Integrating Resource-Based View, Resource-Advantage Theory, and Service-Dominant Logic: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Strategy in Sports Organisations

Prof Dr Vincent English[1]* & Dr Barry Mocke[2]

[1]*Uninettuno University, Rome, Italy*
[2]*Longford International College, Ireland*

*Corresponding author:** Vincent English, Professor of Strategic Management. Italy.

Abstract
This research develops and validates the first integrated strategic framework that combines the Resource-Based View (RBV), Resource-Advantage Theory (RAT), and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), specifically designed for sports organisations. Through a sequential mixed-methods approach incorporating stakeholder-informed framework development, the study addresses critical gaps in existing sports management literature by providing comprehensive guidance for strategic management within complex stakeholder environments. The empirical investigation, conducted through a three-phase methodology involving focus groups, surveys, and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders from Club X (an Irish Premier League team), reveals that success in sports organisations is fundamentally multi-dimensional and stakeholder-defined. The integrated strategic framework is operationalised through three practical tools: the Strategic Asset Implementation and Prioritisation Tool, the Strategic Alignment Dashboard, and the Stakeholder Co-Creation Matrix. These tools translate theoretical insights into actionable guidance, maintaining both theoretical coherence and practical effectiveness. The research demonstrates that theoretical integration can overcome the limitations of individual theories while creating synergistic benefits that provide more holistic strategic guidance than single-theory approaches. The framework's emphasis on stakeholder engagement and collaborative value creation reflects broader trends toward more participatory and sustainable approaches to organisational management, positioning sports organisations to lead these developments while balancing commercial success with social responsibility.

Keywords: Resource-Based View, Resource-Advantage Theory, Service-Dominant Logic, Sports Management, Integrated Strategic Framework, Stakeholder Engagement.

Introduction

Research Context and Motivation

Contemporary sports organisations operate within increasingly complex environments characterised by diverse stakeholder expectations, resource constraints, and evolving social responsibilities [1, 2]. Traditional approaches to strategic management, predominantly derived from general business contexts, have proven insufficient for addressing the unique challenges facing sports organisations, particularly those operating at community and regional levels [3, 4]. These organisations must simultaneously pursue competitive effectiveness, financial sustainability, community engagement, and social impact while managing complex

relationships with supporters, sponsors, governing bodies, and broader community stakeholders [5-7]. Recent developments — including technological change, digital fan engagement, and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic — have further intensified these pressures, reinforcing the need for context-specific and integrated strategic frameworks [8, 9].

The fragmentation of existing theoretical approaches has limited their explanatory power and practical utility for sports management practitioners [10, 2]. While individual theories such as the Resource-Based View (RBV), Resource-Advantage Theory (RAT), and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) offer valuable in-

sights, their isolated application alone fails to capture the multidimensional nature of strategic challenges in sports contexts [11, 8]. Recent research underscores the growing complexity of the strategic environment — shaped by stakeholder diversity, technological disruption, and evolving governance expectations — demanding integrative frameworks capable of addressing resource development, dynamic capability enhancement, and stakeholder value creation in a coherent and practically actionable manner [6, 4].

The motivation for this research emerges from the recognition that sports organisations possess unique characteristics that distinguish them from traditional business enterprises [12, 13]. The temporal nature of sports competition, emotional connections with stakeholders, community embeddedness, and social responsibilities create distinctive strategic challenges that require specialised theoretical approaches [14, 15]. Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on sustainability, social responsibility, and stakeholder engagement in sports management necessitates frameworks that can integrate these considerations with traditional performance objectives [16-18].

Research Problem and Objectives

The central research problem addressed in this study concerns the absence of integrated theoretical frameworks specifically designed for sports organisations that can simultaneously address resource management, dynamic capability development, and stakeholder engagement [19]. Existing literature has predominantly applied individual theories in isolation, limiting their capacity to provide comprehensive guidance for the complex strategic challenges facing contemporary sports organisations [20]. The primary research objective is to develop and validate an integrated strategic framework that combines RBV, RAT, and SDL principles to provide comprehensive guidance for sports organisations seeking to achieve sustainable competitive advantage while creating stakeholder value [21]. This objective encompasses several specific aims: first, to identify the key strategic assets, dynamic capabilities, and stakeholder engagement mechanisms that contribute to organisational effectiveness in sports contexts; second, to develop practical tools that operationalise the integrated framework for implementation by sports organisations; and third, to validate the framework through empirical investigation with stakeholders from a representative sports organisation.

The research addresses three fundamental questions that guide the investigation: (1) How can RBV, RAT, and SDL be integrated into a coherent strategic framework specifically designed for sports organisations? (2) What are the key components and implementation mechanisms required for effective framework operationalisation? (3) How do stakeholders perceive the relevance and utility of the integrated framework for addressing contemporary challenges in sports management?

Research Significance and Contributions

This research makes several significant contributions to sports management theory and practice by advancing strategic management understanding within complex stakeholder environments. The theoretical contribution lies in the development of the first systematic integration of RBV, RAT, and SDL specifically designed for sports organisations, addressing a critical gap in existing literature [22, 2]. The framework demonstrates that theoretical integration can overcome the limitations of individual theories while creating synergistic benefits that provide more comprehensive strategic guidance than single-theory approaches.

The practical contribution encompasses the development of three operational tools that translate theoretical insights into actionable guidance for sports organisations. The Strategic Asset Implementation and Prioritisation Tool offer systematic approaches to resource identification, evaluation, and development, serving both competitive effectiveness and stakeholder value creation. The Strategic Alignment Dashboard enables organisations to monitor and enhance their dynamic capabilities while maintaining strategic coherence. The Stakeholder Co-Creation Matrix facilitates systematic stakeholder engagement and collaborative value creation.

The methodological contribution demonstrates the value of stakeholder-informed framework development that combines quantitative breadth with qualitative depth [23, 15]. The sequential mixed-methods approach enables a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perspectives while providing empirical validation for theoretical constructs. This methodology provides a template for future research seeking to develop practical frameworks that align theoretical insights with stakeholder expectations and organisational realities.

Paper Structure and Organisation

This paper is organised into seven main sections that systematically develop and validate the integrated strategic framework. Following this introduction, Section 2 presents a comprehensive literature review that examines the theoretical foundations of RBV, RAT, and SDL, and identifies opportunities for integration within sports management contexts. Section 3 describes the research methodology, including the sequential mixed-methods approach, stakeholder-informed framework development, and empirical validation procedures. Section 4 reports the research findings, including stakeholder perspectives on strategic challenges, success dimensions, and framework requirements. Section 5 introduces the RBV-RAT-SDL Integrated Strategic Framework, including its theoretical architecture and three operational tools. Section 6 discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the research, including contributions to sports management literature and guidance for practitioners and policymakers. Finally, section 7 concludes the paper by summarising key contributions, acknowledging limitations, and outlining directions for future research. The paper also includes comprehensive references and relevant diagrams that illustrate the framework components and their relationships.

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations
Resource-Based View in Sports Management

The Resource-Based View (RBV), originally developed by Wernerfelt and refined by Barney, provides a foundational perspective for understanding how organisations achieve and sustain competitive advantage through strategic resource management. The theory posits that organisations can achieve superior performance by developing and deploying resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and organisationally embedded (VRIO) [24]. In sports management contexts, RBV applications have demon-

strated relevance in explaining how organisations leverage distinctive assets for competitive differentiation and the creation of stakeholder value.

Smart and Wolfe conducted seminal research applying RBV principles to intercollegiate athletics, demonstrating how sports organisations can develop sustainable competitive advantages through strategic resource management. Their work identified key resources, including coaching expertise, recruiting capabilities, facilities, and organisational culture, as critical determinants of athletic success. However, their analysis focused primarily on competitive performance outcomes, with limited consideration of broader stakeholder value creation and community impact dimensions, which characterise contemporary sports management challenges – a critique that remains relevant today.

Subsequent research has expanded RBV applications in sports contexts to encompass broader organisational effectiveness considerations [25]. Wicker and Breuer examined resource management in nonprofit sport clubs, identifying human resources, facilities, and community relationships as critical assets for organisational sustainability. Their research highlighted the importance of resource complementarity and stakeholder embeddedness in creating sustainable competitive advantages, particularly for resource-constrained organisations operating within complex stakeholder environments.

The application of RBV principles in sports management has revealed several context-specific considerations that distinguish sports organisations from traditional business enterprises. The temporal nature of sports competition creates unique challenges for resource development and deployment, requiring organisations to balance short-term performance pressures with long-term strategic development [26]. Furthermore, the emotional connections between sports organisations and their stakeholders create opportunities for developing resources that are deeply embedded within community relationships and difficult for competitors to replicate.

Contemporary RBV applications in sports management have increasingly recognised the importance of intangible resources, particularly those related to stakeholder relationships, brand reputation, and cultural identity [27, 28]. Brand equity, organisational culture, volunteer networks, and community relationships have emerged as critical strategic assets that satisfy VRIO criteria while contributing to both competitive effectiveness and stakeholder value creation. These resources often derive their strategic value from their embeddedness within stakeholder ecosystems rather than their intrinsic characteristics – a theme reinforced in the findings of this study. However, traditional RBV applications have been criticised for their static perspective on resource management, with limited consideration of how resources evolve and adapt over time [29, 30].

This limitation is particularly relevant in sports contexts, where organisations must continuously adapt to changing competitive conditions, stakeholder expectations, and regulatory environments. The need for more dynamic approaches to resource management has led to increased interest in integrating RBV with theories that emphasise organisational adaptation, strategic responsiveness, and dynamic capability development.

Resource-Advantage Theory and Dynamic Capabilities

Resource-Advantage Theory (RAT), developed by Hunt and Morgan, extends RBV principles by emphasising the dynamic nature of competitive advantage and the importance of continuous resource reconfiguration in response to changing environmental conditions. RAT posits that sustainable competitive advantage derives from superior resource deployment capabilities rather than solely resource possession, highlighting the critical role of dynamic capabilities in organisational effectiveness [31, 32]. The theory's emphasis on dynamic capabilities aligns closely with contemporary challenges in sports management, where organisations must continuously adapt to evolving stakeholder expectations, technological developments, and competitive pressures [33].

Dynamic capabilities, defined as the organisation's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments, provide a framework for understanding how sports organisations can maintain effectiveness while adapting to changing circumstances [34, 35]. Eisenhardt and Martin identified several categories of dynamic capabilities that are particularly relevant for sports organisations. These include strategic decision-making processes, alliance and acquisition capabilities, resource allocation routines, and knowledge creation processes. In sports contexts, these capabilities manifest through leadership effectiveness, innovation adoption, organisational learning, and stakeholder engagement capabilities that enable organisations to adapt while maintaining stakeholder relationships and competitive effectiveness – a theme reinforced in the present study's empirical findings.

The application of RAT principles in sports management has highlighted the importance of leadership capabilities in navigating complex stakeholder environments while maintaining organisational focus and effectiveness [36]. Leaders in sports organisations are required to simultaneously balance stakeholder diversity, short-term performance demands, long-term development goals, and the preservation of organisational culture. These sophisticated leadership requirements necessitate dynamic capabilities that enable continuous learning and adaptation. Innovation capabilities represent another critical dynamic capability for sports organisations, encompassing technology adoption, process improvement, and programme development that enhance both competitive effectiveness and stakeholder value creation [37, 38]. Innovation must be pursued systematically to meet evolving expectations while safeguarding core sporting and community-oriented values. This requires capabilities that enable systematic innovation while preserving organisational identity and stakeholder relationships.

Organisational learning capabilities enable sports organisations to systematically capture, process, and apply knowledge from their experiences and stakeholder interactions [39]. These capabilities are particularly important in sports contexts, where organisations must learn from both competitive experiences and stakeholder feedback to enhance their effectiveness. As emphasised in this study, the ability to integrate learning from diverse sources while maintaining organisational coherence represents a critical dynamic capability for sports organisations. Stakeholder engagement capabilities encompass the organisation's ability to systematically identify, engage, and collaborate with diverse

stakeholder groups while managing competing interests and expectations [40, 15].

These capabilities are fundamental for sports organisations, which operate within complex stakeholder ecosystems that include supporters, sponsors, governing bodies, community members, and broader society. The ability to engage stakeholders effectively while maintaining organisational effectiveness represents a sophisticated dynamic capability that requires continuous development and refinement.

Service-Dominant Logic and Value Co-Creation
Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), developed by Vargo and Lusch, represents a paradigm shift from traditional goods-dominant approaches to a service-centred view of value creation that emphasises co-creation, relationship building, and collaborative governance. SDL posits that value is not created by organisations and delivered to customers but rather co-created through interactions between organisations and stakeholders within broader service ecosystems (Vargo & Lusch, 2016) [41]. The SDL perspective is particularly relevant for sports organisations, which operate within complex stakeholder ecosystems where value creation depends heavily on stakeholder participation and engagement [42]. Sports experiences are inherently co-created through interactions between organisations, participants, supporters, and broader community members, making SDL principles highly applicable for understanding and managing sports organisations [43, 44].

Vargo and Lusch identified several foundational premises of SDL that are relevant to sports management. These include the recognition that service is the fundamental basis of exchange, value is co-created by multiple actors, all social and economic actors are resource integrators, and value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. These premises challenge traditional approaches to sports management that emphasise organisational control and value delivery at the expense of collaborative value creation – and reinforce the shift toward participatory, experience-based stakeholder value models, as explored in this study.

The application of SDL principles in sports contexts has been advanced by Woratschek et al., who developed the Sport Value Framework as a fundamental logic for analyses in sport management. Their framework emphasises the importance of understanding sports organisations as part of broader service ecosystems where value is co-created through stakeholder interactions rather than delivered through organisational outputs. This framework directly informs the co-creation matrix presented in this paper, which operationalises SDL for stakeholder engagement. This practical application underscores the importance of building capabilities in engagement, dialogue, and shared decision-making.

Horbel et al. examined how context shapes value co-creation in sport events, demonstrating that spectator experiences are fundamentally co-created through interactions between multiple stakeholders including organisers, participants, other spectators, and broader community members. Their research highlighted the importance of understanding and managing these interactions to enhance value creation while maintaining organisational

effectiveness — an idea further supported by later work examining fan participation and co-creation mechanisms in digital and physical domains [45].

The SDL emphasis on value co-creation aligns closely with contemporary trends in sports management toward more participatory and collaborative approaches to organisational governance [46, 15]. Sports organisations are increasingly recognising the importance of stakeholder participation in strategic planning, programme development, and performance evaluation as mechanisms for enhancing both organisational effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction.

However, the implementation of SDL principles in sports organisations presents several challenges that require careful consideration [47]. The need to balance collaborative governance with organisational effectiveness, manage diverse stakeholder expectations, and maintain competitive focus while engaging in value co-creation requires sophisticated capabilities and systematic approaches. Furthermore, the measurement and evaluation of co-created value present ongoing challenges for sports organisations seeking to implement SDL principles — particularly in environments where accountability frameworks remain focused on linear, output-based models of value delivery.

Integration Opportunities and Theoretical Gaps
The examination of RBV, RAT, and SDL reveals significant opportunities for theoretical integration that can address the limitations of individual theories while creating synergistic benefits for sports management applications (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011) [44]. Each theory contributes unique insights that complement one another: RBV provides frameworks for resource identification and evaluation, RAT emphasises dynamic capability development and strategic adaptation, and SDL offers approaches to stakeholder engagement and value co-creation within broader service ecosystems.

The integration of these theories addresses several critical gaps in existing sports management literature [19, 45]. First, the static nature of traditional RBV applications can be addressed through RAT's emphasis on dynamic capabilities and continuous adaptation. Second, the limited stakeholder focus of traditional strategic management approaches can be enhanced through SDL's emphasis on value co-creation and collaborative governance. Third, the fragmentation of existing theoretical approaches can be overcome through systematic integration that maintains theoretical coherence while providing comprehensive practical guidance — a key objective of the present study. Theoretical integration also addresses the unique characteristics of sports organisations that distinguish them from traditional business enterprises [48]. The temporal nature of sports competition, emotional stakeholder connections, community embeddedness, and social responsibilities create distinctive strategic challenges that require integrated approaches rather than isolated theoretical applications.

This research presents a layered integration of the Resource-Based View (RBV), which informs the identification of strategic assets, the Resource-Advantage Theory (RAT), which guides dynamic capabilities and strategic adaptation, and the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), which supports value co-cre-

ation and stakeholder engagement. This layered logic underpins the RBV–RAT–SDL Integrated Strategic Framework, as shown in Figure 1, which links theoretical foundations with practical tools and strategic outcomes in a unified conceptual model. This integration not only enhances theoretical coherence but also provides a platform for practical implementation through three purpose-built tools, as described in the subsequent sections.

However, the integration of these theories also presents several challenges that require careful consideration [49]. The different ontological and epistemological foundations of the theories necessitate careful integration that maintains theoretical coherence while avoiding conceptual confusion. Furthermore, the operationalisation of integrated frameworks requires sophisticated tools and methodologies that can translate theoretical insights into practical guidance for sports organisations — as addressed through the development of the three tools introduced in this paper.

The literature review reveals that while individual theories have been applied in sports contexts, systematic integration remains limited [50, 22]. This represents a significant opportunity for theoretical development that can advance both sports manage-

ment theory and practice while providing comprehensive frameworks for addressing contemporary challenges in sports organisations — especially those operating in resource-constrained, community-embedded environments. Figure 1 illustrates a layered integration of three theoretical perspectives — RBV, RAT, and SDL — to support strategic planning and implementation in sports organisations.

The first layer, RBV, focuses on identifying and categorising strategic assets (tangible and intangible) through the VRIO lens. These feed into the second layer, where RAT explains how organisations deploy dynamic capabilities (e.g., leadership, innovation, learning) and engage in strategic adaptation (e.g., environmental scanning, opportunity identification). The third layer, SDL, operationalises value co-creation through stakeholder engagement, collaborative governance, and service ecosystem participation. The base of the framework connects theory to practice via three implementation tools — Strategic Asset Implementation and Prioritisation, Strategic Alignment Dashboard, and Stakeholder Co-Creation Matrix — which collectively drive the strategic outcomes of sustainable competitive advantage, stakeholder value creation, organisational effectiveness, and community impact.
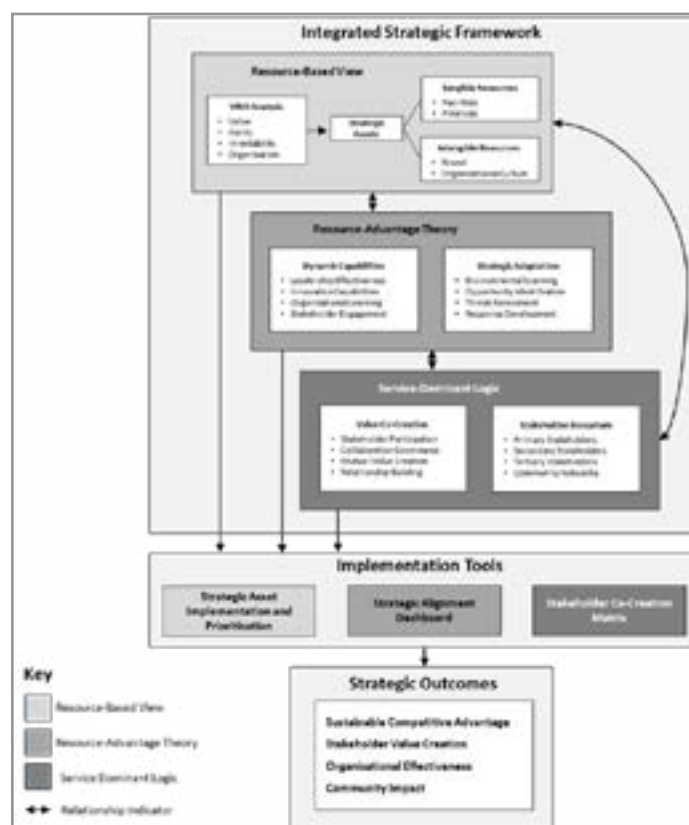

Figure 1: RBV-RAT-SDL Integrated Strategic Framework

Methodology
Research Design and Approach
This research employed a sequential mixed-methods design that combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to develop and validate the integrated strategic framework [23]. It consisted of three distinct phases, designed to build upon one another, providing a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perspectives while ensuring empirical validation of theoretical constructs [51].

The research approach was grounded in a pragmatic paradigm prioritising practical utility and real-world relevance while maintaining theoretical rigour and methodological transparency [52, 10]. The first phase involved qualitative exploration through focus groups with key stakeholders from Club X, a representative mid-sized professional sports organisation. This phase aimed to identify strategic challenges, success dimensions, and framework requirements as perceived by stakeholders while informing the development of quantitative survey instruments [53].

The second phase involved quantitative validation through online surveys with a broader sample of Club X stakeholders, providing statistical support for framework components and relationships [54]. The third phase involved in-depth interviews with key decision-makers from Club X, providing qualitative validation for the integrated framework and its operational tools [55, 56].

The research design incorporated principles of participatory action research, emphasising collaboration between researchers and practitioners to address real-world problems while generating theoretical insights [57]. The stakeholder-informed framework development process ensured that theoretical insights were grounded in organisational realities and stakeholder expectations, enhancing the practical relevance and utility of the research outcomes [58, 59]. It also reinforced co-creation of knowledge, which aligns with the SDL underpinning the framework's development.

Case Study Selection and Context

Club X was selected as the case study organisation for this research due to its representative characteristics as a mid-sized professional sports organisation operating within a complex stakeholder environment. The club competes in a professional league with significant competitive pressures while maintaining strong community connections and a commitment to youth development. It experiences resource constraints that necessitate strategic approaches to resource management and stakeholder engagement. Its dual identity as both a performance-driven and community-embedded organisation reflects the hybrid nature of many contemporary sports clubs, making it an appropriate exemplar for theory development and testing [22].

The case study approach enabled in-depth investigation of strategic challenges and organisational dynamics within a real-world context, providing rich data for framework development and validation [60]. The single-case design enabled a detailed exploration of stakeholder perspectives and organisational processes, thereby enhancing the internal validity and practical relevance of the findings [61]. This depth of inquiry aligns with the study's abductive logic, where theoretical constructs were refined through iterative engagement with stakeholder insights [62].

The research context is characterised by a professional sports league with a mix of professional and semi-professional clubs, creating a competitive environment with significant resource disparities. The regulatory environment includes financial fair play regulations and club licensing requirements that influence strategic decision-making. The cultural context is characterised by strong community identities and passionate supporter engagement, creating both opportunities and challenges for sports organisations. These contextual factors provided a dynamic backdrop for testing the proposed framework's relevance and adaptability in practice.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for this research involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods across the three research phases. In Phase 1, four focus groups were conducted with key stakeholder groups from Club X, including supporters, volunteers, parents of youth academy players, and club management. The focus groups explored strategic challenges, success dimensions, and framework requirements, providing rich qualitative data for thematic analysis [63]. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure representation across stakeholder categories [64]. Thematic saturation guided the number of focus groups, ensuring adequate depth and diversity of perspectives.

In Phase 2, an online survey was distributed to a broader sample of Club X stakeholders, including supporters, community members, and club partners. The survey instrument was designed based on the findings from Phase 1 and included questions related to strategic priorities, organisational performance, and stakeholder engagement. The survey generated quantitative data, which were examined using both descriptive and inferential statistics to validate the framework components and relationships [65]. The sample size exceeded the minimum threshold for reliable factor-level analysis, and internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha.

In Phase 3, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten key decision-makers from Club X, including board members, senior management, and coaching staff. The interviews explored the relevance and utility of the integrated framework and its operational tools, providing qualitative validation for the research outcomes. Interview transcripts were analysed thematically to identify patterns concerning framework implementation and perceived organisational impact [66].

Interviews followed a semi-structured guide to strike a balance between consistency across interviews and flexibility to explore emerging insights [55]. An integrative data analysis approach was adopted, combining thematic interpretation of qualitative data from focus groups and interviews with statistical analysis of survey responses. Triangulation across phases enhanced the credibility of results and supported the empirical robustness of the integrated framework [67].

Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

This research adhered to the highest ethical standards to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. The study received ethical approval from the appropriate institutional review board, and all data were securely stored to protect participant privacy. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence, in accordance with best ethical practice [68]. All procedures complied with the institutional, national, and disciplinary guidelines for research involving human subjects. Trustworthiness of the research findings was established through several mechanisms, including triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity [69].

Triangulation involved the use of multiple data sources and methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Member checking was conducted by sharing key findings with selected participants to ensure their accuracy and relevance. Reflexivity was ensured through ongoing reflection on the researcher's role and biases throughout the research process. An audit trail was maintained throughout data collec-

tion and analysis to ensure transparency and enable external verification of methodological decisions [70].

Findings and Framework Development
Strategic Challenges in Sports Organisations
The empirical investigation revealed that sports organisations face multifaceted strategic challenges that require integrated approaches instead of fragmented theoretical applications. Participants consistently identified resource constraints as a fundamental challenge, with limited financial resources necessitating strategic approaches to resource allocation and development [22]. However, the research revealed that resource challenges extend beyond financial constraints and include human capital, infrastructure limitations, and capability development needs that are critical for achieving competitive effectiveness and creating stakeholder value.

Stakeholder management emerged as a particularly complex challenge, with participants highlighting the difficulty of balancing competing stakeholder expectations while maintaining organisational focus and effectiveness [71]. The research identified multiple stakeholder groups with different priorities and expectations, including supporters seeking competitive success, community members emphasising social impact, sponsors requiring commercial returns, and governing bodies enforcing regulatory compliance. Volunteers and youth academy families also emerged as distinct stakeholder groups with unique needs, underscoring the breadth of the stakeholder ecosystem. Managing these divergent expectations while preserving strategic coherence represents a critical strategic challenge for sports organisations.

The temporal nature of sports competition creates additional strategic challenges that distinguish sports organisations from traditional business enterprises [72]. Participants emphasised the difficulty of balancing short-term performance pressures with long-term strategic development, particularly in contexts where competitive results directly impact stakeholder support and resource availability. This temporal tension requires integrated and adaptive strategic approaches that can maintain competitive focus while building long-term organisational capabilities and stakeholder relationships.

Success Dimensions and Performance Indicators
The research revealed that success in sports organisations is fundamentally multi-faceted, dynamic, and stakeholder-defined, challenging traditional performance-centric approaches that have dominated sports management practice [73]. Participants identified four primary success dimensions that must be balanced for sustainable organisational effectiveness: competitive performance, financial sustainability, community engagement, and organisational development. Competitive performance remains a critical success dimension, with participants emphasising the importance of on-field success for stakeholder satisfaction and organisational legitimacy.

However, the research revealed that competitive success must be balanced with other success dimensions to ensure long-term sustainability. Participants highlighted the importance of developing competitive capabilities that are sustainable over time, rather than prioritising short-term results over enduring organisational growth. This reflects a growing emphasis on "competitive resilience" as a strategic objective in resource-constrained environments.

Financial sustainability emerged as an equally important success dimension, with participants emphasising the need for diversified revenue streams and prudent financial management. The findings indicated that financial sustainability requires strategic approaches to revenue generation that align with stakeholder expectations and organisational values. Participants highlighted the importance of developing financial capabilities that support both competitive effectiveness and community engagement. Revenue sources, including matchday income, sponsorship, grants, and merchandise, were identified as key areas requiring enhanced integration. Community engagement represents a distinctive success dimension for sports organisations, reflecting their unique role within community ecosystems [19].

Participants emphasised the importance of maintaining strong community connections while pursuing competitive and commercial objectives. Data indicated that community engagement requires systematic approaches to stakeholder relationship management and collaborative value creation. Examples included outreach programmes, youth development initiatives, and cultural events that reinforce the club's embeddedness within its locality. Organisational development encompasses the internal capabilities and processes that enable sports organisations to achieve their multiple objectives while adapting to changing circumstances [34]. Participants highlighted the importance of developing leadership capabilities, organisational culture, and learning processes that support both competitive effectiveness and stakeholder value creation. A particular emphasis was placed on the importance of cross-functional leadership, communication, and strategic alignment at all levels of the organisation.

Strategic Assets and Resource Identification
The empirical investigation identified five categories of strategic assets that are critical for sports organisation effectiveness: youth academy systems, community relationships, volunteer networks, brand equity, and organisational culture. These assets demonstrate the characteristics of strategic resources as defined by RBV theory, being valuable, rare, inimitable, and organisationally embedded [74]. Youth academy systems emerged as a critical strategic asset that serves multiple organisational objectives simultaneously. Participants highlighted the role of youth development in creating competitive advantages through player development, while also building community connections and fostering stakeholder loyalty. Findings confirmed that effective youth academy systems require significant resource investments but provide long-term returns through player development, community engagement, and stakeholder value creation. Moreover, they contribute to financial sustainability through talent monetisation and serve as a visible symbol of the club's identity and values.

Community relationships represent a distinctive strategic asset for sports organisations, providing access to resources, legitimacy, and stakeholder support that are difficult for competitors to replicate [75]. Participants emphasised the importance of building and maintaining authentic community connections that extend beyond transactional relationships to encompass mutu-

al value creation and collaborative governance. These relationships often serve as a platform for co-produced social initiatives, enhancing the club's cultural relevance.

Volunteer networks provide critical human resources for sports organisations, while also creating opportunities for stakeholder engagement and fostering community connections [76]. Evidence indicated that effective volunteer management requires systematic approaches to recruitment, training, and retention that recognise volunteers as strategic assets rather than merely cost-saving mechanisms. Successful clubs cultivate a culture of appreciation and inclusion around their volunteers, enhancing long-term organisational resilience.

Brand equity encompasses the intangible assets related to an organisation's reputation, stakeholder loyalty, and market position that influence stakeholder behaviour and access to resources [77]. Participants emphasised the importance of building brand equity through consistent performance, authentic stakeholder engagement, and community contributions, rather than merely focusing on marketing activities. Brand equity was also seen to mediate stakeholder trust, attract commercial partners, and underpin advocacy within the local ecosystem.

Organisational culture represents the shared values, beliefs, and practices that guide organisational behaviour and interactions with stakeholders [78]. Findings revealed that strong organisational cultures provide competitive advantages through enhanced stakeholder loyalty, improved performance, and increased adaptability to changing circumstances. Clubs with clearly articulated and lived cultural values were perceived as more cohesive, mission-driven, and capable of managing uncertainty.

Dynamic Capabilities and Organisational Adaptation
The research identified four critical dynamic capabilities that enable sports organisations to maintain effectiveness while adapting to changing circumstances: leadership effectiveness, innovation capabilities, organisational learning, and stakeholder engagement. These capabilities align with RAT principles by emphasising the organisation's ability to reconfigure resources and adapt to changing environmental conditions [79].

Leadership effectiveness encompasses the capabilities required to guide sports organisations through complex strategic challenges while maintaining stakeholder relationships and organisational culture [80]. Participants highlighted the importance of leadership capabilities that can balance competing stakeholder demands, manage change processes, and maintain organisational focus while adapting to evolving circumstances. Effective leadership was viewed as both decision-making and sense-making, enabling the organisation to navigate short-term pressures while sustaining a long-term strategic vision.

Innovation capabilities enable sports organisations to continuously improve their processes, programmes, and stakeholder engagement approaches while maintaining their core identity and values [81]. The research revealed that innovation in sports organisations must strike a balance between technological advancements and stakeholder expectations, as well as organisational culture. Examples cited by participants included digital

fan engagement platforms, innovative community outreach initiatives, and improved academy development models.

Organisational learning capabilities enable sports organisations to systematically capture, process, and apply knowledge from their experiences and stakeholder interactions [82]. Participants emphasised the importance of learning capabilities that can integrate insights from competitive experiences, stakeholder feedback, and industry developments to enhance organisational effectiveness. Clubs that embedded learning mechanisms—such as review cycles, reflective practices, and knowledge-sharing systems—were perceived as more agile, cohesive, and strategically aligned.

Stakeholder engagement capabilities encompass the organisation's ability to systematically identify, engage, and collaborate with diverse stakeholder groups while managing competing interests and expectations [40]. The research revealed that effective stakeholder engagement requires sophisticated capabilities in communication, relationship management, and collaborative governance. These capabilities were closely linked to enhanced trust, enduring stakeholder loyalty, and the proactive management of emerging issues.

RBV-RAT-SDL Integrated Strategic Framework
Framework Architecture and Theoretical Integration
The RBV-RAT-SDL Integrated Strategic Framework represents a synthesis of empirical findings and theoretical insights that address the multifaceted challenges facing contemporary sports organisations [83]. The framework architecture is built upon three interconnected theoretical foundations that operate synergistically to provide comprehensive strategic guidance while maintaining practical utility for organisational implementation [24]. This integrated approach reflects the need to shift from single-theory abstraction to applied, multi-layered thinking in real-world sport settings.

The RBV component provides the foundational layer for strategic asset identification, evaluation, and development [84]. This component guides organisations systematically identifying tangible and intangible resources that satisfy the VRIO criteria, while recognising the unique characteristics of sports contexts in which competitive advantage often derives from intangible assets, such as community relationships, organisational culture, and stakeholder loyalty [85]. It emphasises complementarity and interconnectedness, noting that strategic value often emerges from resource configurations rather than isolated asset possession. In the case of Club X, strategic assets such as brand equity, volunteer networks, and academy systems illustrate this complementarity in practice.

The RAT component provides the dynamic layer that enables continuous resource reconfiguration and capability development in response to changing environmental conditions [31]. This component addresses the limitations of static RBV approaches by emphasising dynamic capabilities in leadership, innovation, organisational learning, and stakeholder engagement that enable sports organisations to maintain competitive effectiveness while adapting to evolving stakeholder expectations and market conditions [34]. Sustainable advantage, in this view, stems not from resource possession but from superior resource deployment

capabilities — a principle especially salient in resource-constrained environments where strategic agility and capability orchestration are paramount.

The SDL component provides the stakeholder engagement layer that enables value co-creation and collaborative governance approaches [86]. This component addresses the complex stakeholder environments within which sports organisations operate by providing systematic approaches to stakeholder engagement, participatory governance, and collaborative value creation [45]. The SDL component recognises that value is co-created through stakeholder interactions rather than delivered through organisational outputs, thus requiring advanced capabilities in relationship management and co-production. In Club X, SDL was reflected in co-designed youth programmes, supporter consultation initiatives, and embedded community outreach, reinforcing the organisation's role as both service provider and community asset.

Framework integration occurs through three primary mechanisms that ensure theoretical coherence while maintaining practical utility. (1) Resource-capability alignment ensures that strategic assets identified through RBV principles are developed and deployed through dynamic capabilities emphasised by RAT [30]. (2) Stakeholder-resource integration ensures that resource development and capability enhancement serve stakeholder value creation objectives emphasised by SDL [46]. (3) Dynamic co-creation enables continuous framework adaptation through stakeholder feedback and collaborative improvement processes. This last mechanism is essential to ensure the framework's adaptability in rapidly changing competitive and socio-cultural contexts.

Strategic Asset Implementation Tool

The Strategic Asset Implementation Tool operationalises RBV principles within the integrated RBV–RAT–SDL framework by providing a systematic four-stage approach to the identification, evaluation, prioritisation, and development of strategic assets [87]. It reflects the shift from static, internally focused evaluations of resource value toward a more dynamic, stakeholder-informed, and co-creative understanding of strategic resources. This transition ensures that resource development initiatives support not only competitive effectiveness but also broader stakeholder legitimacy and engagement, consistent with the principles of RAT and SDL.

The process begins with a foundational step: understanding the organisation's purpose, vision, and long-term strategic intent. This initial stage ensures that all subsequent actions are aligned with the outcomes most valued by internal and external stakeholders. Strategic assets cannot be meaningfully identified or evaluated in a vacuum; they must be considered in the context of the organisation's raison d'être and its desired position in a competitive and relational landscape. For sport organisations, this includes alignment with community values, member aspirations, and social legitimacy as well as performance outcomes.

The second stage focuses on identifying strategic assets using stakeholder-informed approaches. It combines internal assessments with insights from external stakeholders, acknowledging that value derives from both organisational capabilities and stakeholder perceptions [88]. The process includes a comprehensive mapping of tangible resources—such as facilities, equipment, and financial assets—as well as intangible resources like brand equity, organisational culture, volunteer structures, and community relationships. In the case of Club X, stakeholder consultations highlighted the importance of volunteer networks and the reputation of the youth academy, both of which were subsequently treated as critical strategic assets.

Once identified, the third stage involves evaluating each asset using an enhanced VRIO framework (Barney, 1991). This builds upon traditional RBV logic by incorporating a stakeholder lens that reflects the realities of relational value creation. The assessment of 'value' considers both competitive potential and stakeholder relevance, allowing for the inclusion of assets that may not confer direct advantage but that enable trust, loyalty, or legitimacy. 'Rarity' is assessed not only in terms of market scarcity but also with regard to the unique value the resource holds for stakeholders. 'Inimitability' is expanded to include not just physical or organisational barriers to replication, but also the extent to which a resource is embedded within local knowledge, community ties, or shared identity [89]. Finally, 'organisational embeddedness' is evaluated based on both internal capacities to deploy the resource and the degree to which it can be integrated into co-creative stakeholder processes. This holistic approach ensures that resources are evaluated not only for theoretical competitiveness but also for practical strategic relevance.

The final stage involves prioritising strategic resources for investment and development. A multi-criteria decision-making approach is used to weigh potential competitive advantage, stakeholder value, development needs, and implementation feasibility [90]. Crucially, the prioritisation process includes stakeholder input through targeted consultation mechanisms, ensuring that choices reflect both internal capability and external expectations. Priority resources are those that demonstrate high potential to advance the organisation's vision, generate stakeholder engagement, and deliver measurable outcomes.

The resulting prioritisation matrix helps sport organisations allocate their limited resources toward initiatives that maximise strategic coherence, impact, and alignment. Figure 2 presents a sequential flow beginning with the articulation of organisational purpose and vision (Stage 1), followed by the stakeholder-informed identification of strategic assets (Stage 2), an evaluation using enhanced VRIO criteria (Stage 3), and the prioritisation of assets based on feasibility and strategic impact (Stage 4). It illustrates how the RBV–RAT–SD Integrated Strategic Framework can be applied in practice to guide resource-based planning in sport organisations.
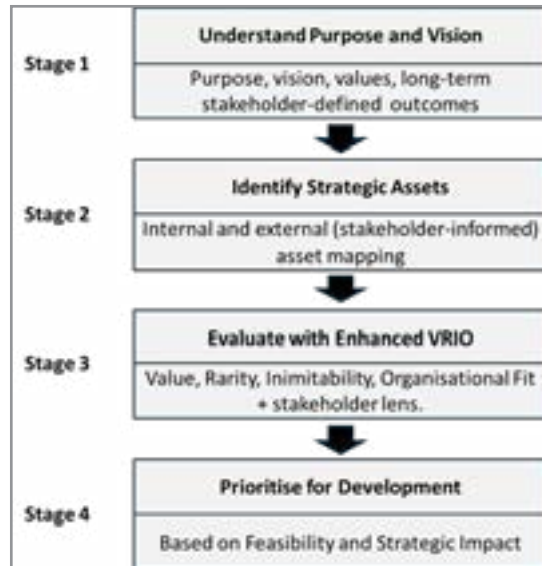
Figure 2: Strategic Asset Implementation Tool - A Four-Stage Process for Purpose-Aligned Resource Development

Strategic Alignment Dashboard

The Strategic Alignment Dashboard operationalises principles from RAT by offering a structured and dynamic approach to capability development, strategic responsiveness, and performance monitoring in stakeholder-rich environments [33]. The dashboard serves as both a strategic steering mechanism and an iterative feedback system, aligning internal development efforts with external expectations and evolving market conditions. It ensures that dynamic capabilities are not developed in isolation but are continuously informed by stakeholder value, competitive forces, and organisational learning. Figure 3 presents a layered model for aligning internal capabilities with external challenges, stakeholder expectations, and performance outcomes. It integrates capability development, strategic adaptation, performance monitoring, and feedback processes into a unified system designed to maintain strategic coherence in dynamic environments. It operationalises the dynamic alignment logic embedded in the RBV–RAT–SDL Integrated Strategic Framework.
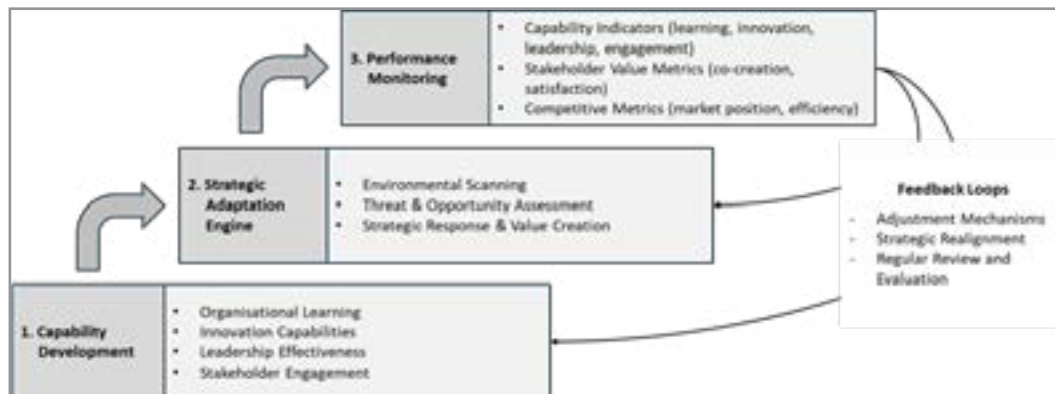

Figure 3: Strategic Alignment Dashboard - A Dynamic System for Coherent Organisational Adaptation

The first component, Capability Development, focuses on cultivating the four dynamic capabilities identified through empirical research: organisational learning, innovation, leadership effectiveness, and stakeholder engagement [30]. These capabilities form the foundation for sustainable organisational responsiveness. Learning capability incorporates mechanisms such as knowledge management, stakeholder-informed performance reviews, and continuous improvement [39]. Innovation includes not only technological advancement and programme redesign but also novel approaches to problem-solving and stakeholder collaboration. For example, Club X introduced digital engagement tools and redesigned fan experiences to enhance both competitiveness and relational value.

Leadership Development entails strengthening competencies in strategic vision, change leadership, stakeholder alignment, and performance management—essential for navigating uncertainty and leading adaptive change. Complementing this, stakeholder engagement capability focuses on communication, relational governance, and collaborative planning. Club X's shift from top-down messaging to co-created planning forums exemplified this capability, enhancing trust and alignment. The second component, Strategic Adaptation Engine, connects capability development to external strategic action. It includes environmental scanning, threat and opportunity assessment, and strategic response formulation [91]. Environmental scanning integrates stakeholder expectation analysis, competitive benchmarking, regulatory surveillance, and market sensing. Opportunity identification considers how internal strengths can be matched with emerging stakeholder needs to generate value and build sustained advantage. This ensures that adaptation is proactive rather than reactive—aligning resource investments with the external

environment.

The third component, Performance Monitoring, measures progress in three interconnected domains: capability indicators, stakeholder value metrics, and traditional competitive metrics. Capability indicators may include innovation rates, leadership performance metrics, or evidence of learning application. Stakeholder metrics such as engagement levels, satisfaction scores, and co-creation outcomes help organisations track relational effectiveness. Traditional competitive metrics, including financial performance, market share, and operational efficiency, remain relevant but are framed within a broader value-oriented logic [92]. This composite measurement approach ensures the organisation monitors not only what it achieves, but how those achievements align with evolving capability and stakeholder expectations.

Finally, Feedback Loops ensure the dashboard functions as an iterative learning and realignment tool. These loops include structured mechanisms for regular review, adjustment, and strategic recalibration. Insights derived from performance monitoring inform continuous capability enhancement, thereby closing the loop between strategic intent, implementation, and outcome. By enabling organisations to balance internal strengths with external demands and stakeholder-defined value, the Strategic Alignment Dashboard provides a practical method for implementing the RBV–RAT–SDL Integrated Strategic Framework.

Stakeholder Co-Creation Matrix

The Stakeholder Co-Creation Matrix, presented in Figure 4, operationalises key principles of SDL by offering a structured yet adaptable framework for stakeholder engagement and value co-creation [41]. It enables organisations to design differentiated participation pathways for diverse stakeholder groups, while maintaining strategic coherence and operational feasibility. Rather than treating stakeholder engagement as a uniform process, the matrix introduces a typology that classifies stakeholders, tailors engagement mechanisms, and aligns co-creation initiatives with organisational priorities and capacities.

At the core of the matrix lies the recognition that stakeholders differ not only in their proximity to the organisation but also in their potential for co-creating value. Stakeholders are mapped along two key dimensions: level of engagement (ranging from passive to collaborative) and type of contribution (ranging from advisory input to direct co-production). This two-dimensional design facilitates the development of engagement strategies that are both inclusive and strategically aligned with the stakeholders' actual capacity and willingness to contribute [40, 93].

The first quadrant focuses on consultative stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, governing institutions, and passive sponsors. These groups are typically engaged through formalised, structured mechanisms—such as compliance reports, policy briefings, or stakeholder surveys. While their contributions are primarily advisory or regulatory in nature, they provide legitimacy, oversight, and a valuable external perspective.

The second quadrant targets collaborative stakeholders who are actively involved in programme or content co-creation. This category includes fans, community partners, and local members who seek meaningful participation in shaping fan experiences, youth programmes, or outreach initiatives. Engagement methods here often include co-creation workshops, digital platforms, and participatory planning forums. For example, Club X successfully applied this quadrant by facilitating fan-led digital media campaigns and collaboratively designing matchday experiences.

The third quadrant encompasses governance-level stakeholders, including senior supporters, volunteers, and staff members, who may participate in co-decision-making and provide strategic input. Their involvement is typically structured through advisory committees, working groups, or representative roles in governance structures. These stakeholders contribute high levels of insight, accountability, and institutional memory, and their engagement reinforces trust and fosters a shared ownership of the strategic direction.

The fourth quadrant addresses informal contributors, including local residents, extended family members of players, and casual supporters. Although their interaction may be less formal or regular, these stakeholders contribute relational capital and valuable perspectives. Engagement with this group is best facilitated through accessible, low-barrier mechanisms—such as community events, open training sessions, or informal feedback loops. At Club X, such engagement informed the design of inclusive communication channels and helped cultivate grassroots trust and goodwill.

Importantly, the matrix not only maps existing stakeholder relationships but also identifies untapped opportunities for strategic co-creation across four domains: Programme co-creation (e.g., community initiatives or youth development pathways); Governance co-creation (e.g., strategic input or advisory representation); Content co-creation (e.g., collaborative storytelling or digital engagement); Facility co-creation (e.g., participatory design or usage policy input) [46, 94].

By intentionally linking stakeholder types to engagement modes and co-creation domains, the matrix enhances both the inclusivity and effectiveness of stakeholder strategies. It provides a practical, SDL-informed tool for navigating complex stakeholder ecosystems in a way that strengthens legitimacy, trust, and sustainable value creation. Thus, Figure 4 becomes a two-dimensional planning tool that categorises stakeholders based on their level of engagement and type of contribution. It supports the development of targeted, meaningful engagement strategies and aligns co-creation opportunities with organisational capacity and stakeholder expectations.
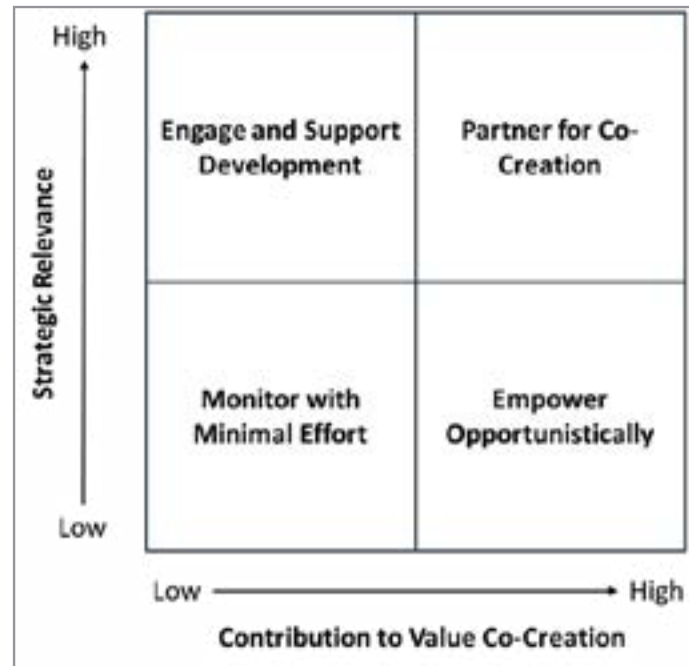
Figure 4: Stakeholder Co-Creation Matrix

Discussion and Implications

Theoretical Contributions

This research makes several important theoretical contributions to the sports management literature, advancing the understanding of strategic management within complex and stakeholder-rich environments. Most notably, the RBV–RAT–SDL Integrated Strategic Framework represents the first systematic synthesis of these three perspectives within a sports context, addressing a critical gap in the literature that has traditionally treated them in isolation [95]. This tri-theoretical integration responds to calls for more context-sensitive models that reflect the pluralistic, dynamic, and often resource-constrained environments in which many sports organisations operate.

The resulting framework demonstrates that theoretical integration can overcome the limitations of each individual theory, producing synergistic benefits that offer more comprehensive and operationally relevant strategic guidance than single-theory approaches. The research advances RBV applications in sports by explicitly incorporating stakeholder perspectives into the processes of resource identification and evaluation [96]. Traditional RBV applications often underplay the significance of relational and community-based resources in generating sustained advantages, particularly for mid-sized clubs lacking elite-level assets.

This research demonstrates how intangible assets, such as legitimacy, trust, and stakeholder engagement, can meet the VRIO criteria when embedded within stakeholder ecosystems. Rather than focusing solely on differentiation-based competitive advantage, the framework demonstrates how stakeholder-embedded resources contribute to organisational resilience, legitimacy, and co-created value, thereby expanding the conceptualisation of what constitutes a 'strategic resource' in practice.

In relation to RAT, the research makes a further contribution by identifying and contextualising the development of dynamic capabilities—specifically, leadership effectiveness, innovation, organisational learning, and stakeholder engagement—as foun-

dational enablers of adaptive strategy. These capabilities are not simply internal operational routines but are understood as relational and co-created competencies, shaped through continuous interaction with stakeholders and the external environment [97]. This approach extends RAT by showing that dynamic capabilities can serve dual functions: sustaining competitive responsiveness while simultaneously supporting collaborative value creation—a duality often overlooked in conventional applications of the theory.

The research also deepens the application of SDL in sports management by operationalising its abstract principles through the Stakeholder Co-Creation Matrix. While SDL has been influential in sports marketing, its integration into strategic planning and organisational design has been limited [98]. The framework bridges this gap by offering practical tools and decision-making mechanisms that enable systematic stakeholder engagement while maintaining strategic coherence. In doing so, it transforms SDL from a primarily conceptual paradigm into a governance-oriented practice framework for sport organisations—particularly those navigating complex stakeholder expectations and resource constraints.

Practical Implications for Sports Organisations

The RBV-RAT-SDL Integrated Strategic Framework provides sports organisations with actionable strategic guidance for addressing the multifaceted challenges that characterise contemporary sports management [3]. The Strategic Asset Implementation Tool offers a structured, stakeholder-informed process for systematically identifying, evaluating, and developing resources that contribute to both competitive effectiveness and stakeholder value creation. This tool is particularly valuable for mid-sized sports organisations, which often operate under resource constraints and must optimise limited assets while balancing diverse stakeholder expectations and managing the tension between short-term results and long-term impact.

By embedding stakeholder perspectives into resource evalua-

tion, the framework enables a more inclusive and context-sensitive approach to strategic planning—one that complements traditional competitive analysis with relational insight [71]. This integrated approach can improve the quality and legitimacy of strategic decision-making, build stakeholder trust, and enhance organisational transparency. Importantly, it also supports inclusive governance by identifying and prioritising resources that, while not immediately advantageous in market terms, strengthen long-term sustainability through enhanced stakeholder relationships and legitimacy.

The Strategic Alignment Dashboard equips sports organisations with a dynamic system for capability development and performance monitoring, supporting strategic agility while maintaining coherence of purpose [34]. By aligning capability development with stakeholder engagement and environmental scanning, the dashboard enables organisations to continuously adapt in a manner that preserves internal alignment and external responsiveness. This allows sports organisations to monitor and enhance their adaptive capacity, ensuring that change initiatives are not only responsive to external pressures but also consistent with organisational values and stakeholder expectations. In doing so, the dashboard strengthens an organisation's ability to sense, seize, and transform strategic opportunities in rapidly evolving environments.

The Stakeholder Co-Creation Matrix offers a practical framework for designing tailored stakeholder engagement strategies, enabling sports organisations to systematically involve diverse stakeholder groups in co-creation processes while maintaining operational effectiveness [99]. Rather than treating stakeholder engagement as a generic or symbolic activity, the matrix helps organisations select appropriate engagement mechanisms based on stakeholders' proximity and potential contribution. This approach not only enhances stakeholder inclusion and creativity but also allows organisations to access external capabilities and relational resources that may not be accessible through traditional governance mechanisms. The result is a more participatory, sustainable, and contextually aligned response to complex strategic challenges.

Policy and Industry Implications
The research findings have important implications for sports policy development and sector-wide governance, extending beyond individual organisational applications [100]. The framework's emphasis on stakeholder engagement and community embeddedness aligns with increasing policy focus on the social responsibilities and developmental roles of sports organisations. Policymakers can apply insights from the framework to design supportive policies, funding instruments, and oversight mechanisms that incentivise collaborative governance and stakeholder-centred development—while preserving competitive integrity. The research highlights the importance of stakeholder-informed approaches to sports governance, which move beyond traditional top-down regulatory models toward more collaborative and participatory paradigms [101].

Sport's governing bodies can utilise the framework's principles to reconceptualise their role—not only as regulators but also as enablers and facilitators of strategic development. This dual role supports a shift from compliance-focused governance toward value-enabling leadership, where strategic guidance is offered alongside regulation to empower member organisations in implementing integrated approaches.

The framework's tools and methodologies can inform industry-wide knowledge-sharing, capacity building, and good governance practices [102]. Sports federations, leagues, and professional associations may adopt the framework to shape education programmes, leadership training, and consultancy offerings that enhance management and governance capabilities across the sector. This can contribute to the professionalisation of sports administration and the development of a shared strategic vocabulary, fostering greater alignment across different organisational levels and stakeholder groups.

Limitations and Future Research Directions
While the RBV-RAT-SDL Integrated Strategic Framework offers valuable guidance for sports organisations, several limitations must be acknowledged to ensure its appropriate application and to contextualise its contributions [103]. First, the framework was developed through an in-depth single-case study situated within a specific cultural, organisational, and regulatory environment. While the case—Club X—shares characteristics with many mid-sized professional football clubs, the findings may not be fully generalisable to organisations in other sports, national systems, or structural configurations.

Further empirical testing is therefore necessary to assess the framework's relevance and transferability across different contexts. Second, the framework's emphasis on stakeholder engagement and collaborative governance may not be equally applicable in all strategic or institutional environments. In sports systems dominated by short-term commercial imperatives, centralised decision-making structures, or weak community ties, extensive stakeholder participation may introduce operational complexity, political tension, or misalignment with organisational imperatives. The framework may therefore be best suited to organisations that operate in stakeholder-rich environments, possess strong community connections, or seek to balance social and competitive goals.

Third, the study's mixed-methods design, while methodologically robust, offers only a cross-sectional view of the organisation at a particular moment in time. As such, it does not fully capture the long-term evolution of the framework's implementation or its sustained impact on organisational performance and stakeholder value creation. Future research employing longitudinal designs could enhance understanding of how the framework evolves over time and under different strategic conditions. To address these limitations, future research should pursue three key avenues. First, comparative case studies across different sports, countries, and organisational levels (e.g., elite vs. grassroots) could help identify both universal principles and context-specific adaptations [104].

Second, participatory action research and co-design methodologies could be employed to refine the framework in collaboration with practitioners, thereby enhancing its usability and implementation fidelity. Third, longitudinal evaluation studies are needed to assess the framework's long-term effectiveness and to identify barriers, enablers, and unintended consequences during

implementation. Such research would also support the iterative development of practical tools and indicators that enhance strategic coherence and stakeholder alignment over time.

Conclusion

Research Summary and Key Contributions

This research has developed and validated the first integrated strategic framework that combines the Resource-Based View (RBV), Resource-Advantage Theory (RAT), and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), specifically designed for application in sports organisations [24, 31, 41]. This tri-theoretical framework addresses critical gaps in the sports management literature by offering comprehensive strategic guidance for organisations operating in complex, stakeholder-rich environments, while maintaining strong practical relevance for implementation.

The empirical investigation revealed that success in sports organisations is fundamentally multi-faceted, stakeholder-informed, and context-sensitive—challenging the traditional, performance-focused approaches that have long dominated the field [73]. Community engagement, financial sustainability, youth development, and organisational culture were identified as critical and interdependent success dimensions requiring integrated strategic approaches, rather than isolated management attention.

The identification of key strategic assets—including youth academy systems, community relationships, volunteer networks, brand equity, and organisational culture—provides specific guidance for resource development that simultaneously supports competitive effectiveness and stakeholder value creation [85]. The research demonstrates that strategic value often emerges from the complementarity and embeddedness of resource combinations within stakeholder ecosystems, rather than from the possession of individual assets in isolation. This insight necessitates a shift toward holistic resource management approaches that recognise relational dynamics and synergistic potential.

The operationalisation of the framework through three practical tools—the Strategic Asset Implementation Tool, Strategic Alignment Dashboard, and Stakeholder Co-Creation Matrix—equips sports organisations with systematic methods for strategic planning, capability development, and stakeholder engagement [87, 34, 41]. These tools translate abstract theoretical insights into context-sensitive, actionable guidance that can be adapted across diverse sporting codes and organisational scales, while preserving both conceptual integrity and practical effectiveness.

Future Research Directions

This research lays a foundation for future scholarship that aims to enhance both theoretical understanding and practical utility in sports management [105]. Longitudinal validation studies represent a particularly important next step, enabling researchers to assess the sustained effectiveness of the framework over time, identify emergent implementation challenges, and examine how integrated strategic approaches evolve in response to shifting internal and external dynamics. Cross-cultural and inter-sport applications are also critical avenues for further investigation. Given that this study was conducted within a single cultural and regulatory context, its applicability to other settings—such as elite professional sport, amateur or grassroots sport, or international contexts—remains an open question.

Comparative research across diverse sporting traditions, governance structures, and institutional environments would help clarify which elements of the framework are universally applicable and which require contextual adaptation [106]. Further, large-scale quantitative testing of the framework's underlying constructs and theoretical relationships would strengthen its empirical foundations. While this study employed a mixed-methods design, future research using structural equation modelling or similar techniques could confirm the framework's internal coherence and predictive power [107]. Such research would be especially valuable in establishing standardised indicators and performance benchmarks that support broader industry adoption.

Final Reflections

The development of integrated strategic frameworks represents a significant opportunity to advance both theory and practice in sports management, particularly within the complex and evolving environments that contemporary sports organisations face [108]. The historical fragmentation of theoretical approaches in this domain has limited their explanatory power, operational relevance, and capacity to guide resource-constrained organisations. This research demonstrates that theoretical integration can yield richer, more actionable insights—enabling organisations to align competitive performance with stakeholder value and long-term sustainability.

The study reinforces the argument that sports organisations possess unique characteristics that require bespoke strategic approaches rather than generic adaptations of business management frameworks [5]. The seasonality and unpredictability of sporting outcomes, the complexity of stakeholder ecosystems, and the depth of community embeddedness and social responsibility create distinctive strategic demands that are best addressed through theoretically integrated, context-specific models.

The emphasis on stakeholder engagement and collaborative value creation embedded in the integrated framework aligns with broader societal shifts toward inclusive, participatory, and sustainability-focused models of organisational leadership [109]. Sports organisations are well-positioned to lead in this domain by demonstrating how co-creation and community engagement can enhance both social impact and competitive success. The framework offers a practical, theoretically grounded approach to navigating this dual mandate—balancing commercial imperatives with community legitimacy and ethical responsibility [110-115]. In doing so, this research contributes not only to academic theory but also to the evolving role of sports organisations as social institutions capable of delivering value that extends far beyond the playing field [116, 117].

References

1. Shilbury, D., Westerbeek, H., Quick, S., Funk, D., & Karg, A. (2014). Strategic sport marketing (4th ed.). Allen & Unwin.
2. Ferkins, L., & Shilbury, D. (2022). The role of strategic capability in the governance of sport. European Sport Management Quarterly. 22: 40-58.
3. Hoye, R., Smith, A. C., Nicholson, M., & Stewart, B. (2015). Sport management: Principles and applications (4th ed.). Routledge.
4. Doherty, A., Misener, K., & Cuskelly, G. (2020). Toward

a multidimensional framework of capacity in community sport clubs. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly. 49: 1020-1043.

5. Slack, T., & Parent, M. M. (2006). Understanding sport organizations: The application of organization theory (2nd ed.). Human Kinetics.

6. Bayle, E., & Madella, A. (2021). Performance management in sports organizations: Toward a stakeholder-based model. Sport Management Review. 24: 631-644.

7. Wicker, P., & Hallmann, K. (2022). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sports clubs: Resource scarcity and stakeholder interactions. European Sport Management Quarterly. 22: 432-451.

8. Winand, M., & Anagnostopoulos, C. (2019). Get ready to innovate! Staff's disposition to implement service innovation in non-profit sport organisations. International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics. 11: 1-19.

9. Anagnostopoulos, C., Winand, M., & Papadimitriou, D. (2017). Performance measurement and non-profit sport organisations: Stakeholder expectations and the institutional logic. European Sport Management Quarterly. 17: 539-564.

10. Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Johnson, R. B. (2006). The validity issue in mixed research. Research in the Schools. 13: 48-63.

11. Ferkins, L., Shilbury, D., & McDonald, G. (2009). Board involvement in strategy: Advancing the governance of sport organizations. Journal of Sport Management. 23: 245-277.

12. Chelladurai, P., & Kerwin, S. (2017). Human resource management in sport and recreation (3rd ed.). Human Kinetics.

13. Naraine, M. L., & Parent, M. M. (2017). This is how we do it: A qualitative approach to national sport organizations' social media strategies. Journal of Sport Management. 31: 162-175.

14. Babiak, K., & Wolfe, R. (2009). Determinants of corporate social responsibility in professional sport: Internal and external factors. Journal of Sport Management. 23: 717-742.

15. Misener, K., & Doherty, A. (2019). Social responsibility and community sport organizations: The case of community sport councils. Journal of Sport Management. 33: 1–14.

16. Breitbarth, T., Hovemann, G., & Walzel, S. (2011). Scoring strategy goals: Measuring corporate social responsibility in professional European football. Thunderbird International Business Review. 53: 721-737.

17. Babiak, K., & Trendafilova, S. (2019). CSR and environmental responsibility: Motives and pressures to adopt green management practices. Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management. 26: 359-368.

18. McCullough, B. P., Orr, M., & Kellison, T. B. (2022). Sport ecology: Conceptualizing an emerging subdiscipline within sport management. Journal of Sport Management. 36: 113-125.

19. Misener, K., & Mason, D. S. (2006). Creating community networks: Can sporting events offer meaningful sources of social capital? Managing Leisure. 11: 39-56.

20. Schulenkorf, N. (2012). Sustainable community development through sport and events: A conceptual framework for sport-for-development projects. Sport Management Review. 15: 1-12.

21. Coalter, F. (2013). Sport for development: What game are we playing? Routledge.

22. Wicker, P., & Breuer, C. (2013). Understanding the importance of organizational resources to explain organizational problems: Evidence from nonprofit sport clubs in Germany. Voluntas. 24: 461-484.

23. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). Designing and conducting mixed methods research (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

24. Barney, J. B., & Arikan, A. M. (2001). The resource-based view: Origins and implications for organizational science. Journal of Management. 27: 625-641.

25. Gammelsæter, H. (2010). Institutional pluralism and governance in "commercialized" sport clubs. European Sport Management Quarterly. 10: 569-594.

26. Relvas, H., Littlewood, M., Nesti, M., Gilbourne, D., & Richardson, D. (2010). Organizational structures and working practices in elite European professional football clubs: Understanding the relationship between youth and professional domains. European Sport Management Quarterly. 10: 165-187.

27. Amis, J., Slack, T., & Hinings, C. R. (2004). The pace, sequence, and linearity of radical change. Academy of Management Journal. 47: 15-39.

28. Holzmayer, F., & Schmidt, S. L. (2020). Intangible resources and firm performance in football: The role of ambidexterity and stakeholder relationships. Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal. 10: 475-492.

29. Fahy, J. (2000). The resource-based view of the firm: Some stumbling-blocks on the road to understanding sustainable competitive advantage. Journal of European Industrial Training. 24: 94-104.

30. Eisenhardt, K. M., & Martin, J. A. (2000). Dynamic capabilities: What are they? Strategic Management Journal. 21: 1105-1121

31. Hunt, S. D. (2000). A general theory of competition: Resources, competences, productivity, economic growth. Sage Publications.

32. Hunt, S. D. (2013). A general theory of competition: Resources, competencies, productivity, economic growth. Sage Publications.

33. Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. Strategic Management Journal. 18: 509-533.

34. Teece, D. J. (2007). Explicating dynamic capabilities: The nature and microfoundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance. Strategic Management Journal. 28: 1319-1350.

35. Pablo, A. L., Reay, T., Dewald, J. R., & Casebeer, A. L. (2007). Identifying, enabling and managing dynamic capabilities in the public sector. Journal of Management Studies. 44: 687-708.

36. Welty Peachey, J., Damon, Z. J., Zhou, Y., & Burton, L. J. (2015). Forty years of leadership research in sport management: A review, synthesis, and conceptual framework. Journal of Sport Management. 29: 570-587.

37. Ratten, V. (2011). Sport-based entrepreneurship: Towards a new theory of entrepreneurship and sport management. International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal. 7: 57-69.

38. Ratten, V. (2022). Sport entrepreneurship and innovation. Journal of Strategic Marketing. 30: 89-103.

39. Argote, L., & Miron-Spektor, E. (2011). Organizational learning: From experience to knowledge. Organization Science. 22: 1123-1137.

40. Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward

a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. Academy of Management Review. 22: 853-886.

41. Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science. 36: 1-10.

42. Lusch, R. F., & Vargo, S. L. (2014). Service-dominant logic: Premises, perspectives, possibilities. Cambridge University Press.

43. Yoshida, M., James, J. D., & Cronin, J. J., Jr. (2013). Value creation: Assessing the relationships between quality, consumption value and behavioral intentions at sporting events. International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship. 14: 126-148.

44. Woratschek, H., Horbel, C., & Popp, B. (2014). The sport value framework – A new fundamental logic for analyses in sport management. European Sport Management Quarterly. 14: 6-24.

45. Anagnostopoulos, C., Byers, T., & Shilbury, D. (2022). Stakeholder co-creation in sport: An integrative review and future directions. European Sport Management Quarterly. 22: 465-488.

46. Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). The future of competition: Co-creating unique value with customers. Harvard Business Review Press.

47. Grönroos, C., & Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: Making sense of value creation and co-creation. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science. 41: 133-150.

48. Akaka, M. A., Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2013). The complexity of context: A service ecosystems approach for international marketing. Journal of International Marketing. 21: 1-20.

49. Vargo, S. L., & Akaka, M. A. (2012). Value cocreation and service systems (re)formation: A service ecosystems view. Service Science. 4: 207-217.

50. Edvardsson, B., Tronvoll, B., & Gruber, T. (2011). Expanding understanding of service exchange and value co-creation: A social construction approach. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science. 39: 327-339.

51. Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

52. Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Journal of Mixed Methods Research. 1: 48-76.

53. Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2014). Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

54. Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

55. Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

56. Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

57. Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice. Sage Publications.

58. Chevalier, J. M., & Buckles, D. J. (2013). Participatory action research: Theory and methods for engaged inquiry. Routledge.

59. Ferkins, L., & Shilbury, D. (2015). The stakeholder dilemma in sport governance: Toward the notion of "stakeowner." Journal of Sport Management. 29: 93-108.

60. Yin, R. K. (2017). Case study research and applications: Design and methods (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

61. Stake, R. E. (1995). The art of case study research. Sage Publications.

62. Dubois, A., & Gadde, L.-E. (2002). Systematic combining: An abductive approach to case research. Journal of Business Research. 55: 553-560.

63. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology. 3: 77-101.

64. Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research. 42: 533-544.

65. Field, A. (2017). Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

66. Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development. Sage Publications.

67. Fetters, M. D., Curry, L. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). Achieving integration in mixed methods designs—Principles and practices. Health Services Research. 48: 2134-2156.

68. British Psychological Society. (2018). Code of ethics and conduct.

69. Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Sage Publications.

70. Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. International Journal of Qualitative Methods. 16: 1-13.

71. Freeman, R. E., Harrison, J. S., Wicks, A. C., Parmar, B. L., & De Colle, S. (2010). Stakeholder theory: The state of the art. Cambridge University Press.

72. Szymanski, S. (2003). The economic design of sporting contests. Journal of Economic Literature. 41: 1137-1187.

73. Shilbury, D., & Moore, K. A. (2006). A study of organizational effectiveness for national Olympic sporting organizations. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly. 35: 5-38.

74. Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. Journal of Management. 17: 99-120.

75. Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. American Journal of Sociology. 91: 481-510.

76. Cuskelly, G., Taylor, T., Hoye, R., & Darcy, S. (2006). Volunteer management practices and volunteer retention: A human resource management approach. Sport Management Review. 9: 141-163.

77. Bauer, H. H., Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., & Exler, S. (2008). Brand image and fan loyalty in professional team sport: A refined model and empirical assessment. Journal of Sport Management. 22: 205-226.

78. Schein, E. H., & Schein, P. (2016). Organizational culture and leadership (5th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

79. Hunt, S. D., & Morgan, R. M. (1995). The comparative advantage theory of competition. Journal of Marketing. 59:

1-15.

80. Avolio, B. J., Walumbwa, F. O., & Weber, T. J. (2009). Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. Annual Review of Psychology. 60: 421-449.

81. Tidd, J., & Bessant, J. (2018). Managing innovation: Integrating technological, market and organizational change (6th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

82. Senge, P. M. (1990). The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization. Doubleday.

83. Grant, R. M. (1991). The resource-based theory of competitive advantage: Implications for strategy formulation. California Management Review. 33: 114-135.

84. Wernerfelt, B. (1984). A resource-based view of the firm. Strategic Management Journal. 5: 171-180.

85. Smart, D. L., & Wolfe, R. A. (2000). Examining sustainable competitive advantage in intercollegiate athletics: A resource-based view. Journal of Sport Management. 14: 133-153.

86. Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. Journal of Marketing. 68: 1-17.

87. Collis, D. J., & Montgomery, C. A. (1995). Competing on resources: Strategy in the 1990s. Harvard Business Review. 73: 118-128.

88. Hart, S. L. (1995). A natural-resource-based view of the firm. Academy of Management Review. 20: 986-1014.

89. Reed, R., & DeFillippi, R. J. (1990). Causal ambiguity, barriers to imitation, and sustainable competitive advantage. Academy of Management Review. 15: 88-102.

90. Saaty, T. L. (1980). The analytic hierarchy process. McGraw-Hill.

91. Ansoff, H. I. (1975). Managing strategic surprise by response to weak signals. California Management Review. 18: 21-33.

92. Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (1992). The balanced scorecard—measures that drive performance. Harvard Business Review. 70: 71-79.

93. Clarkson, M. E. (1995). A stakeholder framework for analyzing and evaluating corporate social performance. Academy of Management Review. 20: 92-117.

94. Ind, N., & Coates, N. (2013). The meanings of co-creation. European Business Review. 25: 86-95.

95. Lockett, A., Thompson, S., & Morgenstern, U. (2009). The development of the resource-based view of the firm: A critical appraisal. International Journal of Management Reviews. 11: 9-28.

96. Armstrong, C. E., & Shimizu, K. (2007). A review of approaches to empirical research on the resource-based view of the firm. Journal of Management. 33: 959-986.

97. Ambrosini, V., Bowman, C., & Collier, N. (2009). Dynamic capabilities: An exploration of how firms renew their resource base. British Journal of Management. 20: S9-S24.

98. Woratschek, H., Horbel, C., & Popp, B. (2020). Determining customer happiness in sport: The role of subjective well-being and service quality. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services. 53: 101965.

99. Ramaswamy, V., & Gouillart, F. (2010). The power of co-creation: Build it with them to boost growth, productivity, and profits. Free Press.

100. Green, M., & Houlihan, B. (2005). Elite sport development: Policy learning and political priorities. Routledge.

101. Henry, I., & Lee, P. C. (2004). Governance and ethics in sport. In J. Beech & S. Chadwick (Eds.), The business of sport management (pp. 25–42). Pearson Education.

102. Masteralexis, L. P., Barr, C. A., & Hums, M. A. (2018). Principles and practice of sport management (6th ed.). Jones & Bartlett Learning.

103. Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. Qualitative Inquiry, 12(2), 219–245.

104. Hofstede, G. (2001). Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

105. Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. Academy of Management Review. 14: 532-550.

106. House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (2004). Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies. Sage Publications.

107. Hair, J. F., Jr., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2018). Multivariate data analysis (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

108. Whittington, R. (2001). What is strategy—and does it matter? (2nd ed.). Thomson Learning.

109. Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2011). Creating shared value. Harvard Business Review. 89: 62-77.

110. Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. Academy of Management Journal. 50: 25-32.

111. Freeman, R. E. (1984). Strategic management: A stakeholder approach. Pitman.

112. Fung, A. (2006). Varieties of participation in complex governance. Public Administration Review. 66: 66-75.

113. Horbel, C., Popp, B., Woratschek, H., & Wilson, B. (2016). How context shapes value co-creation: Spectator experience of sport events. The Service Industries Journal. 36: 510-531.

114. Lusch, R. F., Vargo, S. L., & O'Brien, M. (2007). Competing through service: Insights from service-dominant logic. Journal of Retailing. 83: 5-18.

115. Parent, M. M., & Slack, T. (2007). International perspectives on the management of sport. International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing. 2: 3-18.

116. Whittemore, R., & Knafl, K. (2005). The integrative review: Updated methodology. Journal of Advanced Nursing. 52: 546-553.

117. Woratschek, H., Horbel, C., & Popp, B. (2014). The sport value framework – A new fundamental logic for analyses in sport management. European Sport Management Quarterly. 14: 6-24.