

The Geography of Sport Management Research in the first half of 2023

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Introduction

The analysis on the geography of sport management (SM) research mainly concerns the settings in which SM research takes place and the geographical distribution of SM knowledge production. To allow such an analysis, we only include empirical studies grounded in specific contexts. There were 265 articles published by the 10 targeted journals in the first half of 2023, 226 of which were empirical and the other 39 were literature review, conceptual paper, book review, interview and so on. The 226 empirical articles were included in this analysis. We applied the same coding protocol for the geography of SM research in the previous *Sport Management Digest* (SMD) issues.

Geography of the SM research settings

We examined the geography of the SM research settings along two dimensions: **sport domains** and **specific sports**. We further plotted each dimension against the continents in which the studies took place, in order to gain a geographical perspective.

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 general nature), sport media (mainly the sport media sector), and others. The domains are not mutually exclusive in a strict sense. To address the issue, we follow the rule of specific-first. For instance, studies examining spectators of specific sport event(s), games of professional league(s), or organization behaviour of athletic departments in NCAA are respectively coded to the domains of sport events, professional sport, and collegiate athletics. Thus, a given sport domain such as professional sport may give rise to studies addressing an array of SM research topics as shown in our annual analysis published in the previous SMD issue. On the other hand, only when the consumption target participants in a given study is general in nature

or about a specific sport, for instance, e-sports, the study will be coded to the domain of sport consumers.

Sport media is another domain requiring some explanations. The symbiotic relationship between media and sport has been well recognized and the media has played a pervasive role in sport management. Given the highly mediated environment in which sports operate, media contents, be it generated by the media coverage, sport organizations, athletes, or the end users, render valuable insights for SM knowledge production. Those media contents are typically triggered by a focal event in a professional sport league, or revolved around a sport event. In these instances, we coded the studies to the domains of 'professional sport' or 'sport events', but noted that they took place in a mediated context. There were **33** articles (15% of the total) situated in mediated contexts while the rest were falling in the domains of professional sport (12), sport events (9), collegiate athletics (4), sport organizations (3), elite sport (3), community sport / SFD (1), and sport industry (1).

As shown in Figure 1, 40% of the 226 empirical articles published in the first half of 2023 were in the domain of professional sport, followed by sport events (16%), collegiate athletics (12%), sport organizations (10%), and sport consumers (9%). The other five domains each accounted for a small percentage. Overall, this distribution of sport domains is similar to the empirical articles published in 2022 by the ten targeted journals.

Figure 1. The distribution of sport domains

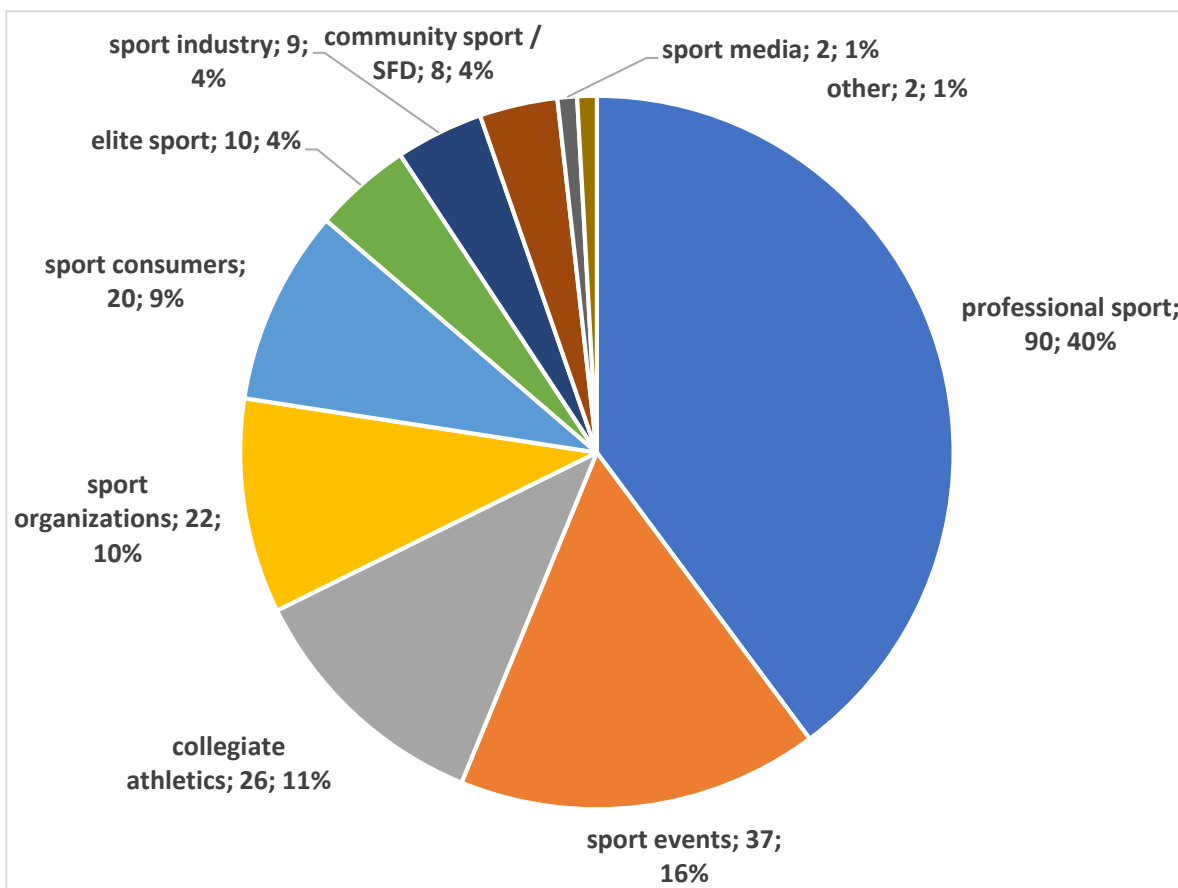


Table 1. Sport domains across continental contexts

Sport domain	Continental context								Total
	NA	EU	OC	AS	AF	CSA	CC	IN	
professional sport	44	15	6	13	0	0	7	5	90
	48.9%	16.7%	6.7%	14.4%	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	5.6%	100.0%
sport events	5	6	2	11	1	2	5	5	37
	13.5%	16.2%	5.4%	29.7%	2.7%	5.4%	13.5%	13.5%	100.0%
collegiate athletics	23	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	26
	88.5%	0.0%	0.0%	11.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
sport organizations	6	8	3	1	1	0	1	2	22
	27.3%	36.4%	13.6%	4.5%	4.5%	0.0%	4.5%	9.1%	100.0%
sport consumers	11	4	0	2	0	0	2	1	20
	55.0%	20.0%	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	5.0%	100.0%
elite sport	0	7	0	0	0	0	1	2	10
	0.0%	70.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	20.0%	100.0%
sport industry	4	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	9
	44.4%	22.2%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
community sport / SFD	3	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	8
	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
sport media	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
other	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Total	97	47	12	33	3	2	17	15	226
	42.9 %	20.8 %	5.3%	14.6 %	1.3%	.9%	7.5%	6.6%	100.0 %

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

Table 1 shows the distribution of sport domains across the **continental contexts**. For the general pattern of continental distribution, North America served as the continental context with the greatest number of articles (42.9%), followed by Europe (20.8%), Asia (14.6%), and Oceania (5.3%). The pattern is also consistent with the year of 2022. Articles with international contexts largely remained the same (7.6% in 2022 vs. 6.6% in this period). However, articles applying cross-continental contexts raised from 3.8% in 2022 to 7.5% in the first half of 2023. Also noteworthy is the minimal presence of Africa (1.3%), and Central and South America (0.9%).

The domain distribution across continental contexts revealed the following features:

First, the greatest number of articles in the domain of professional sport came from North America, followed by Europe, and Asia.

Second, North America dominated the domain of collegiate athletics (88.5%). The continent also had the greatest number of articles in the domain of sport consumers.

Third, same as 2022, the Asian contexts supplied the greatest number of articles in the domain of sport events. The domain of sport events was again the only domain with articles coming from all six continents.

Fourth, Europe featured the greatest number of articles in the domains of sport organizations and elite sport.

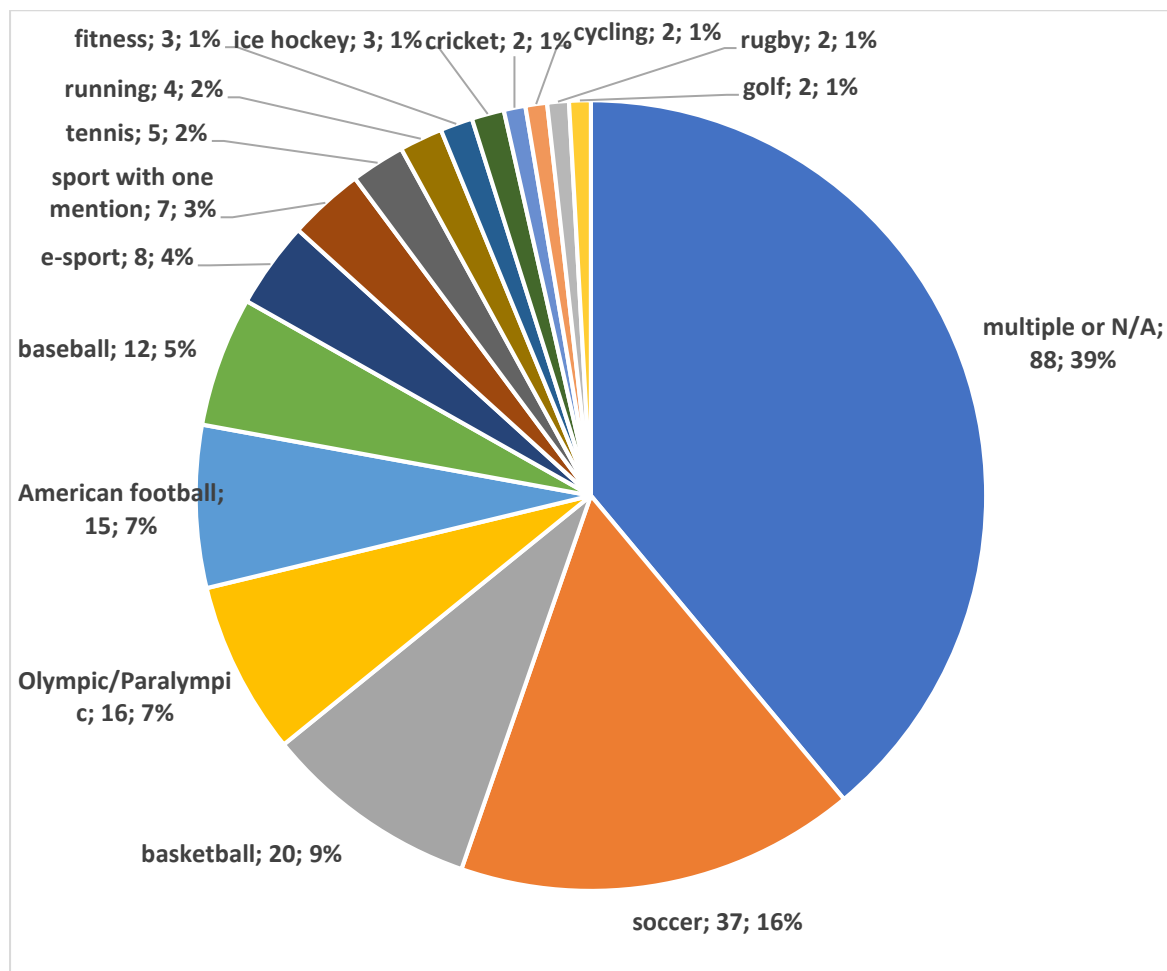
Finally, as noted above there was a surge in articles with cross-continental contexts. These articles mainly fell into the domains of professional sport and sport events.

Regarding the **specific sports** that contextualised the SM research settings, a large portion of articles (39%) utilized a multi-sports context, or did not specify the sports in association with the sport domain (see Figure 2). In a few instances, the information of the sport was intentionally omitted in order to protect anonymity. For instance, a

study situated in professional sport may choose not to reveal the name and sport of the league.

As shown in Figure 2, football (soccer) continued to be the most popular sport for SM research settings, followed by basketball, Olympic/Paralympic, American football, baseball, and e-sports. In reflection, Olympic/Paralympic represents an array of sports included in the competition programme of these Games, corresponding to the domain of sport events with Olympic/Paralympic Games serving as the research setting. Finally, sports that only appeared in one article during this period were wrestling, boxing, **biathlon**, **disc golf**, car racing, **wheelchair basketball**, and swimming. It is encouraging to see that the less researched sports such as disc golf, wheelchair basketball, biathlon entered the radar of SM research.

Figure 2. The distribution of specific sports



An examination of the continental distribution of the top six sports revealed that Europe housed most of the articles with football (soccer) featuring in research settings whereas North America was home for articles featuring American football, basketball, and baseball. It is also interesting to note that a great number of articles set in Olympic/Paralympic Games came from Asia, probably crediting to the fact that the continent hosted three consecutive Games (PyeongChang 2018, Tokyo 2020, and Beijing 2022). Finally, e-sports continued to garner interests from SM researchers. Studies situated in e-sports settings covered the continents of North America, Europe, Asia, as well as cross-continental or international settings (see Table 2).

Table 2. Specific sport by continental context

Sport	Continental context								Total
	NA	EU	OC	AS	AF	CS A	CC	IN	
Football (soccer)	8	21	2	2	0	0	2	2	37
basketball	13	0	0	5	0	0	2	0	20
Olympic/Paralympic	3	2	0	6	0	2	3	0	16
American football	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
baseball	7	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	12
e-sports	2	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	8

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

We approached the geography of SM knowledge production by examining (1) the association between the articles' continental context and the continental location of the author's institutional affiliation, and (2) the distribution of the continental contexts of the articles published by the ten targeted journals.

Following the previous analyses, we are mainly interested in three patterns of **geographical context-author association**: (1) consistent context-author geographical location, (2) inconsistent context-author geographical location, and (3) cross-continental collaboration. Using cultural psychology and anthropology perspectives, we revealed a consistent pattern that helps to grasp tacit meanings grounded in the local culture derived from the research setting as the authors are likely to be native to the culture. An inconsistent pattern suggest a misalignment between the hidden cultural assumptions in the research setting and the researchers entering the site as outsiders. Nonetheless, there are also cases that although the pairing of the authors' institutional affiliation and the geographical context of the study indicates an inconsistency, the authors in fact are well conversed with the culture of the research setting because of their cultural origin. For instance, although some authors teach and research in USA institutions, they are South Koreans and conduct research using South Korean settings. Finally, the pattern of cross-continental collaboration is popular in SM research (20.8% of the total articles). This pattern may enjoy the advantage of incorporating both emic and etic perspectives when deciphering local meanings (Pike, 1967).

As shown in Table 3, the majority of articles with geographical settings in the Global North enjoyed a consistent pattern in context-author geographical location (NA: 79.4%; EU: 72.3%; OC: 75.0%). On the other hand, articles with settings located in the Global South tended to have an inconsistent pattern (AF: 100%; CSA: 50%; AS: 33.3%). The pattern of cross-continental collaboration represents a desired form of SM knowledge production allowing due cultural sensitivity, assuming that at least one author in the research team is native to the culture of the research context. Over 20% of the article in the covered period assumed a knowledge production pattern of cross-continental collaboration, particularly in the Global South (AS: 42.4%, 14 articles; CSA: 50%, 1 article). It is also encouraging to observe that a sizable portion of articles with

cross-continental settings were produced by cross-continental author teams (CC: 41.2%).

Table 3. Continental context versus author institutional affiliation

Continental context	Author institutional affiliation					
	NA	EU	OC	AS	CC	
NA	77	6	1	2	11	97
	79.4%	6.2%	1.0%	2.1%	11.3%	100.0%
EU	1	34	1	0	11	47
	2.1%	72.3%	2.1%	0.0%	23.4%	100.0%
OC	1	0	9	0	2	12
	8.3%	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%	16.7%	100.0%
AS	6	4	1	8	14	33
	18.2%	12.1%	3.0%	24.2%	42.4%	100.0%
AF	1	2	0	0	0	3
	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
CSA	0	0	1	0	1	2
	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	100.0%
CC	5	3	1	1	7	17
	29.4%	17.6%	5.9%	5.9%	41.2%	100.0%
IN	1	11	1	1	1	15
	6.7%	73.3%	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%	100.0%
Total	92	60	15	12	47	226
	40.7%	26.5%	6.6%	5.3%	20.8%	100.0%

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.

The distribution of continental contexts of the articles published in the 10 targeted journals are shown in Table 4. As mentioned above, the greatest number of articles in

the covered period were conducted in North American context (42.9%), followed by Europe (20.8%) and Asia (14.6%). With such a geographical distribution, the ten journals tended to assign their pages to articles contextualized in North America, particularly JSM, SMR, IJSC, C&S, and JSE. Notably, journals with European connections (ESMQ, IJSP, IJSF) published the greatest number of studies contextualised in Europe while the greatest number of articles contextualised in Asia appeared in IJSMS.

Table 4. Continental contexts of articles from the 10 journals

	Continental context								Total
	NA	EU	OC	AS	AF	CSA	CC	IN	
JSM	12	2	2	2	0	0	3	0	21
	57.1%	9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	100.0%
SMR	13	2	3	3	1	0	1	2	25
	52.0%	8.0%	12.0%	12.0%	4.0%	0.0%	4.0%	8.0%	100.0%
IJSMS	7	4	0	10	0	0	0	0	21
	33.3%	19.0%	0.0%	47.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
ESMQ	9	14	3	5	1	1	3	3	39
	23.1%	35.9%	7.7%	12.8%	2.6%	2.6%	7.7%	7.7%	100.0%
IJSF	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	8
	37.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	100.0%
IJSC	10	2	1	3	0	0	3	0	19
	52.6%	10.5%	5.3%	15.8%	0.0%	0.0%	15.8%	0.0%	100.0%
IJSPP	4	6	2	1	0	1	1	2	17
	23.5%	35.3%	11.8%	5.9%	0.0%	5.9%	5.9%	11.8%	100.0%
JSE	15	4	0	1	0	0	3	3	26
	57.7%	15.4%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%	11.5%	11.5%	100.0%
C&S	15	6	0	4	0	0	2	1	28
	53.6%	21.4%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	3.6%	100.0%
JGSM	9	4	1	4	1	0	1	2	22

	40.9%	18.2%	4.5%	18.2%	4.5%	0.0%	4.5%	9.1%	100.0%
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Conclusions

This analysis found that the geography of research settings and SM knowledge production of the 226 articles published by the ten SM journals in the first half of 2023 assumed patterns similar to the year of 2022, with authors affiliated with institutions in the Global North publishing the majority of articles contextualised in the Global North. Meanwhile, it is notable that a sizable number of articles (20.8%) were produced through cross-continental collaboration with authors from the Global South in the research team, particularly authors based in Asia. In fact, Asia (14.6%) was the third most popular continental context for SM research, after North America (42.9%) and Europe (20.8%). As a general trend, e-sports continue to garner interests from SM researchers, being the sixth most popular sport in the SM research settings. Finally, sports for disabled people such as wheelchair basketball debuted in SM research settings since the inception of the analysis of the geography of SM research in 2021.

1. References

Pike, K. L. (1967). *Language in relation to a unified theory of the structure of human behaviour*. The Hague: Mouton.