

## Competition: The Heart and Soul of Sport Management

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Understanding competition is central to the task of strategy formulation and implementation and it is the link between competition and strategy that was explored in the 2011 Dr. Earle F. Zeigler Lecture. It was argued that strategy, given its centrality to organizational phenomena, and strategy research in particular, provides rich and diverse competitive contexts with the potential to reveal some of the unique properties of sport management. To ascertain the prevalence of sport-related strategy research, three sport management journals were subject to content analysis to identify published manuscripts related to strategy. Before presenting the results, the Lecture considered competition on and off the field, the origins of competitive behavior in sport management and a brief review of the major research themes in the generic strategic management literature. Results revealed that 20 (2.5%) of the 805 manuscripts published in the three journals were strategy focused. Research themes and contexts were presented as well as a bibliometric analysis of the reference lists of the 20 identified strategy manuscripts. This analysis highlighted the journals that are influencing published sport management strategy-related research. It was concluded that strategy research specific to sport management has been sparse to date, yet the role of strategy formulation is central to the role of management and should also be central to sport management scholarship.

I am extremely honored and humbled to be the 2011 Zeigler recipient. I am aware that the hosting of the 2011 North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) conference at the University of Western Ontario was especially significant given Dr. Zeigler's distinguished contributions to this institution and his attendance and active participation in the conference. I appreciated the significance of being at the University of Western Ontario to receive an award bearing Dr. Zeigler's name. As many past Zeigler recipients have noted, Dr. Zeigler was instrumental in stimulating action to create NASSM. Twenty-six conferences later NASSM has much to be proud of in terms of its contributions to focusing attention on sport management scholarship, both within North America and beyond. Technically, I am one who fits within the "beyond" category but, given my regular participation in NASSM conferences and other organizational activities, I have a special affinity for NASSM and for everything it symbolizes. My personal involvement and contributions to both NASSM and the Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ) have been the catalyst for the theme chosen for the Zeigler lecture in June 2011. My role with SMAANZ in relation to NASSM has allowed for some interesting reflections on issues pertaining to competition, cooperation and strategy generally.

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My major external service and leadership contributions have primarily related to the development of SMAANZ. SMAANZ was formed in 1995 followed by its journal, *Sport Management Review*, which was established in 1998. SMAANZ was modeled on NASSM, and in the spirit of thinking globally and acting locally, the founding members adapted operating protocols to match local conditions. In many ways SMAANZ mirrors NASSM, in other ways, it is distinctive, yet the goal remains the same in relation to promoting scholarship. At one level, SMAANZ is obviously competing in the same space as NASSM, yet, at another level, both organizations are predominantly working to enhance and promote sport management scholarship in their local domain. Competition is most obvious in relation to the journals. There remains, however, the challenge of maintaining a healthy competitive balance, extracting the positives of healthy competition rather than the negatives of unhealthy competition. I like to think that SMAANZ has, in some small way, contributed to the healthy elements of competition by encouraging NASSM, the European Association for Sport Management (EASM) and other World Association partners to continually reflect on their progress and the quality of what they do. Of course, the same is equally true for SMAANZ in terms of the competitive encouragement it receives from its World Association partners.

Cooperation between all six regional associations is most obvious through recent initiatives to create a World Association for Sport Management, which will require focused cooperation among the six regional partners,

yet at the same time, require each regional association to continue competing to promote its core products. Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996) have described this mix of competition and cooperation as co-opetition. Co-opetition “describes how businesses simultaneously compete and cooperate with competitors, suppliers, customers, and other ‘players’ in their environments” (Dobbs, 2010, p. 35). The need for simultaneous competition and cooperation has been well documented in our field in relation to sports leagues (e.g., Sanderson & Siegfried, 2003; Stewart, Nicholson, & Dickson, 2005). Competition, in particular, is a familiar and well-known concept.

We have all experienced competition through participation in sport and we have all witnessed the positive and negative elements of competition. In the sports business, competition is first and foremost thought of in the context of the action on the field of play. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Moore, 1997) defines competition as “an event or contest in which people compete” (p. 264). To compete is “to strive for superiority or supremacy” (p. 264). The use of the words “superiority” and “supremacy” highlight the potential negative outcomes of competition. By definition, competition is about declaring winners and losers as a measure of superiority. Clearly, that is the case in professional sport, where it is argued that elite athletes have the cognitive and emotional maturity to cope with the impact of winning and losing.

Unfortunately, there is ample evidence that the pressure of professional sport overcomes many athletes. Consequently, a challenge confronting contemporary sport managers is the need to determine policies and procedures that regulate the behavior of athletes, coaches and officials in response to intensely fought contests, often over-heated by emotions. Moreover, the pressure to win, maintain contracts and consistently achieve peak performance gives rise to another raft of social policies aimed at maintaining the balance between healthy and unhealthy competition. Examples include antidoping and gambling policies. Many sport management scholars are actively involved in research in this important social policy space.

Definitions of sport universally refer to competition as a key characteristic (e.g., Coakley, 2009). Institutionalized competition is one characteristic separating sport from informal recreation and play. The vast majority of roles, tasks and functions of sport managers are either directly or indirectly related to managing competition. The on-field competitive landscape is the responsibility of the coaching staff, and management of the competitive landscape off the field is the responsibility of senior executives. Given the high media profile of many sports and the acute attention on results, managing the weekly highs and lows from competition outcomes is a feature of the sport domain. More than most industries, outcomes of competition are on show weekly and sometimes daily. Managing the implications of competition, both on and off the field, is a critical success factor and a strategic imperative in its own right. Competition, therefore, is the heart and soul of sport management.

How coaches “manage” competition, in terms of preparing their athletes to compete, has received abundant attention in the literature. How senior sport executives “manage” competition or, more specifically, tackle the task of formulating and implementing strategy in their organizations is less clear. Ultimately, the goal of senior executives is to effect strategies that enhance an organization’s competitive position and economic performance. As Dobbs (2010) noted, “competitive behaviors among firms in an industry are not only common, they are expected and demanded by shareholders” (p. 35). This is equally applicable to the sport industry, although the pace of acceptance and understanding of business strategy has varied depending on whether sports systems and structures have been grounded in the origins of amateur or professional sport.

Competition, therefore, is central to strategy and it is the link between competition and strategy that will be explored in this paper. To do so, it is necessary to examine the origins of competitive behavior in sport management, followed by a brief review of the major research themes in the generic strategic management literature. This will lead to the major purpose of this paper, which is to examine the extent to which strategy research is represented in the sport management literature. This analysis was confined to strategy research published in three mainstream sport management journals including the *Journal of Sport Management (JSM)*, *Sport Management Review (SMR)* and *European Sport Management Quarterly (ESMQ)*. If strategy-related research is important to the field, it should be well represented in the three sport management journals reviewed. Essentially, the following two questions shaped the focus of this paper.

- How many strategy-related manuscripts have been published in the three journals, and what is their focus?
- Having identified the range of strategy-focused manuscripts, is it possible to detect any special features of strategy research in relation to sport management?

Before answering these two questions, it is informative to consider the origins of competitive behavior and strategy research in sport management.

## Origins of Competitive Behavior and Strategy Research in Sport Management

It is now 55 years since Simon Rottenberg (1956) published his seminal article in the *Journal of Political Economy* examining the labor market in baseball. As Peter Sloane (2006) noted when evaluating Rottenberg’s contribution some 50 years later, “the economics of sport can truly be said to have begun with Simon Rottenberg’s paper . . .” (p. 2). Sloane continued, stating that Rottenberg “sketched out the main features of major league baseball and these, described by Fort as the eleven anchors of the sports economics literature, have been taken to apply to

other team professional sports leagues” (p. 3). The intention here is not to embark on a detailed analysis of these anchors (see Table 1), but they are worth noting as all eleven cases describe, in some way, competitive behavior inherent in professional sports leagues. All of these competitive behaviors translate to strategic decision-making required to maintain competitive balance, and, consequently, the strategies or actions the League and participating clubs can enact.

As will be shown in the next section of this paper, many of the theories pertaining to competitive behavior and therefore strategy are grounded in the economics literature. This is equally the case in sport. The salary cap and draft are perhaps the best known regulatory mechanisms designed to equalize competition. Uncertainty of outcome, a key principle underlying the rationale for a draft and salary cap, has also been investigated in relation to fan satisfaction in the NFL as an important indicator of ticket sales, television and radio advertising (Paul, Wachsmann, & Weinback, 2011), highlighting an important link to marketing strategy. Equally, competitive balance is a strong research theme in the sport economics literature (cf. Fort & Quirk, 2010; Humphreys, 2002; Késenne, 2000). The sport labor markets in North America, Europe and Australia have also been the focus of research on the mechanisms used to determine how player movement within leagues is managed, and how the players’ share of revenue is calculated (cf. Booth, 2005; Fort, 2005; Frick, 2007). Managing competition and competitive balance is, therefore, central to the job of sport managers.

Returning to Sloane’s (2006) evaluation, he concluded that Rottenberg’s contribution to the economics of sport was significant, however, he contests claims by Rottenberg that professional sports leagues should be analyzed using the same frameworks as for other industries. Sloane noted, for example, in relation to competition policy, that Rottenberg “believed that no special treatment was required for sport in relation to anti-trust policy” (p. 18). In practice, this has not been the case, with Major League Baseball (MLB) having been granted antitrust exemption in 1922, and the 1961 Sport Broadcasting Act allowing the sale of league-wide broadcast rights for the major leagues (Sloane, 2006).

The question of whether “managing sport” is different has consistently exercised the minds of sport management scholars. Chalip (2006), for example, stated that “if the study of sport management is to position itself as a distinctive discipline, then it must take seriously the possibility that there are distinctive aspects to the management of sport” (p. 3). Although Rottenberg claimed the distinctions to be minimal, at least in the context of economic analysis, Sloane and others (e.g., Fort & Winfree, 2009) do not share that view. Moreover, much has changed in the 55 years since Rottenberg’s seminal work, not the least being the amount and variety of revenues generated from broadcast rights relative to ticket sales.

Smith and Stewart (2010), when reviewing the special features of sport, stated, “While it is inappropriate to conclude that the features discussed ... demand a specialised form of management practice, our analysis suggests that sport leagues and competitions still have many idiosyncrasies that demand considered and strategic responses” (p. 10). Factors reviewed by Smith and Stewart included the need to consider variable quality and competitive balance, the critical importance of setting up structures for collaborative behavior and, managing players as income earning assets. These were just some of the idiosyncratic areas related to competition as noted by the authors. It is reasonable to presume, therefore, that any defining features of sport management are likely to be grounded in competition and should emerge in the conduct of strategy research, and an analysis of the sport-related strategy literature. If competition is the heart and soul of sport management, then strategy research and its analysis should expose the key features of sport that will continue to pump life through the “mind” and “body” of the academy.

Strategy has been a topic of great interest to scholars outside the domain of sport management. Before examining the published sport management strategy-related work it is useful to briefly review the generic strategy literature and four major research themes. This review is important, because there needs to be evidence of a clear link between mainstream strategy theories and their application to the sport setting.

**Table 1 Eleven Anchors of Sport Economics**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The labor market is monopsonistic</li> <li>• The product is monopolistic</li> <li>• There are rich and poor clubs, based on attendances as opposed to population size</li> <li>• Attendances are a function of some key variables</li> <li>• The reserve clause does not provide an equilibrium distribution of talent</li> <li>• The advantages of the draft are largely illusory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The prospect of very high salaries attracts an over-abundance of players leading to wide salary dispersion</li> <li>• Baseball team owners are rational profit maximizers</li> <li>• Differences in the quality of rivals should not be ‘too great’ to produce a successful product (uncertainty of outcome)</li> <li>• The free market is as efficient as the reserve clause in terms of resource allocation (the invariance principle)</li> <li>• The demise of the reserve clause would have no impact on the amount of training or the quality of play</li> </ul>
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Sloane (2006, p. 3)

## Mapping Strategic Thought

Strategy can be thought of as a pattern of actions employed by managers to position an organization for competitive advantage, and can be both proactive and reactive. Strategic management refers to the managerial process of formulating the pattern of actions and implementing them. The birth of the field of strategic management, according to Rumelt, Schendel and Teece (1994), can be traced to three key works including Alfred Chandler's *Strategy and Structure* (1962), Igor Ansoff's *Corporate Strategy* (1965), and Kenneth Andrews' *The Concept of Corporate Strategy* (1971), which was originally published in 1965 as a Harvard University textbook, *Business Policy: Texts and Cases*. All three texts are familiar to students who have studied strategic management, and each is characterized by a prescriptive formula of "strategy" relying on managerial action in response to environmental circumstances.

These authors represented a change in approach to strategy, recognizing that strategic management involves both strategic choice and organizational change. In the relatively stable post-World War II period where high-growth and stability was a feature of most economies, managerial decision-making and change were not considered significant factors in a firm's performance. With the onset of changing technologies and market conditions in the 1970s and beyond, strategy-related research began to change. Scholars recognized that more dynamic models were required to address an increasingly complex strategic environment, which led to heightened interest in management theory and education generally. Typically, early classes in strategy were embedded in business policy courses and were most evident in American graduate business administration programs. The business policy model reflected one of two main streams of research to emerge during this period.

The first stream of research, according to Furrer, Thomas, and Goussevskaia (2008), was the process approach which was embedded in the business policy model and "consisted essentially of descriptive studies of how strategies were formed and implemented" (p. 4). Based on observing how strategy decisions were made, this stream of research led to a better understanding of the process of how strategies were determined, both intended and unintended, as was evident in Mintzberg's (1978) work examining patterns in strategy formation. The second stream of research came to be dominated by Michael Porter and the need to better understand the relationship between strategy and performance. Porter's work, which is best known through his two books entitled *Competitive Strategy* (1980), and *Competitive Advantage* (1985), was theoretically based in industrial economics which deals with "the structure of markets, the conduct of firms (strategic behavior), and the social costs and benefits that result from various market structures and firm behavior" (Lewis, Morkel, Hubbard, Davenport, & Stockport, 1999, p. 15). Porter's work advanced the prevailing structure-conduct-performance (S-C-P) paradigm

beyond performance in terms of social outcomes (i.e., production efficiency, full employment). His work also considered the performance of individual firms, which are typically focused on issues such as pricing, advertising, product development, and investment in operations (Lewis et al., 1999). Porter's approach was more firm-focused and dynamic than that originally demonstrated in the structure-conduct-performance paradigm (Gerrard, 2003).

Porter's five forces analysis of industry competition has become essential course content for generations of students and practicing managers. Essentially, it provides a structured approach to assessing the attractiveness of an industry, by analyzing entry and exit barriers, the threat of substitutes, the bargaining power of buyers and suppliers, and the overall intensity of competition among competitors in an industry. Managers, therefore, became the catalysts to reshape industry competition in a way that had previously been ignored. Managers astute enough to change the rules of competition in an industry were likely to create a sustainable competitive advantage, a key pillar on which Porter's work was based.

During the 1980s, strategy research shifted from its focus on industry structure to the firm's internal capabilities and the use of its resources. Although other theories were also in vogue at the time, the resource-based theory of competitive advantage was developing and has become an influential stream of research. Wernerfelt (1984) first wrote about the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm, but it was not until the 1990s, through the work of Barney (1991) and others, that this work became more recognized (Ramos-Rodríguez & Ruíz-Navarro, 2004). Furrer et al. (2008) noted that the RBV focused on "how the possession of valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable resources may result in sustainable competitive advantage" (p. 5).

This logic extended to core competencies, as identified by Prahalad and Hamel (1990), in which competencies defined a firm and where value was located. Collis and Montgomery (1998) observed that "managers in multi-business firms began to conceive of their firms as portfolios of competencies not just portfolios of businesses" (p. 21). The RBV and core competencies perspectives led naturally to the current focus on human and intellectual capital as a company's key strategic resource. If this is the case, then the preparation of sport managers to fulfill roles at CEO and senior management level is critical to the advancement of our field. Outcomes from this stream of research lead to some interesting questions about the extent to which sport management programs teach strategic management, and infuse students with the necessary conceptual skills required to think and act strategically. In part, this is addressed through collective learning from all subjects taught in a course. They all, in some way, contribute to developing problem-solving skills and the information required to manage sport organizations. The real issue, however, is the extent to which the theoretical and practical scaffolding is presented to students to allow them to develop the capacity

to synthesize information commensurate with high level strategic thinking which is often abstract in nature. Although the quality and uniqueness of our research helps define our field, so too do senior managers (or senior graduates) and their perceived competencies in the highly visible and competitive domain of major sports.

This review of the generic literature has necessarily been truncated, but it has mapped some of the more influential research streams in relation to strategic management. Significantly, these research themes should emerge when mapping strategic thought in sport management via the three mainstream journals assessed.

## Mapping Strategic Thought in Sport

### Data Collection

To recap, the aim of data collection was to:

- identify all strategy-related manuscripts published in *JSM*, *SMR* and *ESMQ* and document their major themes; and
- use bibliometric techniques to examine the reference lists of all identified strategy manuscripts for the purpose of understanding which journals are influencing the research published in the above three journals.

Stage one of this investigation assessed the table of contents of every issue in the three journals. Manuscripts focused on strategy were identified, examined, and keywords were developed to capture the major theoretical theme, and the context of each article. This work was then extended to include a textual analysis of the abstract of each manuscript, using Leximancer software (version 3.5). Leximancer is a qualitative analytic tool designed to examine unstructured textual data, and to produce meaningful insights through concepts that are then clustered into higher-level themes. It also depicts relationships between key concepts and themes. Citation analysis was used for stage two of this investigation, which was a content analysis of the reference lists of all relevant manuscripts. Data were organized to show the most frequently cited journals.

## Results

A total of 805 citable items were published in the three journals. Citable items refer to the number of substantial articles published, and substantial articles refer to original manuscripts and reviews, including case studies which were subject to review. In each journal the search commenced from their inception until the end of 2010. In *JSM*, 462 manuscripts have been published since 1987; 176 manuscripts have been published in *ESMQ* since 2001; and 167 in *SMR* since 1998. From these 805 manuscripts, 20, or 2.5% of all manuscripts, were identified as strategy-related. Eleven were identified in *JSM*, five in *SMR* and four in *ESMQ*. All four in *ESMQ* were a result

of a 2003 special issue focused on the resource-based view of strategy.

Table 2 shows the eleven manuscripts published in *JSM* and their dominant theory and context. Strategic capability, strategic analysis and strategic behavior represent one group of papers, followed by competitive advantage and competitive behavior. The RBV is also central to two of the papers, with one further RBV manuscript in the context of organizational efficiency. Two papers were focused on nonprofit strategy, one on marketing plans, and one specifically on vertical integration. Interestingly, David Stotlar's (2000) review of vertical integration is the only Zeigler lecture to specifically address strategy or a specific element of strategy. Slack's 1995 lecture, although not dedicated to strategy, touched on its importance to our field.

Table 3 shows the five manuscripts identified in *SMR*, with two focused on competitive fit and competitive advantage, two on strategic capability in the context of governance, and one devoted to cluster theory. Table 4 shows that all four manuscripts published in the *ESMQ* 2003 special issue on the RBV were obviously focused on this theme, with an emphasis on competitive advantage.

The textual review of abstracts progresses insights from a static keywords perspective to a more dynamic analysis showing interrelationships between higher-level themes and lower-level concepts. Figure 1 illustrates the key themes and interconnections between them. Although it is recognized that using only the abstracts for this textual analysis is limited, an interesting visual snapshot of the main theoretical themes inherent in the strategy-research published in the three journals is provided. Density of data in these visual maps can be increased to reveal greater depth and, consequently, the interrelationships between concepts and themes (see Figure 2). Figure 1, for instance, illustrates the major themes with "advantage" the largest circle indicating its prominence in the abstracts. Leaving aside the large "sport" circle (referring to sport the noun, and the subject being managed) and the smaller "sports" circle (referring to specific sports, or organizations and leagues), which is to be expected, other prominent themes include strategy, integration, resources, leadership, financial, and companies, with other references to research and the study of strategy generally. The nodes within the circles and their linkages to other themes are evident in Figure 2. A clear link, for example, is shown between competitive advantage and the resource-based view, which in turn links to resources, leadership, performance and financial concepts.

To further enhance this textual analysis it would be necessary to examine all 20 manuscripts as one document, penetrating more deeply into the themes and concepts and their interrelationships. This more detailed approach should further the aim of identifying the unique features of strategy theory, if there are any, in relation to sport management. In the short-term, this analysis is most likely to reveal the unique contexts in which strategy research is being undertaken. These contexts reflect a variety of "competitive" conditions. For example, professional sport

**Table 2 Journal of Sport Management**

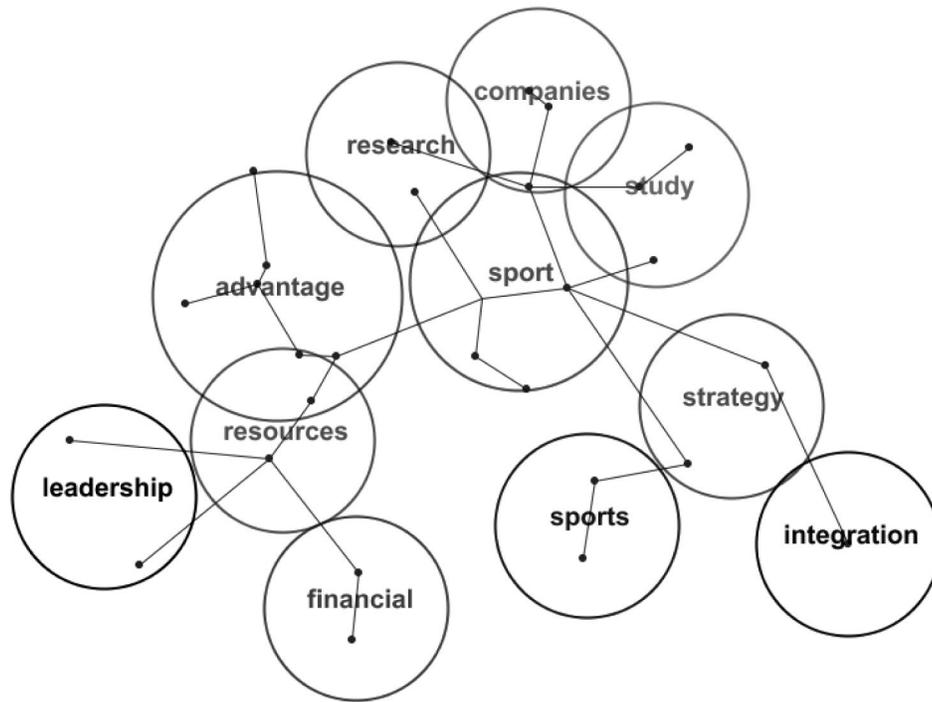
No	Article	Theory	Context
1	Sutton, W.A. (1987). Developing an initial marketing plan for intercollegiate athletic programs, <i>1</i> , 146–158.	Marketing plans	Intercollegiate athletics
2	Rail, G. (1988). A theoretical framework for the study of complex organizations, <i>2</i> , 40–52.	Strategic analysis/ sociology	Strategies/power relationships
3	Thibault, L., Slack, T., & Hinings, B. (1993). A framework for the analysis of strategy in non profit sport organizations, <i>7</i> , 25–43.	Nonprofit strategy	Canadian NSOs
4	Thibault, L., Slack, T., & Hinings, B. (1994). Strategic planning for nonprofit sport organizations: Verification of a framework, <i>8</i> , 218–233.	Nonprofit strategy	Strategic planning/ Canadian NSOs
5	Amis, J., Pant, N., & Slack, T. (1997). Achieving a sustainable competitive advantage: A resource-based view of sport sponsorship, <i>11</i> , 80–96.	Competitive advantage/ resource-based view	Sponsorship
6	Berrett, T., & Slack, T. (1999). An analysis of the influence of competitive and institutional pressures on corporate sponsorship decisions, <i>13</i> , 114–138.	Competitive behavior	Sponsorship/Canadian corporate sponsorship
7	Stotlar, D. (2000). Vertical integration in sport, <i>14</i> , 1–7.	Vertical integration	Professional sport/ broadcasting
8	Smart, D., & Wolfe, R. (2000). Examining sustainable competitive advantage in intercollegiate athletics: A resource-based view, <i>14</i> , 133–153.	Competitive advantage/ resource-based view	Intercollegiate athletics
9	Sack, A.L., & Nadim, A. (2002). Strategic choice in a turbulent environment: A case study of Starter Corporation, <i>16</i> , 36–53.	Strategic choice/five forces analysis	Starter Corp/ merchandising, licensing
10	Gerrard, B. (2005). A resource-utilization model of organizational efficiency in professional sports teams, <i>19</i> , 143–169.	Resource-based view/ economics	Organizational efficiency
11	Ferkins, L., Shilbury, D., & McDonald, G. (2009). Board involvement in strategy: Advancing governance of sport organizations, <i>23</i> , 245–277.	Strategic capability	Governance/ New Zealand NSOs

**Table 3 Sport Management Review**

No	Article	Theory	Context
1	Shilbury, D. (2000). Considering future sport delivery systems, <i>3</i> , 199–221.	Cluster theory	Revenues/delivery systems/NSOs
2	Berrett, T., & Slack, T. (2001). A framework for the analysis of strategic approaches employed by nonprofit sport organizations in seeking corporate sponsorship, <i>4</i> , 21–45.	Competitive fit	Sponsorship/Canadian NSOs
3	Evans, D.M., & Smith, C.T. (2004). The internet and competitive advantage: A study of Australia's four premier professional sporting leagues, <i>7</i> , 27–56.	Competitive advantage	The Internet/ professional sport
4	Ferkins, L., Shilbury, D., & McDonald, G. (2005). The role of the board in building strategic capability: Toward an integrated model, <i>8</i> , 195–225.	Strategic capability	Governance/NSOs
5	Ferkins, L., & Shilbury, D. (2010). Developing board strategic capability in sport organizations: The national-regional governing relationship, <i>13</i> , 235–254.	Strategic capability/ interorganizational theory	Governance/New Zealand NSOs

**Table 4 European Sport Management Quarterly**

No	Article	Theory	Context
1	Gerrard, B. (2003). What does the resource-based view “bring to the table” in sport management research?, 3, 139–144.	Resource-based view	Research implications
2	Mauws, M.K., Mason, D.S., & Foster, W.F. (2003). Thinking strategically about professional sports, 3, 145–164.	Competitive advantage/ resource-based view	Professional sport/ economic rents
3	Smart, D.L., & Wolfe, R.A. (2003). The contribution of leadership and human resources to organizational success: Empirical assessment of performance in Major League Baseball, 3, 165–188.	Resource-based view	Leadership, human resources/ MLB
4	Amis, J. (2003). “Good things come to those who wait”: Strategic management of image and reputation at Guinness, 3, 189–214.	Competitive advantage	Image/reputation



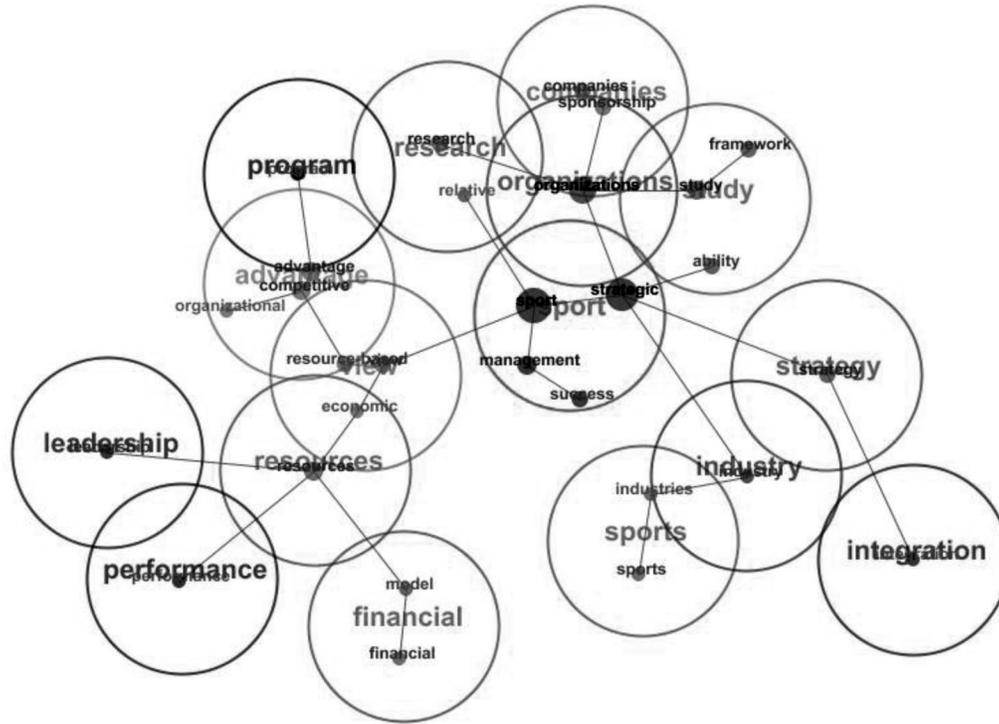
**Figure 1** — Textual review of abstracts, major themes

is intensely competitive and, consequently, competitive behavior off the field is intense, not just within leagues but also across the broader sport, recreation and leisure industries. Community-based sport is also competitive, but not to the same extent as professional sport, and not with the same degree of precision attached to the execution of skills. These varying competitive or environmental conditions provide extremely diverse and potentially rich research settings. Context, therefore, is most likely to reveal what, if any, “special features” of sport management might exist. The search for what defines our field may simply be a matter of perspective or, in other words, the way we choose to look at the problem.

This analysis thus far has demonstrated the application of generic theories of strategy to a variety of contexts specific to sport. For example, the current analysis reveals

a focus on context via Canadian national sport organizations (NSOs) and the need to understand nonprofit strategy and sponsorship, which also extends to corporate behavior in relation to sponsorship. New Zealand NSOs were also featured examining the strategic capability of nonprofit volunteer boards to determine strategic direction through planning processes.

The assessment of theoretical foundations and the issue of determining sport management’s unique properties were also assisted by the citation analysis. Nine-hundred-and-twenty-five citations were identified from the reference lists of the 20 manuscripts, which included 452 citations from the 11 *JSM* papers, 271 in *SMR*, and 202 in *ESMQ*. Of the 925 citations, 503 (54.4%) were to journal articles. Table 5 illustrates the top 15 journals cited. The *Strategic Management Journal* was the most



**Figure 2** — Textual review of abstracts, major themes and concepts

frequently cited (63), followed by *JSM* (56). Arguably, this is a good reflection of the theory—context argument in relation to the special features of sport management. It also shows a positive reliance on the top-ranked strategy and sport management journals. Thereafter, the bulk of the journals are generic management or marketing focused, with four sport management journals in the top 15. The *Sport Business Journal* (12), *SMR* (11) and *ESMQ* (9) were the other three sport journals but, in reality, the number of citations was small and hardly influential. Of the books cited, only Porter's *Competitive Strategy* (6) and *Competitive Advantage* (4) were cited more than three times.

With only 2.5% of all published manuscripts in *JSM*, *SMR* and *ESMQ* reporting strategy research, it is unlikely that the motivation for citation to the sport management journals was associated to strategy theory. Therefore, context was the most likely explanation for most of the citations to those three journals. What the textual review of abstracts did not reveal, as well as the keywords analysis, was the unique contexts in which strategy research is being applied. These varying competitive environments define context and, as has been argued, the importance of strategy research to contribute to the evolution of our field.

**Table 5** Top 15 Journals Cited in Strategy Manuscripts

Rank	Journal	Citations
1	<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	63
2	<i>Journal of Sport Management</i>	56
3	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	23
4	<i>Journal of Management</i>	19
5	<i>International Journal of Advertising</i>	17
6	<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	16
7	<i>Nonprofit Management &amp; Leadership</i>	13
8	<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	12
9	<i>Nonprofit &amp; Voluntary Sector Quarterly</i>	12
10	<i>Sport Business Journal</i>	12
11	<i>Sport Management Review</i>	11
12	<i>Corporate Governance: An International Review</i>	9
13	<i>Harvard Business Review</i>	9
14	<i>Journal of Management Studies</i>	9
15	<i>European Sport Management Quarterly</i>	9

## Summary

This analysis has demonstrated that strategy research currently represents a very small proportion of the manuscripts published in the three key sport management journals. Slack (1996), in his 1995 Zeigler lecture, stated, "... despite the centrality of strategy to the operations of all organizational phenomena, there have been very few studies of this topic in our field" (p. 101). Sixteen years later it is difficult to argue that much has changed in relation to strategy research. Slack might appreciate, however, given the tone and focus of his address that, of the strategy research conducted there is evidence of a diversification of contexts. Canadian and New Zealand NSOs, intercollegiate sport, corporations focused on sport sponsorship and merchandising, MLB, and broadcasters are just some of the research contexts identified. Moreover, based on the citation analysis, it is also clear that strategy research is influenced by the leading generic management journals highlighting important links to management theory.

This analysis has revealed that strategy research specific to the field of sport management has been sparse. It is not clear why this is the case, particularly given the centrality of strategy to organizational life. It has been argued that strategy theory and practice off the field is akin to the competition dynamic on the field. Like on-field success, competitive success off the field is an imperative, with strategic action a factor of the knowledge, skills, and techniques of individual managers. Our research underpins this transfer of strategy-related knowledge. Successfully formulating and implementing strategy is essential for sport management graduates working as senior executives, as off-field outcomes are highly visible for sports-loving communities and, therefore, have the potential to impact on the perceptions of our field. This is not an inconsequential concern as our field trades in the pleasure of leisure, and often it is associated with the nonserious, intellectual pursuits in life.

In searching for the unique identifiers in our field of sport management via strategy research, it is difficult, based on this analysis, to find any—there is simply not enough published work. Context, as has been argued, is the most likely vehicle for this analysis, and there was some evidence of a diverse range of contexts. Assessing the varying competitive forces on and off field provides the contextual signposts for where differences and uniqueness might be found. To date, strategy research has not been tackled with the centrality it deserves. Managing competitive forces on and off the field is central to the task of management and, therefore, if competition is the heart and soul of sport management, then strategy research is the conduit to the spirit and character of our field.

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