

STRATEGIC REVITALIZATION: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE IN THE ROMANIAN SPORTS MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: *This research aims to explore the implementation of innovative strategies in the management of sports activities in Romania, with emphasis on the adaptation requirements to the global dynamics of the sports sector. Focusing on the analysis of sports management and seeking to identify and implement potential innovations, this paper aspires to contribute to the revitalization of this sector within Romania. Innovative are essential in increasing efficiency, competitiveness and sustainability in the sports domain, reflecting a necessary evolution in the current domestic context, essential elements ultimately driven by the technological boom of the last decade.*

Keywords: *sports innovation, sports management, innovative strategies; sustainability.*

INTRODUCTION

Recent advancements in sports and physical education have been significantly influenced by innovation and technology, essential elements ultimately driven by the technological boom of the last decade (Omar et al., 2023). Technological innovation is increasingly becoming a central focus for sport organizations, mainly due to its significant impact on their performance. Innovation in this domain encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, both planned and unplanned (Ratten, 2020). In a more specific context, an examination (Marriott et al., 2024) into the methods innovating within the field the sports may be performed (MacIntosh, Bravo, & Li, 2020) such as to portray how performance in this domain may be influenced. This examination can occur at various levels (Ratten & Jones, 2021) and from multiple perspectives (Hoye, Misener,

Naraine, & Ordway, 2022) and its understanding is paramount considering that the sport domain is traditionally viewed as a sector where achieving innovation may be particularly challenging (Ratten, 2019).

Technological innovation appears to be on the agenda of most sport organizations due to its impact on performance (Ratten & Ferreira, 2016) and it comes in a variety of different forms including planned and unplanned activities (Ratten, 2020).

This framework is particularly relevant nowadays when sports entities must (or should) embrace contemporary strategies to maximize outcomes, whether sporting, economic or non-financial (the latter exemplified by, *inter alia*, the growing appeal of spectator influx - Stoldt, Dittmore, Ross, & Branvold, 2020 – or the development of a pyramid infrastructure at early age levels).

Within the proposed research, there is a vivid aspiration to channel or import fresh methodologies into the Romanian sports sector, poised or should be poised near an innovative metamorphosis (Ratten, 2019).

Romania, endowed with a deep cultural and historical legacy in sport, has considerable potential for advancement, which, unfortunately, indicate a regression in the contemporary era. A reason for this decline could be attributed to a predominantly maladapted approach to the radical shifts within the current social sphere and the improper management of its human resource (Barnhill, Smith, & Oja, 2021; Chelladurai & Kim, 2023).

Adopting innovative strategies in Romanian sports management is imperative and should be imminent considering the dynamism of global sports developments; further integrating innovation would have the potential to usher in a period of growth, efficiency, and competitiveness, transcending mere declarations of intent and materializing through tangible outcomes in sports, economic progression, and sustainable evolution of sports (Parent & Ruetsch, 2021), irrespective of mass or performance segment involvement. The COVID-19 crisis significantly influenced the global landscape, serving as a catalyst for the rapid adoption of previously overlooked technologies. Driven by new constraints, these technologies were quickly implemented

and those which proved effective continue to be relevant and in use today (Ersöz & Yenilmez, 2023; Anggadwita, Indarti, & Ratten, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODS

The paper aims to use incorporate the following research methodologies:

- a) Documentary analysis – This method will be based on the exhaustive examination of existing literature in the field of sports management (especially those analyzing innovative aspects in this domain) including academic studies, scientific articles, thesis and monographies.
- b) Case studies – Detailed case studies will be carried out on entities within Romania to identify strategies and practices that are effectively implemented within the national domestic context.
- c) Semi-structured interviews – Interviews will be conducted with experts in the sports field, including presidents or directors of sports clubs, sports club managers, coaches, athletes, player agents as well as other participants in sports activities, to obtain perspectives and a general deep understanding of mindsets as well as strategies implemented by these clubs.
- d) Survey by questionnaires – This method will involve the development and distribution of questionnaires to obtain quantifiable data regarding the perspectives and experiences of various stakeholders involved in the sports field.
- e) Participatory observation – Direct and participative observations will be made in various sports entities to collect authentic, firsthand relevant data.
- f) SWOT analysis – Through this method, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats specific to the Romanian sports sector will be identified.
- g) Content analysis – This method involves analyzing the media system and sports publications to evaluate the discourse and dominant representations in the Romanian sports field.
- h) Focus group analysis – Organizing discussion groups with various actors involved in the sports field to facilitate in-depth conversations and identify emerging themes.

- i) Comparative analysis – Involves studying and comparing the Romanian sports management model with those of other countries to identify potential successful models that can be adapted, adopted or improved.
- j) Ethnographic methods – In this method, in-depth research will be conducted to understand the domestic cultural and social context.

These methods will be implemented in a sequential and integrative manner, allowing a comprehensive approach to the problems and potentials of the sports field within Romania. Through this hopefully robust methodology, we aspire for the research paper to highlight the current strategies applied by domestic sports clubs while also developing innovative strategies for advancing and revitalizing the Romanian sports sector.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The paper is structured around at least five key objectives that aim to analyze, navigate and enhance the landscape of sports management in Romania:

- a) Comprehensive analysis of sports management - We seek to conduct a thorough analysis of the current state of sports management in Romania by highlighting the strengths and pinpointing areas in need of enhancement or development.
- b) Innovative strategy formulation and implementation – We intend to focus on crafting and proposing the application of innovative management strategies, tailored to adapt to the unique domestic context and aiming to boost both the efficiency and effectiveness of sports management practices.
- c) Framework development for sports innovation – We will dedicate to the establishment of a solid theoretical and practical framework that incorporates the analysis of cutting-edge global trends related to sports innovation.
- d) Fostering multispectral cooperation – We would explore the potential for cross-sector collaboration (including private, public, and educational sectors) in an attempt to forge new pathways for innovative strategies which could drive forward the evolution of sports sector.

- e) Impact assessment of strategic innovations – The final objective centers on evaluating the real-world impacts of these innovative strategies on the Romanian sports sector especially measuring advancements in competitiveness, operational efficiency and overall sports performance.

Each of these objectives not only chart a clear course for achieving specific research results but also collectively seek to advance and refine the field of sports management in Romania through strategic innovations which may be implemented.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES. PROGNOSIS

The research seeks to attempt to develop a modernized strategic framework that incorporates innovative methods and techniques, enhances public and private policies in sports, promotes a culture of innovation, stimulates community participation and commitment, ultimately aiming to attempt produce a reference monography on sports management best practices. By implementing innovation strategies, the research seeks to outline a path for successful integration of such innovation in the management of sports activities in Romania, drawing from a rich fund of recent literature and case studies to establish a robust and dynamic plan for the future of Romanian sports management, anchored in innovation, efficiency and cutting-edge global practices, while being adapted within the domestic realities.

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