

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN SPORTS: INSIGHTS AND APPLICATIONS FOR UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. *Planning is important for helping sports teams around the world perform better, last longer, and stay ahead of the competition. The article focuses on how to strategically manage sports strategically, combining theories and studies with examples from Uzbekistan. This research examines existing studies and various scenarios to find key strategies for sports management, such as a clear goal, good leaders, new ideas, involvement, and long-term planning. The article also highlights Uzbekistan's chess achievements as an example of successful planning while pointing out issues in sports management and suggesting improvements.*

Keywords. *Strategic management, sports organizations, sports governance, sports development, Uzbekistan sports, chess development, sports leadership, digital transformation in sports, sports sustainability, sports inclusivity.*

Introduction. Sport organizations worldwide operate within increasingly complex socio-economic systems, requiring sophisticated strategic management to navigate competitive pressures, evolving stakeholder expectations, and sustainability demands (Gorobatenko, 2023).

Beyond promoting physical activity and health, sports entities significantly contribute to national identity and economic output (Kokoulina, 2016). Uzbekistan's rapid development in international chess underscores the impact of strategic investments; however, extending such successes across diverse sports domains necessitates comprehensive strategic frameworks informed by global best practices and localized insights.

Literature Review. The body of research on strategic management in sports underscores the complex interplay between organizational mission, resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and external environmental factors. Gorobatenko (2023) argues that individualized mission statements and balanced performance indicators are fundamental for guiding sports organizations through dynamic competitive landscapes. Complementing this, Kulikova and Ashirov (2021) demonstrate that strategic planning plays a pivotal role in ensuring sustainability amidst market volatility, with adaptive mechanisms serving as critical for long-term viability.

Kokoulina (2016) emphasizes the cultural and leadership dimensions of sport management, asserting that organizational culture shapes outcomes as much as formal strategy. Julagov (2021) integrates this perspective by elaborating on mechanisms for optimizing physical culture institutions using strategy to align stakeholder interests and expand public engagement.

The potential of combining grassroots sports development with professional pathways is explored by Tikhonova and Volkov (2022), who emphasize community synergy as a catalyst for talent cultivation and social integration. Deryugin (2020) extends the discourse towards strategic branding, highlighting that market differentiation and athlete-personal branding increasingly influence organizational success.

Classic strategic frameworks such as Ansoff's (1957) model remain relevant, especially in guiding market expansion and product diversification strategies that sports organizations pursue amid growing competition (Taylor et al., 2018). Meanwhile, Smith and Stewart (2010) focus on leadership's role in enabling organizational learning, crucial for adapting to fast-paced environmental changes.

The growing importance of sustainability in sports event management is a recent trend addressed by Shilova (2019), advocating for minimizing ecological impacts and fostering social responsibility. Baker and Esen (2017) discuss digital transformation, particularly how innovative marketing and fan engagement technologies revolutionize sports consumption.

Inclusivity emerges as a vital strategic dimension, with Khan and Alam (2019) arguing that equal access policies increase participation and improve social cohesion. Uzbekistan's chess achievements provide a practical example of strategic state support collaborations at grassroots and elite levels, as reported by Maratov et al. (2020). This success reflects integrated approaches that combine funding, coaching education, and international exposure.

Further, Collins and Jackson (2014) provide comprehensive models on managing diverse stakeholder relationships, a critical task in sports organizations with multifaceted interests. They advocate flexible governance structures to facilitate cooperation.

Vaganova and Popov (2021) highlight continuous professional education for coaches and administrators as instrumental in sustaining organizational efficacy. Shen and Wu (2016) warn of financial vulnerabilities in sports, recommending strategic diversification to mitigate dependence on single revenue streams.

Lee et al. (2019) explore crisis management through adaptive strategic frameworks, underscoring resilience amid uncertainties. Turner (2015) illustrates the strategic role of integrated digital platforms in communication and operational effectiveness. (see Table-1.)

Table 1.

Key Strategic Management Components in Sports Organizations

Component	Description	Relevant Authors
Mission & Vision	Clear articulation of long-term goals aligned with social responsibility and stakeholder needs	Gorobatenko (2023); Wahlström (2018)
Environmental Analysis	Assessment of internal strengths/weaknesses and external opportunities/threats using SWOT, IFE, EFE	Wahlström (2018)
Strategy Formulation	Using BCG, SPACE, and QSPM matrices to develop objective, feasible strategic alternatives	Wahlström (2018)
Leadership & Governance	Promotes transparency, organizational learning, and innovation through functional boards and leadership	Smith & Stewart (2010); Collins & Jackson (2014)
Innovation & Sustainability	Digital transformation, analytics, ecological impacts, and social responsibility as strategic priorities	Baker & Esen (2017); Shilova (2019)

This table synthesizes the foundational pillars of strategic management specific to sports entities. Defining mission and vision clarifies the common purpose for all stakeholders—including athletes, coaches, administrators, and fans—facilitating cohesive strategic planning.

The need for sports organizations to regularly assess their internal capabilities against outside dangers and possibilities, for adaptable decision-making, is shown by the emphasis on environmental scanning using SWOT and related analytical tools.

The successful execution of plans is a crucial aspect and is dependent on the ability of leadership and governance to put them into practice. By spreading responsibility across various functional boards, each with different areas of expertise, the organization can cultivate both its ability to adapt and its capacity for innovation. Including innovation and sustainability as strategic priorities signals the field's evolution from purely competitive concerns to embracing digital transformation and social responsibility frameworks. Finally, inclusivity broadens the talent base and reinforces sport's societal benefits, making it integral to contemporary sports management practices.

Together, these works offer a rich foundation of strategic insights that could be applied in Uzbekistan's sports environment. Adopting mission-driven frameworks, emphasizing coaching education, engaging digital platforms for fan outreach, and prioritizing sustainability and inclusivity are key practical takeaways. Addressing current infrastructure gaps and promoting decentralized decision-making would further strengthen strategic outcomes.

This study adopts a qualitative literature synthesis and comparative analysis methodology. Scholarly articles, official reports, and case studies on strategic sports management were systematically reviewed via academic databases, including Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and CyberLeninka, focusing on publications within the last decade. Selection criteria prioritized peer-reviewed empirical research and theoretical models elucidating strategic frameworks, governance approaches, and performance metrics.

Strategic Management Frameworks in Sports Organizations. Strategic management in sports is a dynamic, three-stage process encompassing strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Wahlström, 2018). This cyclical journey begins by establishing a clear vision and mission that articulate the organization's long-term objectives and core purpose, reflecting social responsibility and the aspirations that guide stakeholder satisfaction (Wahlström, 2018). Within sports organizations, this foundational step is critical to align diverse stakeholders—including athletes, coaches, administrators, fans, sponsors, and regulatory bodies—towards common goals.

A comprehensive internal and external environmental analysis follows, notably employing SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analyses enriched by tools such as the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) and External Factor Evaluation (EFE). Financial ratio analysis over successive years adds quantitative depth to this evaluation, enabling data-driven insights to support strategic choices. Subsequent strategy formulation involves the application of matrices like Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and Strategic Position & Action Evaluation (SPACE), ensuring proposed strategies align with organizational capabilities and external market dynamics. These alternatives are rigorously evaluated with methodologies such as the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) for objective prioritization (Wahlström, 2018).

Leadership and Governance in Sports Strategy. The role of leadership and governance is vital in bridging strategic intent with operational reality.

Recent studies highlight how effective boards and leadership improve an organization's ability to plan and act strategically (Petrucci & Robinson, 2022). Transitioning from volunteer-driven amateur models to fully professionalized entities demands leadership able to navigate complex regulatory environments and multi-stakeholder expectations.

Leadership impacts strategic capability by fostering a culture of organizational learning and adaptability, facilitating transparent decision-making, and promoting innovation (Smith & Stewart, 2010). Boards must be composed with a balance of expertise, strategic vision, and governance experience to ensure effective oversight and resilience amid challenges (Collins & Jackson, 2014).

Innovation and Sustainability in Strategic Sport Management. Innovation, particularly digital transformation, is revolutionizing sports organization strategies. Leveraging big data analytics, performance management tools, and digital marketing platforms enhances both internal operations and fan engagement (Baker & Esen, 2017; Taylor et al., 2018). Incorporating sustainability as a guiding principle further aligns sports governance with global social and environmental expectations. Shilova (2019) argues for embedding ecological consciousness across event management, resource use, and community engagement, elevating sports organizations' social legitimacy.

Sustainable strategic partnerships and networks underpin long-term viability and societal impact, blending commercial and social objectives within complex global sports ecosystems (Peterson & Morales, 2023).

Inclusivity and Community Engagement. Strategic inclusivity ensures sports organizations expand access across demographic divides, engaging marginalized groups and fostering social cohesion (Khan & Alam, 2019). Effective community linkages with elite training pathways forge a holistic sports development environment (Tikhonova & Volkov, 2022). This approach not only broadens participation but also cultivates talent pipelines essential for sustained competitive success.

Application to Uzbekistan's Sports Context. Uzbekistan's success in chess is a good example of how they combined government backing, local efforts, and working with other countries, resulting in victories and setting a standard for other sports. This advancement is largely driven by the decisive engagement of the Uzbek government, exemplified by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's landmark decree issued on January 14, 2021, which initiated the State Program for Chess Development for 2021–2025 (FIDE, 2021; Maratov et al., 2020).

The state program lays out ambitious goals such as expanding regular chess participation to 3 percent of the national population by 2025, establishing 25 new chess schools and clubs via public-private partnerships, and positioning Uzbekistan among the top 10 countries in the International Chess Federation (FIDE) ratings (Uzbekistan Chess Federation, 2025).

The decree incorporates chess into the educational curriculum of over a thousand elementary schools, supporting the "Chess in Schools" initiative with substantial budget allocations—over \$3 million USD earmarked for equipment, instructor training, and program implementation in the 2021–2022 academic year.

The historic advancement involves chess-focused schools, financial bonuses for high-achieving players, and backing for players with disabilities through the National Paralympic Association's chess division (Uzreport, 2025).

Crucial to the rise of a new generation of highly skilled players who have achieved international recognition in prominent competitions and Olympiads has been the development of infrastructure and professional training programs (Uzbekistan Chess Federation, 2024). (see Table-2.)

Table 2.

Application of Strategic Management to Uzbekistan's Sports Context

№	Aspect	Current Status	Recommendations	Supporting References
1.	State Support & Chess Focus	Strong government backing, structured development programs for chess	Extend strategic planning and state support to other sports sectors	Maratov et al. (2020); FIDE (2021)
2.	Infrastructure	Fragmented and inconsistent infrastructure	Develop cohesive national sports infrastructure strategies	Gorobatenko (2023)
3.	Professional Education	Limited continuous development for coaches and managers	Establish ongoing education systems incorporating international best practices	Vaganova & Popov (2021)
4.	Governance	Centralized with decision-making bottlenecks	Promote decentralization & empower regional sports federations	Gorobatenko (2023)
5.	Digital Infrastructure	Underdeveloped for fan engagement and data analytics	Invest in digital platforms for marketing & operational efficiency	Baker & Esen (2017); Taylor et al. (2018)
6.	Inclusivity	Emerging but requires expansion	Implement wider inclusivity initiatives for youth and marginalized groups	Khan & Alam (2019)

This table offers a diagnostic and prescriptive overview of Uzbekistan's sports ecosystem, reflecting successes, constraints, and strategic pathways. The state's robust engagement in chess—manifest via policy decrees, dedicated programs, and resource allocations—illustrates how centralized yet well-funded efforts can elevate a sport to international prominence.

The challenges in broader sports sectors underscore the pitfalls of fragmented infrastructure and centralized control that can hinder responsiveness and growth. Professional education gaps and limited digital advancement highlight areas where modernization can yield profound effects. Importantly, augmentation of inclusivity and decentralized governance emerges as a critical lever to harness latent local potential. Collectively, these findings suggest that while chess provides a blueprint of excellence, sustainable development across other sports will require integrated reform spanning governance, education, infrastructure, and technology.

However, Uzbekistan's other sports face significant problems, even though chess is doing well thanks to its organized and well-funded strategy. Problems like broken infrastructure, controlling government, and poor training for professionals make it hard for other sports to have the same success. For instance, decision-making inertia within sports federations often delays the adoption of innovative management practices and resource optimization strategies.

There is a pressing need to diversify and decentralize governance to empower regional federations and local clubs, which could foster greater inclusivity and more efficient talent identification and development (Gorobatenko, 2023).

To address these multifaceted challenges, Uzbekistan could benefit from adopting multi-tiered Key Performance Indicator (KPI) frameworks that holistically evaluate financial sustainability, social impact, and environmental stewardship, thereby guiding sports organizations toward balanced and sustainable development objectives (Gorobatenko, 2023).

Enhanced digital infrastructure—including advanced fan engagement platforms, real-time performance analytics, and integrated communication systems—would expand the visibility and economic viability of sports domestically and internationally (Baker & Esen, 2017; Taylor et al., 2018).

Moreover, continuous professional development programs are essential for building organizational capacity and promoting strategic thinking among sport managers, coaches, and administrators. Such programs should emphasize international best practices, innovative coaching methodologies, and adaptive leadership skills, fostering a culture of lifelong learning and organizational resilience (Vaganova & Popov, 2021). Expanding inclusivity initiatives, especially targeting youth and marginalized populations, would strengthen grassroots access and social cohesion, ensuring sport's developmental benefits are widely distributed (Khan & Alam, 2019).

In conclusion, while Uzbekistan's chess achievements provide a robust blueprint for strategic sports management, replicating such success in other sports domains demands systemic reforms. These include decentralizing governance, embracing multi-dimensional performance metrics, upgrading digital capacities, and initiating comprehensive capacity-building programs.

By marrying these strategic imperatives with its unique socio-cultural context, Uzbekistan can catalyze sustained growth and dynamic competitiveness across its entire sports ecosystem.

Challenges and Strategic Recommendations. Key obstacles in Uzbekistan include heavy reliance on government funding, insufficient strategic diversification, and hierarchical governance limiting entrepreneurial agility (Shen & Wu, 2016). The challenges and strategic recommendations for Uzbekistan's sports sector are deeply rooted in human, organizational, and systemic factors. From a humanized perspective, these issues touch on the experiences, aspirations, and frustrations of the people who dedicate their lives to sports in Uzbekistan, from athletes and coaches to administrators and fans.

Heavy reliance on government funding means that many sports organizations face uncertainty and limitations that restrict their ability to plan innovatively or invest in long-term growth. This financial dependence often leads to stress and pressure among managers who must operate within tight budget constraints, limiting their creativity and capacity to respond flexibly to emerging opportunities or crises. The insufficient diversification in strategic approaches and revenue streams highlights a sector constrained by tradition and bureaucracy. For many practitioners, this manifests as a feeling of frustration with rigid structures that do not value entrepreneurial thinking or grassroots innovation. The hierarchical governance creates bottlenecks where decisions are delayed or disconnected from the realities on the ground, resulting in missed opportunities to nurture local talent or engage communities meaningfully.

Recommendations that emphasize decentralizing authority are not just administrative changes—they represent a call to empower local leaders, coaches, and communities to take

ownership of their sports development. This empowerment can revitalize motivation and accountability, creating environments where people feel valued and capable of making a difference. Similarly, diversifying revenue by exploring partnerships with private businesses or merchandising opens new horizons for financial independence and growth. For many involved in sports, this means more resources for equipment, training, facilities, and events, which ultimately enriches the sporting experience and performance.

Building adaptive governance models reflects the dynamic social and economic fabric of Uzbekistan. It acknowledges that sports organizations operate in complex ecosystems with multiple stakeholders whose voices and needs must be balanced. Promoting innovation and responsiveness within governance can foster openness to new ideas, collaboration, and continuous improvement. In essence, these challenges and recommendations speak to the heart of Uzbekistan's sports community—they resonate with a desire for progress, recognition, and sustainability. Addressing them means nurturing human potential, fostering trust and partnership, and building systems that reflect the vibrant culture and ambitions of Uzbek sports. (see Table-3.)

This table pragmatically distills broad academic insights into actionable steps tailored to Uzbekistan. Emphasizing mission and vision provides strategic clarity foundational to organizational coherence and national alignment.

The recommendation to use balanced scorecards addresses the complexity of sports performance, recognizing that success is multidimensional—financial, social, and environmental metrics must all be monitored to achieve true sustainability.

Table 3.
Strategic Recommendations for Uzbekistan's Sports Sector

№	Recommendation	Description	Expected Impact
1.	Mission & Vision Statements	Define clear goals linked to national sport development policies	Align stakeholder efforts, increase coherence
2.	Balanced Scorecards	Use multi-dimensional KPIs including financial, social, and environmental metrics	Holistic performance evaluation
3.	Revenue Diversification	Expand funding beyond government sources through sponsorship, merchandising, and private partnerships	Greater financial stability
4.	Continuous Professional Development	Implement coach and administrator training programs based on global best practices	Improved organizational capacity and innovation
5.	Technology Leverage	Adopt digital marketing, fan engagement, and data analytic tools	Enhanced visibility, fan base, and operational efficiency
6.	Inclusivity Initiatives	Broaden sport access for marginalized and youth populations	Social cohesion, talent pipeline expansion
7.	Governance Reform	Decentralize decision-making and encourage entrepreneurial leadership	Increased agility and responsiveness

Diversifying revenue shields sports organizations from funding shortages common in state-dependent models and encourages entrepreneurial initiative. Continuous education fosters a knowledgeable and agile workforce capable of navigating emerging challenges and innovations.

Leveraging technology is indispensable for expanding reach and operational excellence, reflecting trends in global sports industries.

Finally, inclusivity initiatives not only fulfill ethical and social goals but also broaden the player pool and fan base, factors critical to long-term vitality. The call for empirical future research reflects prudent academic and practical rigor—adaptation to local contexts and iterative evaluation are essential for sustained success.

Discussion. Global research confirms that strategic management in sports necessitates a clear mission, integrated multi-level strategies, and adaptive frameworks to external dynamics (Gorobatenko, 2023; Kokoulina, 2016). Uzbekistan's application faces challenges of infrastructure, professional education, and resource allocation consistency. However, the country's chess achievements underscore successful strategic state intervention, grassroots nurturing, and international collaboration (Maratov et al., 2020).

Practical strategies include adopting balanced KPI systems tailored to local sports, investing in digital infrastructure for fan outreach, and fostering inclusivity by expanding sport access to underrepresented populations (Khan & Alam, 2019). Continuous coaching education and strategic branding remain underexploited areas, with potential significant impacts.

Shortcomings identified in existing frameworks often stem from rigid hierarchical structures and limited financial diversification (Shen & Wu, 2016). Addressing these requires flexible governance models promoting decentralized decision-making and entrepreneurial approaches.

Conclusions. Strategic management remains foundational for sports industry sustainability. This review highlights critical success factors—mission clarity, multi-tiered strategy implementation, and stakeholder inclusivity—that can be tailored for Uzbekistan's sports context. Enhancing digital engagement, sustainability orientation, and ongoing professional development emerge as priority areas. In summary, strategic management research stresses an integrated approach combining governance reform, technological innovation, economic sustainability, and social inclusivity as vital to the future success of sports, including in emerging markets like Uzbekistan. These findings, drawn from rigorously vetted contemporary sources, provide a robust foundation to formulate adaptive, comprehensive sport management strategies tailored to local and global realities.

In considering the strategic advancement of Uzbekistan's sports sector, it is imperative to articulate clear, focused recommendations consistent with the nation's broader developmental objectives. A foundational step involves the precise formulation of mission and vision statements for sports organizations. These statements must be carefully crafted to align with the overarching national sport development goals, thereby providing direction and coherence across diverse stakeholders and initiatives. Such clarity ensures that all efforts contribute toward shared long-term aims, fostering unity and purpose within the sports ecosystem.

Another key aspect is setting up comprehensive performance tracking methods; for instance, using balanced scorecards would be helpful. By examining financial performance, social influence, and ecological responsibility, these instruments enable a full evaluation, delivering decision-makers the broad understanding needed for well-informed, flexible

management. By incorporating multidimensional accountability, this strategy surpasses standard performance measurements in sports teams.

Financial diversification emerges as a critical pillar for sustainability. Creating more ways to earn money, other than relying on government funds, can help protect against money problems. It might require working with private companies, creating plans for selling merchandise and sponsorships, and looking at new ways to earn money through digital means.

This kind of variety makes things more financially stable while also encouraging businesses and giving the sports industry independence and the ability to change strategies.

Establishing ongoing professional development systems is also essential for coaches, administrators, and sports managers. Structured education and training programs, rooted in contemporary international best practices, cultivate a culture of lifelong learning and strategic acumen. When we put resources into our workforce, we're giving them the skills to overcome obstacles, embrace innovation, and keep our organization at the top.

Finally, leveraging technology is indispensable for modern sports management. By using digital platforms effectively, you can improve marketing, create unique experiences for fans, and analyze data to enhance work processes. Such technological integration enables sports organizations to remain competitive in a rapidly digitizing environment.

Future studies should focus on testing these strategies in Uzbekistan's diverse sports organizations. Examining theories closely in different contexts is important to improve their practical use and make them better.

By embracing these comprehensive recommendations, Uzbekistan's sports sector can aspire toward sustainable growth, heightened competitiveness, and inclusive development, positioning itself firmly on the path toward international sporting excellence.

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