

The internal and external context of sports organizations and its impact on the strategy developed

Achraf BERQI, (Doctoral student)
Economics and Public Policy Laboratory
Faculty of economics and management kenitra
Ibn Tofail University of Kenitra, Morocco

Mounia CHERKAOU, (Researcher Professor)
Economics and Public Policy Laboratory
Faculty of economics and management kenitra
Ibn Tofail University of Kenitra, Morocco

Correspondence address :	Campus universitaire Kénitra Morocco https://feg.uit.ac.ma supportfeg@uit.ac.ma +212 5 37 32 92 18
Disclosure Statement :	Authors are not aware of any findings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this study
Conflict of Interest :	The authors report no conflicts of interest.
Cite this article :	BERQI, A., & CHERKAOU, M. (2023). The internal and external context of sports organizations and its impact on the strategy developed. International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics, 4(4-2), 359-373. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8282913
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Received: July22, 2023

Accepted: August 24, 2023

International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics - IJAFAME
ISSN: 2658-8455
Volume 4, Issue 4-2 (2023)

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Abstract:

Managing a football club organization is a multifaceted undertaking encompassing various elements, including cost, revenue, investment, and debt management. It raises the question of whether there is a disparity in management approaches between the Royal Moroccan Football Federation and the National Professional Football League. The intricate matter of football management in Morocco reflects a history where, despite the efforts of various stakeholders, it still needs to be completed. While some aspects are gradually becoming more apparent, a considerable journey is still ahead to address all the complexities involved.

The various research on strategic change within sports organizations enacts the captivating concept of change while briefly analyzing the impact of the internal and external context on the strategic evolution of a sports club.

We delved into how these dynamic entities were compelled to adopt a proactive approach in response to evolving demands and expectations from their stakeholders, all while navigating an ever-changing sports landscape. However, there is more to the story, as the football world keeps growing, transforming, and pushing the boundaries of innovation. In this highly anticipated follow-up, we will dig deeper into the crucial role of internal and external context and its impact on the strategies devised within our elite football clubs.

Qualitative research plays a pivotal role in management science research. Our work aims to establish a coherent strategy that empowers sports organizations, particularly professional clubs, to function in a healthy climate and generate competitive and organizational benefits in the short, medium, and long term. Achieving this objective necessitates the application of techniques dedicated to qualitative longitudinal research.

Keywords: internal context, external context, growth strategy, performance, strategic change.

JEL Classification: Z20

Paper type: Empirical research

1. Introduction:

For quite some time, Morocco has demonstrated its leadership in African football. They have achieved remarkable feats, reaching the semi-finals in the World Cup, becoming champions of Africa in the under-23 category, reaching the finals in the African Cup of Nations under-17 category and the Women's African Cup, and successfully qualifying for the World Cup. These impressive accomplishments resulted from a revolution in Moroccan football, spearheaded by the Royal Moroccan Football Federation under the leadership of Mr. Faouzi Lekjaa. They implemented a comprehensive reconstruction strategy across all national team categories to inspire Moroccan supporters and kindle dreams during every continental and international competition.

The vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI has driven the revival of sports in Morocco, focusing on football, the country's most widely practiced and beloved sport. This vision is now yielding fruitful results as our national teams achieve triumphant performances on the global stage. The speech delivered by His Majesty King Mohammed VI on the 24th anniversary of the Sovereign's accession to the throne of His glorious ancestors carries strong messages emphasizing the concepts of seriousness and dedication. The Royal speech showed of the national team's achievements at the Qatar World Cup, becoming the first African team in history to qualify for the semi-finals and enter the big leagues. This sporting feat made the Moroccan people proud and rekindled the spirit of belonging to our national identity. He added that this spirit and determination drove the tripartite bid with Spain and Portugal to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup finals. Through a thorough analysis of internal and external factors, Moroccan football's structure has adopted a winning strategy in all aspects, emphasizing competitiveness and organizational efficiency.

Over the past years, numerous factors have prompted sports actors to rethink their strategies and adapt to an ever-changing environment. From technological advancements to new fan requirements and economic and social challenges, sports organizations face complex obstacles that demand innovative solutions and agile management. In this sequel, this article closely analyzes the strategies implemented by some of the most prominent sports organizations and how they have reinvented themselves to remain competitive in a demanding national market.

Hence, the objective of this article is to demonstrate that the strategy of a sports club relies on respecting several dimensions, namely a sports dimension, a management dimension, and a results dimension. The implementation and success of this strategy primarily depend on the process established by any sports organization. According to Leocini & Silva (2000), a good management model must consider several characteristics such as sufficient stability; a model that considers profitability and performance in the field as objectives or expected results; a model that facilitates access to the information needed for such analysis. Engaging in a change process requires political, organizational, and managerial preparation.

Get ready to immerse yourself in a world where strategic change is the cornerstone of success for modern sports organizations. Discover the inspiring stories of leaders who dared to push the boundaries of tradition and demonstrated boldness in shaping a promising future. Join us on this new adventure as we explore the fundamentals of strategic change within sports organizations, its impact on sporting outcomes, and its implications for the entire sports ecosystem.

Studies by Bayle (2000), Szymanski (2006), and Hoffman (2002) show that there are interactions between financial performance, social/societal capital, and organizational performance that lead to improved soccer club performance. This is why we decided to study the internal and external context of soccer clubs, intending to develop a coherent strategy compatible with the set objectives.

This article first provides a literature review to clarify conceptual and theoretical frameworks that help better understand the foundations of scientific research and derive research propositions. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of our findings' theoretical and practical implications.

2. Literature review:

Several sports management theories aim to manage and optimize activities and resources related to the administration, organization, and development of sports teams, sporting events, and sports infrastructures.

Stakeholder theory is an approach widely used in strategic management, including in the context of sports management. It proposes that organizations should consider not only the interests of shareholders but also those of all stakeholders with a direct or indirect interest in the organization. Sports management includes athletes, coaches, supporters, sponsors, media, sports authorities, local communities, etc. The presence of these stakeholders in a company's strategy leads us to view the organization "as a constellation of cooperative and competitive interests" (Martinet & Reynaud, 2001), which can sometimes converge and sometimes be contradictory. In any case, stakeholders' interests have an intrinsic value, and no one interest is supposed to dominate the others. Whatever the case, the aims remain the same.

Stakeholder needs and expectations can change over time. Sports organizations must be prepared to adjust their strategies and activities in response to environmental changes and stakeholder expectations.

Leadership is a crucial element in sports management. Different leadership approaches, such as transformational, transactional, and leadership, are applied based on an emotional connection with team members. Leadership becomes strategic when it designates the leader who decides on the organization's strategy. This understanding aligns with the work of the classical school and the Human Relations School (Barnard, 1938). The 60s were a prolific period for the study of managers. In the 1980s, however, the manager-centric approach was called into question. Organizational approaches prevailed, emphasizing the role of the environment (Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978), technology (Nelson & Winter, 1982), and organizational size (Blau, 1970).

Different leadership approaches can be applied depending on the organization's culture, the specific sporting context, and the team members' personalities. Transformational leadership focuses on creating an inspiring vision and stimulating the motivation and commitment of team members. Transformational leaders encourage innovation, creativity, and continuous improvement, which can be highly beneficial in sports, where adaptation and improvement are essential. Transactional leadership focuses on establishing a relationship of rewards and sanctions with team members. Transactional leaders set clear expectations regarding performance and rewards, and team members are rewarded according to their achievements. While this approach can help maintain discipline and performance, it may not be as motivating as transformational leadership in the long term. Leadership in the management of sports organizations is a critical element in influencing team culture, motivation, and performance. Managers and coaches need to be flexible in their approach, choosing the leadership style that best suits the needs of the team and the specific challenges of the sporting world.

2.1. Empirical literature review

In social sciences, the initial analyses of sports organizations have predominantly centered on examining their structure, legal characteristics, sociological and socio-historical influences, and the political and economic dynamics that drive sports systems and the organizations

within them. Consequently, the management of sports organizations has primarily been approached through theoretical frameworks derived from sociology and organizational theories.

Some works focused on sports organizations as early as the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Magnane in 1964, Taupier in 1970, Brohm in 1976). However, in the late 1980s, the first research specifically addressing the management of sports movement organizations emerged in France. This research was driven by a few specialists in organizational sociology, notably Chifflet in 1987, but particularly Ramanantsoa and Thierry-Baslé in 1989, as well as Loret in 1989, 1993, 1995, and subsequent works.

The literature review dedicated to sports organizations highlights the question of their distinctiveness. Deloitte and Touche (2004) stress the importance of implementing tailored systems to effectively manage and evaluate these entities' organizational and sports performance.²

Until now, research concerning the strategic management of sports organizations remains relatively underdeveloped (Pigeassou & Fergusson, 1997; Desbordes, 2001). The inception of a specialized disciplinary field dedicated to sports management in the early 1960s led to groundbreaking studies on organizations, primarily in North America (Etzioni, 1965, p. 663). In France, the focus of studies has primarily revolved around sports federations (Bayle, 1999; Bayle & Chappelet, 2004) and professional clubs (Durand, 1994; Bayle & Couderc, 2003). The studies concerning clubs (Lardinois & Tribou, 2004) aim to clarify the activities that the latter should aspire to and pursue.

Football is widely practiced globally, uniting millions of fans who passionately support their teams. Within this sport, football clubs hold a fundamental role and are often seen as institutions with dedicated fan communities. It is considered one of the most thrilling sports globally, and professional football clubs play a pivotal role in the fiercely competitive industry. Success on the field depends on a football club's ability to manage internal and external factors effectively. This efficient management is crucial for the club's growth and achievements. Even in Morocco, football clubs encounter various management challenges, as high-level clubs face intricate obstacles while adapting to a dynamic environment.

The performance of a high-level sports club relies on several factors, including its internal setup and the external circumstances it operates. In Morocco, top-tier clubs grapple with complex challenges, necessitating adaptability to the ever-changing landscape. Their internal and external contexts significantly influence the organizational performance of these clubs in Morocco. A robust internal structure, marked by efficient governance, clear organizational frameworks, and competent personnel, supports the club's overall performance. Additionally, they must proactively manage external challenges like competition, partnerships, the economic climate, and the expectations of their fans to maximize opportunities and minimize risks.

To conquer these difficulties, clubs must adopt prudent management strategies, reinforce transparency and governance, invest in infrastructure, and enlist the expertise of competent professionals. By overcoming these hurdles, Moroccan football clubs can establish a solid management model, thereby contributing significantly to the country's sports development.

2.2. Hypothesis development

In sports organizations, the successful implementation of strategic changes relies on several crucial factors:

- Transparent communication
- Efficient personnel management
- A culture of adaptability

- A comprehensive analysis of internal and external contexts

Specifically, when applied to football sports organizations, this hypothesis suggests that certain favorable conditions can enhance the adoption of new strategies to maximize profits and achieve competitive and institutional goals.

Transparency in communication is a vital component of the triumph of strategic changes. Leaders, employees, and stakeholders must engage in open and honest communication. Conveying goals, motivations, and expectations fosters a shared understanding and encourages buy-in from stakeholders. Furthermore, transparent communication helps address and alleviate fears and resistance to change, smoothing the transition process.

The role of personnel in implementing strategic changes is of paramount importance. Effective personnel management encompasses adequate human resource planning, identification, and development of the required skills. Additionally, the active involvement of employees in the change process is crucial. By providing support, training, and motivation to employees, they become more inclined to actively participate in the change implementation and contribute significantly to its success.

A crucial aspect of strategic change in sports organizations is fostering an organizational culture that encourages adaptability and innovation. Such a culture requires sports clubs to challenge existing practices, swiftly adapt to market developments, and nurture creativity. By embracing adaptability, these organizations can capitalize on emerging opportunities, proactively anticipate future challenges, and effectively implement new strategies. Both internal and external contexts significantly shape the process of a football club. Hence, understanding key elements of this context and incorporating them into strategic planning can lead to more informed decision-making and greater adaptability to achieve objectives.

This research hypothesis asserts that transparent communication, efficient staff management, an adaptive culture, and thorough analysis of the internal and external context are crucial factors for successfully implementing strategic change in sports organizations. The primary goal is to demonstrate the necessity of employing a tool to analyze various strategy types based on each sports club's specific objectives.

Exploring a suitable conceptual tool has led to a strategy model grounded in the business life cycle. This model allows the hypothesis of evolution for each sports club, considering their action plan, to be examined. It strives to provide a meaningful description of the entity throughout different stages of development. As a result, applying this model to sports clubs serves as a coherent working hypothesis, aiding in identifying growth stages and strategic decision-making.

2.3. Conceptual approach

The conceptual approach of an article pertains to how ideas and concepts are formulated and presented within the context of scientific research. Its objective is to provide a clear and cohesive understanding of the subject under investigation, employing rigorous methodology and relying on concrete evidence. The current article builds upon previous work and centers around three primary theories: stakeholder theory, leadership theory, and the theory of conventions, which will be the main focus of our study. The view of conventions effectively elucidates organizational functioning and offers an intriguing perspective on how social norms, practices, and rules influence individual organizational behavior. When an organization seeks to evolve or undergo a transformation, understanding the challenges associated with altering established conventions becomes essential, as change can be demanding, questioning accepted practices and negotiating new norms within the organization.

"The theory of conventions holds particular relevance in the realm of management sciences, as it proposes an innovative lens that scrutinizes organizational processes in their routine and

mimetic aspects" (Gomez, 1997). By utilizing the theory of conventions, researchers and practitioners can better grasp how social rules and informal norms shape individual behavior and impact the organization. This insight can further aid in managing change, reinforcing organizational culture, and fostering compelling and harmonious operations within the company. The theory of conventions offers "numerous compelling contributions to both the organization and the individual." Gomez (1997) states that one noteworthy contribution is its endeavor to develop a universal model capable of explaining the market and the organization, institutions, and entrepreneurs, explicit and implicit rationalization, quality management, customer relationships, corporate governance, and the organization.

Concept of Trajectory: The concept of trajectory allows us to visualize and comprehend how an element evolves, moves, or transforms within a given space or over a specific period. It is a potent tool for analyzing and understanding complex phenomena and temporal dynamics. In this article, the notion of trajectory encompasses two dimensions: the evolution of the clubs within the competitive pyramid and the strategic trajectory of the clubs.

Concept of Strategy: Strategy refers to plans, choices, and deliberate actions to achieve a specific objective or address a particular problem. It finds application in various fields, including organizational management. An effective strategy must be adaptable to changing circumstances or unforeseen events that may arise during its implementation. Regular reassessment of the plan is crucial to ensure its continued relevance. Our research emphasizes the performance of a strategy tailored to the nature of the club, its objectives, and the challenges that arise throughout the sports season.

3. Methodology:

Qualitative research plays a pivotal role in management science research. Our objective is to establish a strategy that facilitates the operations of sports organizations, enabling them to operate within a professional climate and generate competitive advantages in the short, medium, and long term. Our thesis relies on a longitudinal qualitative analysis. The choice of the qualitative method is justified as the strategy stems from a particular perception of the competitive environment, influenced by the sports organization's objectives, history, sector of operation, and duration of existence in the football world. This perception of the domain is filtered through the organization's goals.

Our work aims to establish a coherent strategy that empowers sports organizations, particularly professional clubs, to function in a healthy climate and generate competitive and organizational benefits in the short, medium, and long term. Achieving this objective necessitates the application of techniques dedicated to qualitative longitudinal research. Consequently, we adopted a comparative approach involving multi-case longitudinal analysis to describe the clubs' strategic changes. The investigation comprised several phases, examining the historical trajectory of the two clubs, even preceding the establishment of professionalism within Moroccan football. Subsequently, we explored the internal and external context of the club. These components contribute to the study of the transformation of strategies within our elite clubs and culminate in a comprehensive analysis of the two cases.

Interviewees (table 1) were primarily selected based on their affiliations with the studied teams, a crucial criterion in qualitative studies. It is important to note that all participants volunteered and were not compelled to partake in the study.

Table 1 : Qualitative Study Sample Description

Contact	Gender	Club	Interview length
President	Male	X and Y	30 Min

Federal members	Male and Female	—————	25 Min
Local community	Male and Female	—————	30 Min
Coach	Male	X and Y	40 Min
Player	Male	X and Y	30 Min
Technical director	Male	X	40 Min
Reporter	Male and Female	—————	30 Min
Supporters	Male and Female	X and Y	30 Min

Source: Authors

3.1: Data Collection Method

Throughout the data collection period, challenges arose concerning information confidentiality. However, the stakeholders of the two clubs recognized the significance of our research, focused on strategic change within sports organizations, and cooperated to meet our informational requirements to achieve the objectives outlined at the outset of our work.

During the research, in-depth interviews constituted a pivotal phase in our investigation. Commencing in September 2020, these interviews aimed to explore the diverse strategies developed within our professional clubs to enhance performance and measure evolutionary progress over time. The initial series of interviews complemented existing documentation, delving into the historical trajectory of sports organizations. Subsequently, the second series sought to understand the relationships between the clubs and their internal and external stakeholders. Finally, the last series of interviews, the most significant, examined the club's context (both internal and external).

Employing an interview guide (table 2) proved instrumental in facilitating the interview process, providing a consistent and pertinent set of questions to gather information concerning the specific objectives of each interview.

Table 2: Interview guide

Dimensions	Keywords	Questions asked
Club History	Club History Strategy Environment	Highlights the sports structure. Strategy developed over a period of time. The general climate of the club (internally and externally).
Relationship with the environment	Sponsors Public	Partners of both clubs The mutual relationship between the two
Organization of the club	Plan and organization chart Workforce Financial means	Stakeholder in the club i.e. the people managing the club Players and people who work within the club Resources and expenses
Club strategy	strategic approach strategic decision	The strategic choices adopted. The decision-making process within the sports organization.

Source: Authors

3.2 : Data analysis Method

Longitudinal research in our research is associated with studying the functioning of sports organizations even before the introduction of professionalism in Moroccan soccer; in this perspective, the data collected will help us fully understand the sequence of different strategies opted for within clubs.

Creating one or more case studies involves using concrete examples to acquire knowledge, in-depth research on studied subjects, and, if possible, lessons learned throughout the evaluation. In complex situations, case studies aim to answer the "How" and "Why" questions based on specific examples chosen judiciously according to your assessment objectives. These tools provide empirical, generally more credible information without background information.

Case studies, of which longitudinal case studies are a particular variant, have now established themselves in management science as an independent research method.

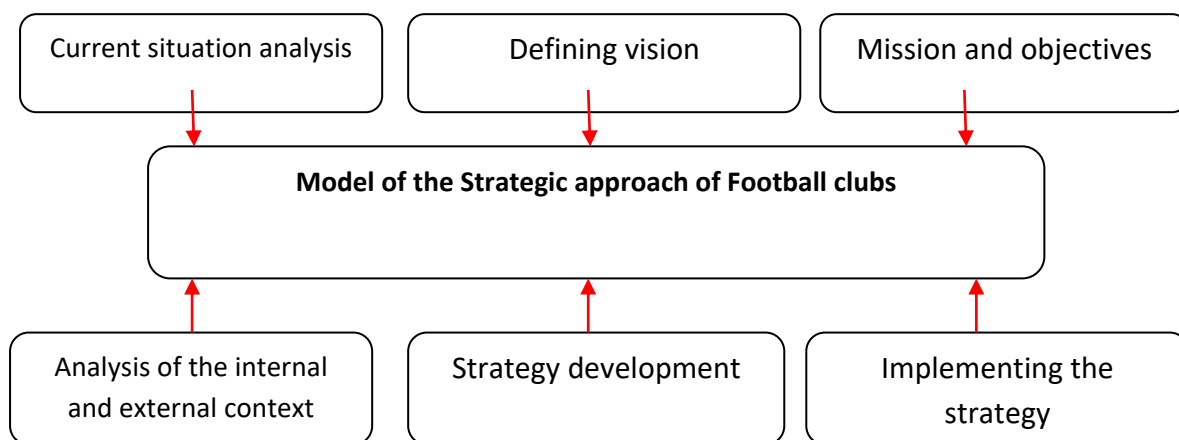
A case study is an in-depth study of one or more cases illustrating the phenomenon under investigation.

According to Yin (2003, 2009), the case study method can be used to explain, describe or explore events or phenomena in their real-life context. This approach differs from controlled experimental design, where researchers test hypotheses under clinical laboratory conditions, allowing them to manipulate the environment deliberately.

In our article, the case study method is of prime importance, as strategic change within sports organizations, especially at the internal level, would enable us to fully understand the correct functioning of a sports entity despite its ranking within the competitive pyramid.

Implementing the model (Figure 1) involved in the strategic distinction of the two clubs enables an understanding of the strategic dynamics of the clubs during their formation and transformation. Strategic dynamics are thus conceived as a succession of stabilization and radical change phases.

Figure 1 : Approach model



Source: Authors

A strategic approach model for a sports club can help align the organization's objectives with a clear vision and develop effective strategies to achieve these objectives. Implementing and regularly evaluating strategies also help to adapt to changes in the external environment and continually improve the club's performance.

4. Qualitative Findings:

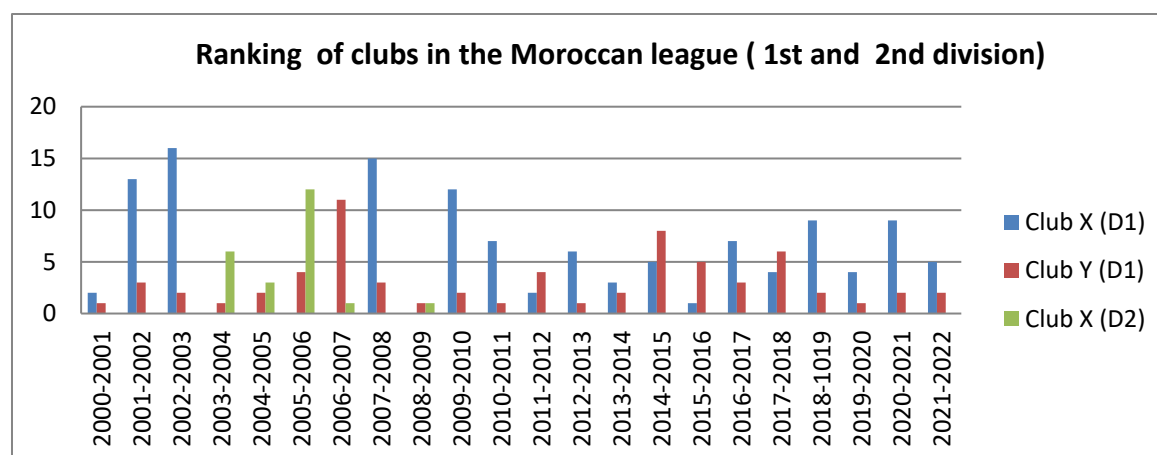
Football is a globally popular sport, bringing together millions of enthusiasts who rally behind football teams. Football clubs play a pivotal role in this sport and are often regarded as institutions with devoted fan communities supporting them. In this section, we will introduce the two football clubs and elucidate the crucial components of their strategy analysis model. The analysis model primarily centers on the historical trajectory of the two clubs, encompassing their position within the competitive pyramid. Furthermore, the model

underscores the significance of considering the internal context of the clubs and, finally, the external factors that encompass both clubs.

4.1 Historical Trajectory:

It is of utmost importance to highlight that a club's progress within the competitive pyramid is contingent on numerous factors, including on-field performance, financial management, the quality of infrastructure and facilities, and their ability to attract sponsors and investors. Additionally, promotions or relegations between different pyramid levels may occur based on sporting results.

Figure 2: Club development over the last 20 years



Source: Authors

Club X, established in 1946 in Morocco's capital, is one of the country's most esteemed football clubs. With a history of triumph and unwavering devotion to the sport, it has etched an enduring legacy on the Moroccan football landscape. The club's humble origins trace back to its founding by a group of football enthusiasts in 1946. Initially participating in local tournaments without professional status, the dedication and passion of its members soon garnered attention for their exceptional on-field performances.

Throughout the 1950s, Club X began competing in national competitions and swiftly emerged as one of the nation's most formidable clubs. The turning point came in 1958 when they were crowned champions of Morocco, signaling the start of a successful era for the club. Subsequent years saw them continue to claim titles and cement their position as a premier club in the country. This marked a pivotal phase in the club's evolution as they embarked on a path towards professionalism, structuring them to become a true force in Moroccan football. Guided by committed leaders and talented players, they consistently achieved victory and earned widespread respect in Morocco.

The zenith of Club X's achievements arrived in the 1980s and 1990s. Dominating Moroccan championships and making impressive showings on the continental stage, including participation in the prestigious African Confederation Cup, they solidified their status as one of the most prestigious and beloved football clubs in both Morocco and Africa. The club also clinched the Throne Cup, Morocco's primary cup competition, multiple times during this period.

Founded in Casablanca, Morocco 1949, Club Y boasts a legendary history punctuated by numerous national and continental successes. Throughout their journey, this revered club encountered moments of glory, faced challenges, and celebrated triumphant victories, earning a reputation as one of Africa's most decorated and respected football clubs.

Initiated by a group of football enthusiasts, Club Y swiftly garnered popularity in the Casablanca region and secured its place in the Moroccan football championship. Although the early years witnessed ups and downs, their first major triumph came in 1950 when they tied for the Moroccan championship title.

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed further success as Club Y thrived, claiming several Moroccan championships. However, it wasn't until 1988 that they attained their first national championship in the top division, heralding an era of dominance in Moroccan football.

The 1990s emerged as a golden period for the club under the guidance of French coach Claude Le Roy. Multiple Moroccan championship titles were secured, accompanied by success on the continental stage.

1997 they achieved their first African Champions League title, the most prestigious African club tournament. This momentous achievement was repeated twice more in 1999 and 2002, elevating them to one of the most successful clubs in the history of the CAF Champions League.

Throughout this period, Club Y also claimed other prestigious titles such as the CAF Super Cup, the CAF Cup, and the Arab Champions League, further cementing their reputation as one of Africa's most respected football clubs and bolstering their popularity on the national stage.

Continuing to thrive, Club Y remains one of the most successful football clubs in both Morocco and Africa. With numerous Moroccan championship titles in recent decades, they have solidified their position as one of the nation's top football clubs.

4.2 Internal Factors Influencing Football Clubs

Football is among the most globally widespread and thrilling sports, and professional football clubs play a vital role in this fiercely competitive industry. To succeed on the field, a football club must adeptly manage its internal context, encompassing diverse elements such as organizational structure, player management, coaching, club culture, and decision-making.

However, Club Y faces a significant challenge with the instability in its management team, which can lead to far-reaching consequences for the overall performance and stability of the club. This instability might be evident through frequent changes in leadership, internal conflicts, and a need for more focus on the club's primary objectives.

In contrast, Football Club X is reaping the rewards of a strategy formulated nearly five years ago. The club has successfully adopted a policy of attracting young talents and investing in player development, mainly once the team is complete. A long-term infrastructure preparation project accompanying this strategic approach occurred between 2010 and 2015.

The board of directors emerges as the central pillar of a football club, shouldering the responsibility for managing the club's activities, finances, and overall development. The board's stability ensures the club's endurance and success. A steady panel allows for the continuation of projects and long-term club objectives. Conversely, frequent changes in the board may disrupt or even abandon ongoing projects, negatively affecting the club's progress. A stable board of directors also fosters the development of a long-term vision for the club and enables planning for the necessary investments to achieve competitive and organizational goals.

4.3 External Factors Influencing Football Clubs

The external context of a football club refers to the broader environment in which it operates, encompassing elements beyond its internal functioning. Various aspects within this context can significantly influence the club's operations and performance.

4.3.1 Regulatory Context of the Clubs:

In Morocco, the sports policy aims to promote sports at all levels, from grassroots to elite, by encouraging regular sports participation, developing sports infrastructure, and supporting athletes and sports federations. As part of the institutional development of national football, the establishment of sports companies by clubs plays a crucial role. The Royal Moroccan Football Federation, led by Mr. Faouzi Lekjaa, is acknowledged for its professionalism, dedication, and strategic vision for Moroccan football. His hard work and passion have contributed to the growth of football in Morocco, elevating the country's standing in the African and international football arenas. The organization aims to foster a professional culture driven by general interests and strategic objectives that serve the country's development.

As an integrated construction, the institutional process requires adequate time, as professionalism in football is a cultural aspect before being a set of procedures. The creation of sports companies is mandated by law 30-09, making it obligatory for clubs to embark on this path, which has been ongoing for some time. The ultimate goal is to promote transparency and effective management of sports entities within a professional organizational climate.

4.3.2 Economic and Sporting Context of the Clubs:

The economic landscape of football clubs in Morocco has experienced significant transformations in recent years. Football enjoys immense popularity in Morocco, and football clubs contribute significantly to the country's economy.

The growing interest of sponsors in Moroccan football has played a pivotal role in improving the financial resources of clubs. Sponsors perceive football as an effective means of promoting their brands and reaching a broad audience in Morocco. Consequently, clubs have forged lucrative partnerships with local and international companies, augmenting their revenues.

Moreover, the broadcasting rights of Moroccan football have also contributed significantly to the clubs' financial resources. Moroccan and foreign television channels have secured the rights to broadcast national competitions, leading to additional revenue streams for the clubs. Both clubs, situated in the Rabat and Casablanca regions, enjoy a strong presence in Morocco, boasting many licensed players concerning the population.

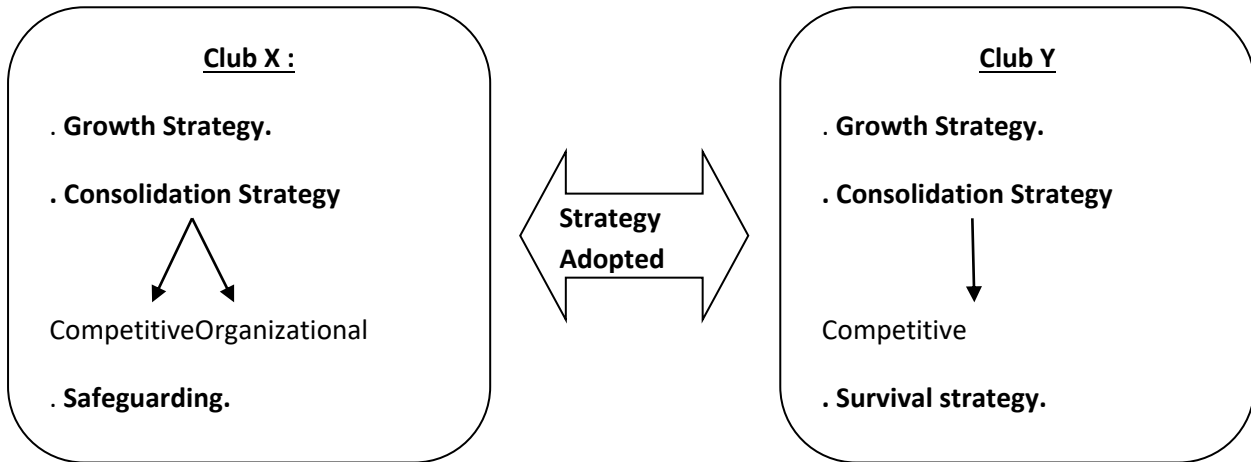
Club X, one of the three clubs in the municipality competing in the Moroccan first division, is a prominent football team in the region, known for its competitiveness and organizational prowess. Similarly, the other club also serves as the city's focal point of football. Club Y significantly impacts the city's economy, attracting many supporters to matches and increasing economic activity, particularly in catering, hospitality, retail, and services—supporters' spending before, during, and after games stimulate the local economy. The club's operations, including facility management, match, and event organization, require the contributions of numerous individuals, including administrative, technical, operational staff, and security personnel.

5. Results Discussion:

In this part of the article, we present the outcomes obtained from the qualitative analysis of football clubs X and Y. The results are derived by comparing them to the analytical model,

which considers the clubs' historical trajectory within the competitive pyramid, examines their internal and external context, and, ultimately, the specific strategies (illustrated in Figure 3) each club employs.

Figure 3: Strategies of the two clubs.



Source: Authors

Club X:

The Club implements three distinct strategies. The first strategy is a growth-oriented approach that significantly impacts both the competitive and organizational aspects. Even before the professional era in Morocco, the Club and its various components had implicit goals: to achieve the top position in the competitive hierarchy. On the organizational front, Team X experiences the influence of two types of leadership during our longitudinal comparative analysis of cases. The club president leads the first type, while the Club's coach embodies the second (2014-2020).

A momentous event occurred when a new board of directors assumed control during the 2014 season. This signified the Club's dedication to an ambitious policy to accomplish short, medium, and long-term organizational objectives. Within this period, another form of leadership emerged, led by the Club's coach. This symbolic coach guided the Club to success, achieving podium finishes, winning the Throne Cup (2014), reaching the cup finals for the second consecutive time (2015), securing the national championship (2016), participating in the African Confederation Cup, and competing in the Arab Cup. The Club's solid aspirations for sporting excellence are the foundation of this unwavering policy.

The second strategy is consolidation, where the Club has achieved stability in both competitive and organizational hierarchies since 2014. The management effectively handles tangible and intangible resources to attain short, medium, and long-term goals. The Club has a well-structured management system that aligns with its activities.

The final strategy is a safeguarding initiative that Club X has adopted for long-term benefits. The Club's leaders decided to focus on nurturing young players through their youth academy to produce results over a specific period determined by the Club's technical authorities. This approach ensures stability for the Club on both organizational and competitive levels. Financial management plays a crucial role, aiming to eliminate debts and maintain the financial health of all club components, including its employees.

Club Y:

Over a significant period, Club Y has witnessed a substantial upward trajectory. The club has been dedicated to a trophy-oriented strategy for the past decade. The growth has been fueled by an absolute competitive advantage, with the club's first team dominating all opponents. However, a primary concern lies in the instability at the club's leadership level, which could have significant ramifications on the overall performance and stability of the organization. This instability is manifested through frequent changes in leadership, internal conflicts, and a loss of focus on the club's primary objectives.

Regarding the consolidation strategy, the club continues to address competitive needs and maintains its position at the top of the hierarchy. Nevertheless, the lack of organizational consolidation becomes evident through leadership instability, leading to inconsistencies in club management and hindering the team's coherent development and progress. Frequent leadership changes can result in shifts in strategy and vision for the club, causing disruptions in long-term planning and impeding team growth. Additionally, this instability may lead to disorganization within the club, as new leaders may have differing visions for its management, potentially giving rise to internal conflicts. Consequently, these conflicts can divert the club's attention from its main objectives and adversely impact on-field performance. Finally, the absence of continuity challenges establishing a strong club culture and identity. Frequent changes can leave players and fans feeling unsettled and disconnected from the club, negatively affecting on-field performance as players may need help adapting quickly to new systems or leadership.

The survival strategy for Club Y is vital for its longevity and adaptability to a dynamic environment. Rooted in evolution, this strategy determines how stakeholders interact with the world to ensure survival and growth. The club's primary issue of leadership instability emphasizes embracing such a strategy. Leaders must be stable and committed to creating a clear vision and identity for the club, maintaining strategic and managerial continuity, and fostering the team's cohesive development.

6. Conclusion:

Sports organizations are indispensable in the modern sports landscape, encompassing both the professional and amateur levels. These organizations must adopt effective strategies to thrive in an ever-changing competitive environment.

The latter part of our article presents the competitive and organizational images of the two clubs. Club X, favoring a consolidation strategy in its internal management, appears prudent in achieving its long-term competitive results. In contrast, despite its sports achievements, Club Y continues to face resistance from stakeholders.

Prudent financial management is another critical factor contributing to the success of sports organizations. Balancing budgets, maximizing revenue from various sources (ticket sales, sponsorships, merchandising, broadcasting rights, etc.), and minimizing unnecessary expenses are essential for ensuring long-term financial viability. Additionally, implementing a robust marketing and communication strategy is fundamental. Sports organizations must cultivate a strong brand identity, engage fans, and leverage social media and digital platforms to reach a global audience, strengthening their fan base and increasing their influence.

This study sheds light on the underlying mechanisms of the complex interaction between Clubs X and Y, revealing crucial insights into the functioning of both clubs. Our results unmistakably demonstrate that the strategy adopted by Club X plays a pivotal role in the smooth functioning of the organization. At the same time, Club Y has faced challenges in implementing a coherent strategy that matches its sports performance.

The results of this study set the foundation for promising future research in the field of strategic management of football clubs in Morocco. Building upon current findings and pursuing proposed investigations can deepen our fundamental knowledge of this system and

pave the way for significant scientific advances that will yield practical benefits for our esteemed sport.

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