism and neoclassical sport management to a new geopolitical economy of sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 22(5), 685-704.**

In this study, the author investigated whether, in today's changing world, it is time to start looking at sport in a different way. In more detail, Chadwick researched whether scholars should now be thinking in terms of a new geopolitical economy of sports. The author developed a commentary based on literature drawn from sport management, geography, politics and economics. He concluded that the world, and more specifically sport, in the twenty-first century, is encountering profound changes, which will shape human existence for at least the next fifty years if not to the end of the century. It was argued that global economic and political shifts are challenging the established Western order, power has begun to move beyond centres such as New York and London to Mumbai, Riyadh and Beijing.

**Mountifield, C., & Sharpe, S. (2023). Are the Olympic Games an opportunity or a myth? The case of PyeongChang 2018 and What May Prove to Be a Paradoxical Notion. *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 8(1), 117-138.**

This study highlighted contrasting viewpoints on the perceived value that the Olympic Games make to world peace efforts through the lens of the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea. The authors reviewed news articles (n = 114) from a variety of international periodicals and deployed a thematic analysis with key nascent tropes – cynicism of the potential for peace; scorn of the role of sport in peace processes; and high-level political meddling in sport – pointing to a consensus that hosting of the Games would have little impact on the political landscape in the Korean peninsula. These threads were then considered in connection with the concepts of peace, national interests, and international relations established through a review of literature that included recounts of Olympic state-based action and interference and influence since the modern inception of the Olympic Games. The authors concluded that the concept of Olympism as a peace movement is outmoded; a myth that endures because international sport contains an inherent political utility.

**Mickelsson, T. B. (2023). Understanding Central-and Eastern European migrants' inclusion into sport: a Delphi study. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 15(1), 109-124.**

With the world facing a humanitarian “crisis” in Ukraine, this research investigated culturally contingent components when considering Central- and East European (CEE) migrants' inclusion into European sport. The Delphi method was deployed, and three rounds of data collection were conducted: 19 CEE experts in sport (researchers, NGOs, governmental employees) were recruited to jointly produce a set of consensual directives. The results were analysed with Bronfenbrenner's Process-Person-Context-Time model. The key agreements consisted of four significant themes. Facilitators included shared experiences of (organised) sport, and CEE migrants' familiarity with other cultures. Barriers included the nature of labour migration on time- and economy to engage in leisure, and stereotypical and misleading perceptions of ‘post-soviet residents’. In conclusion, the results show that a range of similarities may exist between CEE and European (sport) contexts that could be conducive to CEE migrants' inclusion into European sport, but that practitioners will need to be aware of sensitive Soviet history.

**Feddersen, N. B., & Phelan, S. E. (2021). The gradual normalization of behaviors which might challenge ethical and professional standards in two British elite sports organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 36(5), 409-419.**

In this study, the authors examined how two elite British sports organisations began accepting behaviours that might challenge ethical and professional standards. The data was sourced from two separate ethnographic studies. Alvesson and Einola's (2018) 'Functional Stupidity framework' was deployed to analyse the data for processes of a lack of reflexivity, lack of justification, and a lack of substantial reasoning and was presented in three vignettes for each case organisation. The authors then carried out a cross-case analysis and showed that periods of significant change are high-risk for the spread of unethical and unprofessional behaviours. The common rationales for accepting such behaviours were: (1) you have not spent time in the trenches, (2) it has always been like this, (3) policing space, (4) I am just doing my job and (5) giving opportunities to those close to me. Their findings suggested a sense of banality to wrongdoing where normal people slipped into ethical problem areas.

**Bright, V., Warner, S., & Zvosec, C. (2022). Refereeing as a Postathletic Career Option. *Journal of Sport Management*, 1(aop), 1-11.**

Though athletes may be especially primed to become referees; the authors posited the hypothesis that little is known about what former athletes think about this career choice. The researchers aimed to understand athletes' perceptions of refereeing, and in doing so, examine athletes' perceptions of the refereeing environment and identify referee recruitment barriers. Utilizing a descriptive phenomenological approach, 23 current and former athletes took part in semi-structured interviews based on their lived experience as an athlete. The participants identified the officiating environment as a high-stress environment with financial instability, while time and lack of knowledge and support were identified as recruitment barriers. The results contributed to the burgeoning line of research attempting to address the global referee shortage and provide both theoretical and practical implications for sport managers.

**Chen, R., Rochon, M. A., & Anderson, L. C. (2022). "That is Terrible News!": Media Framing of Mamba Mentality Within Contemporary US Racial and Gender Politics. *Communication & Sport*, 10(4), 616-641.**

On January 26, 2020, former Los Angeles Lakers superstar Kobe Bryant was tragically killed in a helicopter crash. Drawing on theoretical frameworks of racial and gender politics in the U.S. context, and media framing, the authors conducted a textual analysis of mainstream news media's framing of "Mamba Mentality" in the immediate aftermath of Bryant's death. Across the 119 articles retrieved for analysis, they found 'Mamba Mentality' consistently framed in four ways: a performance standard, both mental and physical; a symbol for overcoming adversity; a commodity; and a legacy/ethos. While mainstream media was complicit in absolving Bryant of his 2003 sexual assault allegation, the allegation was folded into his complex celebrity identity, which ultimately legitimised his 'Mamba Mentality' persona as strong, tough, and able to overcome any obstacle that stood in the way—regardless of the cost. The findings implicated how a celebrity athlete's life is valued by contemporary media, and how media portrayals represent historical underpinnings of identity politics and oppressive practices, in line with structural and systemic violence in contemporary American society.

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