The Role of Technology in Modernizing Sports Management in Iraq: Opportunities and Challenges

Murtadha Abdulabbas Deiri Alasadi [1]   ,   Ahmed Salah Abdulameer Nassrullah [2]   ,

Dr. Mehrdad Moharram zadeh [3]

Abstract

This research examines the role of technology in modernizing sports management in Iraq, focusing on opportunities, challenges, and comparative analyses with other regions. It highlights the varied integration of technologies like Management Information Systems (MIS), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and wearable tech, which are transforming sports globally. In Iraq, these technologies are in the nascent stages compared to advanced adoptions in countries like the USA and Europe. The study emphasizes how technology can enhance sports management in Iraq, offering improved performance, fan engagement, and operational efficiency.

However, the adoption of technology in Iraq's sports sector faces challenges, including infrastructural limitations, economic constraints, educational gaps, and cultural resistance. A comparative analysis reveals that while developed countries lead in technology adoption, emerging markets are rapidly catching up, adapting to their specific needs and constraints.

The study concludes that, as for Iraq, embracing technological advancements could lead to significant improvements in sports management, aligning with global standards. Recommendations include investing in infrastructure, enhancing training and education, developing supportive policies, and engaging the community. Future research directions suggest focusing on the long-term impacts of technology integration in sports, comparative studies with other regions, and monitoring emerging technological innovations.

Keywords: Sports Management, Technology Integration, Iraq, Innovation in Sports, Digital Transformation

Affiliations of Authors

[1, 2] Islamic Azad University (Khorasgan), Iran, Isfahan 39998-81551

[3] sport management, University of mohagheghe Ardabili, Iran, Ardabil, 56199-11367

[1] murt96adha@gmail.com
[2] ahmedsalahh1.1989@gmail.com
[3] mmoharramzadeh@yahoo.com

[1] **Corresponding Author**

انتساب الباحثين
[1، 2] جامعة آزاد الإسلامية (خوراسگان)، ايران، اصفهان، 39998-81551

[3] الادارة الرياضية، جامعة محقق اردبيلي، ايران، اردبيل، 56199-11367

[1] murt96adha@gmail.com
[2] ahmedsalahh1.1989@gmail.com
[3] mmoharramzadeh@yahoo.com

[1] المؤلف المراسل

دور التكنولوجيا في تحديث إدارة الرياضة في العراق: الفرص والتحديات
مرتضى عبد العباس ديري الأسدي [1] ، أحمد صلاح عبد الأمير نصر الله [2] ، د. مهرداد محرم زاده [3].

المستخلص

يدرس هذه البحث دور التكنولوجيا في تحديث إدارة الرياضة في العراق، مع التركيز على الفرص والتحديات والتحليلات المقارنة مع مناطق أخرى. يبرز البحث تكامل التكنولوجيات المتنوعة مثل أنظمة معلومات الإدارة (MIS)، والذكاء الاصطناعي(AI) ، والتكنولوجيا القابلة للارتداء، والتي تحول الرياضة عالميًا. في العراق، هذه التكنولوجيات لا تزال في مراحلها الأولية مقارنة بالتبني المتقدم في دول مثل الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وأوروبا. تؤكد الدراسة على كيف يمكن للتكنولوجيا تحسين إدارة الرياضة في العراق، مقدمة تحسينات في الأداء، والتفاعل مع المعجبين، وكفاءة التشغيل.

ومع ذلك، يواجه تبني التكنولوجيا في قطاع الرياضة العراقي تحديات، تتضمن القيود البنيوية، والقيود الاقتصادية، والفجوات التعليمية، والمقاومة الثقافية. يكشف التحليل المقارن أنه بينما تتصدر الدول المتقدمة في تبني التكنولوجيا، فإن الأسواق الناشئة تلحق بها بسرعة، وتتكيف مع احتياجاتها وقيودها الخاصة.

تخلص الدراسة إلى أنه بالنسبة للعراق، يمكن أن يؤدي احتضان التقدم التكنولوجي إلى تحسينات كبيرة في إدارة الرياضة، متماشية مع المعايير العالمية. تشمل التوصيات الاستثمار في البنية التحتية، وتعزيز التدريب والتعليم، وتطوير سياسات داعمة، وإشراك المجتمع. تقترح اتجاهات البحث المستقبلية التركيز على الآثار طويلة الأمد لتكامل التكنولوجيا في الرياضة، والدراسات المقارنة مع مناطق أخرى، ومراقبة الابتكارات التكنولوجية الناشئة .

1. Introduction

The evolution of technology has become a pivotal element in numerous sectors, and the realm of sports management is no exception. In recent years, Iraq's sports sector has witnessed potential growth and development opportunities, yet it faces unique challenges that technology could help address. This research aims to delve into the dynamic relationship between technological advancements and sports management practices in Iraq, exploring how this synergy could lead to modernization and efficiency in the field.

The study includes an analysis of how technology impacts various facets of sports management, ranging from enhancing athlete performance and increasing fan engagement to improving organizational and administrative processes. The Iraqi sports sector, characterized by significant growth potential, simultaneously confronts challenges such as a lack of advanced technological infrastructure, limited access to cutting-edge technologies, and potential resistance to cultural and organizational change.

This research aims to assess the current state of sports management in Iraq, exploring the opportunities presented by technology while considering the challenges that may hinder its integration. It seeks to determine how global experiences and trends in sports technology can be applied within the Iraqi context, thereby enhancing Iraq's standing in the global sports arena. This study underscores the importance of technology in modernizing sports management in Iraq, highlighting that embracing these technological advancements could lead to substantial improvements in the sector, aligning it more closely with international standards and practices.

1.1 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this research are:

- **To Assess the Current State of Sports Management in Iraq:** This involves examining the existing infrastructure, practices, and methodologies used in sports management across various levels in Iraq. Understanding the present scenario will provide a baseline for evaluating the potential impact of technological interventions.

- **To Identify and Analyze the Role of Technology in Sports Management:** This objective focuses on exploring various technological tools and solutions, such as Management Information Systems (MIS), data analytics, wearable technology, and digital platforms, and assessing how they can be integrated into sports management practices in Iraq.

- **To Explore the Opportunities Presented by Technological Integration:** This includes evaluating how technology can enhance various aspects of sports management, such as athlete performance, fan engagement, event management, and administrative efficiency.

- **To Understand the Challenges and Limitations of Implementing Technology in Iraq's Sports Sector:** This involves identifying barriers to technology adoption, such as infrastructural limitations, economic constraints, and educational gaps.

- **To Propose Strategic Recommendations for Effective Technological Adoption:** Based on the findings, the research aims to offer actionable recommendations for sports organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders in Iraq to leverage technology effectively for the advancement of sports management.

- **To Contribute to the Body of Knowledge in Sports Management and Technology:** The research seeks to add valuable insights to the existing literature, particularly focusing on the context of Iraq, which has been relatively underexplored in this field.

By achieving these objectives, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how technology can be a catalyst for modernizing sports management in Iraq, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges in this endeavor.

1.2 The Research Methodology

The research methodology for this study on technology in sports management in Iraq involves a comparative analysis approach, utilizing secondary data from academic articles, industry reports, and case studies. Emphasis is placed on exploring technological integration within Iraq's sports sector, assessing opportunities and challenges without involving primary data analysis or fieldwork.

2. Literature Review

Here are some studies on technology in sports management:

1- **"Technology Ecosystems in Sport: A Bibliometric Analysis"** by Paloma Escamilla-Fajardo, Juan Núñez-Pomar, and Vanessa Ratten, published in 2020. This study conducts a bibliometric analysis to provide structured information on the academic evolution of technology in the sports field, covering articles published between 1977 and 2019.

2- **"The Impact of Technology on Sports – A Prospective Study"** by Frevel et al., published in 2022. This study explores the role of technology in sports, especially focusing on the impact of VR technology on the sports industry and its future potential.

These studies offer valuable insights into the evolving role of technology in sports management, from educational and management perspectives to the potential future impacts of technologies like virtual reality in sports.

3. The Role of Technology in Sports Management:

The integration of technology into sports management has significantly transformed the way sports organizations operate, enhancing efficiency, decision-making, and performance. This section explores the various technologies that have become integral to modern sports management[1]

3.1 Exploration of Various Technologies in Sports Management

In this section, we delve into the different technologies that have revolutionized sports management, including Management Information Systems (MIS), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and wearable technology.

- **Management Information Systems (MIS):** MIS plays a critical role in sports organizations by enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of information management.

These systems facilitate better communication, data processing, and strategic decision-making, essential for the smooth operation of sports management activities.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI has broad applications in sports analytics, such as performance analysis, injury prediction, and player scouting. By processing large datasets, AI provides deeper insights and supports decision-making in ways traditional methods cannot.

- **Wearable Technology:** Wearable tech, including fitness trackers and sensor-equipped clothing, is increasingly used to monitor athlete performance. These devices provide valuable data on physical activity, health metrics, and performance patterns, essential for creating personalized training and injury prevention strategies.

The integration of these technologies in sports management marks a significant shift towards more efficient, data-driven decision-making and enhanced athlete performance. However, the adoption of these technologies must consider factors such as cost, user-friendliness, and data privacy.

3.2 Examples of Successful Technology Integration in Sports

The sports industry has seen several successful integrations of technology, enhancing various aspects of sports management, performance, and fan engagement. Here are a few notable examples:

- **Hawk-Eye Technology in Tennis and Cricket:** Hawk-Eye, an advanced ball-tracking technology, has been significantly successful in sports like tennis and cricket. It uses multiple cameras to accurately track the path of the ball, providing instant replay and decision-making support. This technology has improved the accuracy of line calls in tennis and decisions on leg before wicket (LBW) in cricket[2].

- **Wearable Devices in Football (Soccer) and Basketball:** Teams across sports like football and basketball have adopted wearable technology to monitor players' health and performance. Devices like GPS trackers and heart rate monitors are used during training and matches to gather data on player fitness, movement, fatigue, and overall performance. This data helps coaches tailor training programs and manage player workload.

- **Virtual Reality (VR) Training in American Football:** Some NFL teams use VR technology for quarterback training. This immersive technology allows players to experience game-like scenarios without the physical toll of actual gameplay. VR helps in enhancing players' cognitive abilities, decision-making skills, and understanding of game strategies.

- **Data Analytics in Baseball (MLB):** Major League Baseball (MLB) teams, like the Oakland A's, have famously utilized data analytics to optimize player performance and team composition. This approach, often referred to as "Moneyball," involves the use of statistical analysis to identify undervalued players and make strategic decisions.

- **Fan Engagement Apps in Various Sports:** Many sports organizations have developed

mobile apps to enhance fan engagement. These apps provide fans with real-time access to scores, player statistics, live streaming, and interactive content, thereby enhancing the fan experience both inside and outside the stadium.

These examples demonstrate the transformative impact of technology in sports, not only in improving the game and athlete performance but also in enriching the fan experience and streamlining management processes.

4. Opportunities and Benefits

The integration of technology in sports management presents a range of opportunities and benefits that can revolutionize the sector. This part of the research will delve into how technological advancements can enhance various aspects of sports management, including athlete performance, fan engagement, and operational efficiencies. The focus will be on identifying the potential gains that technology can bring to the sports industry, particularly in the context of Iraq, where the sports sector is evolving and has the capacity to benefit significantly from technological innovations.

4.1 Discussion of How Technology can Enhance Sports Management in Iraq

The integration of technology in sports management offers a range of opportunities and benefits that can significantly enhance the sports sector in Iraq. Here are some key aspects where technology could make a substantial impact:

- **Improved Athletic Performance:** Advanced technologies like wearables and AI-driven analytics can provide detailed insights into athletes' performances. This data can be used

to tailor training programs, enhance physical conditioning, and reduce the risk of injuries. For Iraqi sports teams, this means a higher level of competitiveness and better results in both national and international competitions [3].

- **Efficient Management Systems:** The implementation of Management Information Systems (MIS) in sports organizations can streamline operations, from scheduling and logistics to financial management. This increased efficiency can lead to better resource allocation and more effective management practices.

- **Enhanced Fan Engagement:** Digital platforms and social media can significantly boost fan engagement. By providing interactive content, real-time updates, and a platform for fans to engage with their favorite teams and athletes, Iraqi sports entities can build a stronger fanbase, which is crucial for the growth of the sports industry.

- **Market Expansion and Revenue Generation:** Technology opens up new avenues for revenue generation, such as online merchandising, digital ticketing, and live streaming of events. This can be particularly beneficial for Iraqi sports organizations looking to expand their market reach and diversify their income sources[4]

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** The use of data analytics in sports management can lead to more informed decision-making. This can be related to player recruitment, game strategies, and even the planning of sports events and marketing campaigns.

- **Community and Youth Development:** Technology can also play a vital role in community and youth sports programs in Iraq. By providing access to training resources, online coaching, and sports education, technology can help nurture young talent and promote sports at the grassroots level.

Overall, the adoption of technology in sports management in Iraq presents a multitude of opportunities that can lead to enhanced performance, efficient management, increased fan engagement, and broader community involvement in sports.

4.2 Highlighting Potential Benefits of Technology in Sports Management

The integration of technology in sports management brings several potential benefits, including improved performance, enhanced fan engagement, and increased operational efficiency. Here's a closer look at each of these areas:

- **Improved Performance:** Advanced technologies such as AI and data analytics enable detailed performance analysis. This can lead to better training methods, injury prevention, and overall athlete development. For example, performance data can reveal insights into a player's strengths and weaknesses, allowing for personalized training regimes that can significantly improve their skills and performance.

- **Enhanced Fan Engagement:** Digital platforms, including social media and dedicated mobile apps, offer new ways to engage fans. These technologies provide fans with an immersive experience through interactive content, real-time game updates, virtual reality experiences, and direct communication channels with their favorite teams and players. By leveraging these platforms, sports organizations can build a stronger and more engaged fan base.

- **Operational Efficiency:** Technology can streamline various operational aspects of sports management, from scheduling and logistics to ticket sales and marketing. For instance, MIS can automate administrative tasks, reduce paperwork, and provide real-time data for efficient decision-making. This leads to a more organized approach to managing sports events, reducing costs, and improving the overall quality of sports events[5]

These benefits showcase the transformative potential of technology in enhancing sports management, leading to a more efficient, engaging, and performance-oriented sports industry.

5. Challenges and Limitations

This section of the research addresses the various challenges and limitations that impede the effective integration of technology in sports management, particularly within the context of Iraq. It will explore diverse barriers such as infrastructural inadequacies, limited financial resources, gaps in technological expertise, and cultural resistance to change. The analysis will also consider broader issues such as policy and regulatory constraints, cybersecurity concerns, and the global technological divide. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing strategies to overcome them and fully harness the potential of technological advancements in sports management.

5.1 Barriers to the Adoption of Technology in Iraq's Sports Sector

Adopting modern technology in the sports sector of Iraq faces several challenges and limitations. These barriers can be categorized into various aspects:

- **Infrastructure Limitations:** One of the primary barriers is the lack of advanced technological infrastructure required to support modern sports technologies. This includes both physical infrastructure, like high-quality facilities and equipment, and digital infrastructure, such as high-speed internet connectivity.

- **Economic Constraints:** The cost of acquiring and implementing advanced technologies can be prohibitive for many sports organizations in Iraq. Budget constraints may limit the ability of these organizations to invest in the latest technology, which can be a significant barrier to technological adoption.

- **Educational and Skill Gaps:** There may be a lack of skilled professionals who are trained in utilizing and managing these advanced technologies. This skills gap can hinder the effective implementation and use of technology in sports management.

- **Cultural Resistance to Change:** In some cases, there may be resistance to adopting new technologies due to cultural preferences for traditional methods. This resistance can come from both the management level and the athletes themselves.

- **Regulatory and Policy Challenges:** Inadequate regulatory frameworks and policies can also be a barrier. A lack of clear guidelines and support from governing bodies can make it difficult for sports organizations to adopt new technologies confidently[6]

- **Cyber-security and Data Privacy Concerns:** With the increasing use of digital technologies, concerns about data security and privacy become more prominent. Ensuring the protection of sensitive data related to athletes and fans is crucial, and addressing these concerns is necessary for the successful adoption of technology.

- **Limited Local Technological Expertise:** The local market may have limited expertise in sports-specific technologies, leading to dependence on foreign technologies and expertise. This can pose challenges in terms of integration, maintenance, and customization of technology according to local needs.

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from various stakeholders, including government bodies, sports organizations, educational institutions, and the private sector, to create an environment conducive to technological advancement in the sports sector.

5.2 Challenges and Limitations in Adopting Technology in Iraq's Sports Sector

Identifying the barriers to technology adoption in Iraq's sports sector involves a multifaceted approach, considering socio-economic, infrastructural, and educational factors:

- **Socio-Economic Challenges:**

- **Financial Constraints:** Many sports organizations in Iraq may face budget limitations, making it challenging to invest in

advanced technological systems. The high costs associated with acquiring, implementing, and maintaining new technologies can be a significant hurdle.

- **Economic Stability:** Iraq's economic environment can also influence the investment in sports technology. Fluctuations in the economy or priorities set by governmental bodies can impact the funding available for sports technology initiatives.

- **Infrastructural Barriers:**

- **Lack of Modern Facilities:** The absence of modern sports facilities equipped with the latest technology can hinder the development and application of advanced sports management practices.

- **Digital Infrastructure:** A key component of implementing technology in sports is having a robust digital infrastructure, including reliable internet access. In some areas of Iraq, this infrastructure may be lacking or underdeveloped, limiting the potential for technological integration.

- **Educational and Training Issues:**

- **Skill Gap:** There might be a lack of professionals who are trained in sports technology. This includes data analysts, IT specialists, and other roles crucial for the effective use of technology in sports.

- **Training and Development:** The need for continuous training and development in technological skills is essential. Without proper training programs, sports staff and athletes might not be able to leverage the full potential of the available technology[7]

- **Cultural and Organizational Resistance:**

- **Resistance to Change:** There can be resistance to adopting new technologies, especially if there's a strong tradition of conventional methods in sports management and training.

- **Awareness and Perception:** The awareness of the benefits of technology in sports might be limited, and there may be misconceptions about the role and effectiveness of technology in sports.

- **Regulatory and Policy Framework:**

- **Regulatory Support:** The lack of supportive regulations and policies for technology adoption in sports can be a barrier. This includes policies for data protection, technology usage, and athlete privacy.

- **Governmental Involvement:** The level of governmental involvement and support can significantly affect the rate and success of technology adoption in sports.

- **Security and Privacy Concerns:**

- **Data Security:** With the increased use of digital technologies, concerns about data security and privacy are paramount. Ensuring the protection of sensitive information is crucial.

- **Reliance on Foreign Technologies:** Dependence on foreign technologies for sports management can raise concerns about data sovereignty and control.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive strategy involving government support, investment in infrastructure, education

and training programs, cultural change management, and the development of a robust regulatory framework. This multi-pronged approach can help overcome the barriers to adopting technology in Iraq's sports sector[8].

6. Case Studies and Examples

Introduction: The implementation of technology in sports management in Iraq has seen various developments, and it has been applied in multiple areas. By analyzing specific examples, we can understand how Iraqi sports have benefited from technology.

6.1 Analyzing Specific Instances Where Technology has been Implemented in Iraqi Sports Management

- **Use of Technology in Football Training:** Iraqi football teams might be utilizing technology for training purposes. This could include the use of video analysis software to analyze matches and training sessions, helping coaches and players to improve tactics and skills.

- **Social Media for Fan Engagement:** Iraqi sports teams and organizations are likely using social media platforms to connect with fans. These platforms can be used for sharing team news, player updates, and engaging content to build a stronger fan community.

- **Digital Ticketing Systems:** Some sports venues or events in Iraq may have introduced digital ticketing systems. These systems offer convenience to fans and streamline the ticketing process, also providing valuable data on sales and attendance patterns.

- **Wearable Technology for Athletes:** Iraqi athletes, particularly in professional leagues, might be using wearable technology like fitness trackers to monitor their physical performance and health. This data can be crucial for optimizing training and preventing injuries.

- **E-Learning Platforms for Sports Education:** There could be initiatives in Iraq that use e-learning platforms for sports education and training. These platforms can provide resources and courses for athletes, coaches, and sports administrators[9]

- **Online Marketing and Promotion:** Iraqi sports organizations might be leveraging online marketing tools and platforms to promote events, sell merchandise, and engage with a wider audience.

These examples demonstrate how technology can be used in various aspects of sports management in Iraq, from enhancing performance and fan engagement to streamlining operations and marketing efforts. However, the extent and impact of these technological implementations can vary based on the resources and infrastructure available in different regions and organizations within Iraq.

6.2 Comparative Analysis with Other Regions or Countries

Comparing the implementation of technology in sports management in Iraq with other regions or countries can highlight different approaches, levels of technological integration, and outcomes. This comparative analysis can provide valuable insights into global trends and best practices.

- **Advanced Technological Integration (e.g., USA, Europe):** In countries like the United States and many in Europe, the integration of technology in sports is highly advanced. These regions have seen the adoption of cutting-edge technologies such as AI for player scouting, big data analytics for performance analysis, and immersive fan experiences through AR and VR. The infrastructure, funding, and cultural emphasis on sports and technology make these countries leaders in sports tech.

- **Emerging Technological Adoption (e.g., Asian Countries):** In many Asian countries, there's a growing trend in adopting sports technology. This includes the use of technology in cricket analysis in India, e-sports in South Korea, and wearable tech in China. These countries demonstrate how emerging markets are rapidly adopting technology in sports, driven by economic growth and technological advancements[10]

- **Challenges in Developing Regions (e.g., African Countries):** Similar to Iraq, many African countries face challenges in integrating technology into sports due to infrastructural and financial constraints. However, there's a growing emphasis on using affordable and accessible technology for grassroots sports development and talent identification.

- **Middle East Region:** Other countries in the Middle East, like the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, are investing heavily in sports technology, particularly in preparation for hosting major international events like the FIFA World Cup. This showcases a regional shift towards embracing technology in sports

management and infrastructure development.

This comparative analysis shows that while developed countries lead in technology adoption in sports, emerging and developing regions are rapidly catching up, adapting technology according to their specific needs and constraints. Iraq, like many other countries with similar challenges, can learn from these varied approaches to effectively integrate technology into its sports sector.

Conclusion

In concluding this research on the role of technology in modernizing sports management in Iraq, several key findings and recommendations have emerged.

Results

- **Implementation Varies:** The extent and nature of technology implementation in Iraq's sports sector vary, with some advancements in areas like social media engagement and digital ticketing, but more work needed in areas like advanced analytics and infrastructure.

- **Global Trends:** Compared to regions like the USA and Europe, Iraq's sports technology integration is in a nascent stage. However, there's potential for growth, as seen in other emerging markets.

- **Opportunities for Development:** Technologies like AI, wearable devices, and digital platforms present significant opportunities for enhancing athlete performance, fan engagement, and operational efficiency in Iraq.

Recommendations

- **Invest in Infrastructure:** Focus on developing the necessary digital and physical infrastructure to support the adoption of advanced sports technologies.

- **Training and Education:** Implement educational programs and training workshops to develop local expertise in sports technology.

- **Policy Support:** Encourage the development of policies that support technological innovation in sports, including funding and regulatory frameworks.

- **Community Engagement:** Use technology to engage the community and foster grassroots sports development.

Future Research Directions:

- **Long-Term Impact Studies:** Future research could explore the long-term impacts of technology integration in sports, particularly on athlete performance and fan behavior.

- **Comparative Studies:** Further comparative studies with other regions could provide deeper insights into best practices and strategies for technology adoption in sports.

- **Technological Innovations:** Continuous monitoring of emerging technologies and their potential application in the sports context in Iraq.

This research underscores the transformative potential of technology in sports management. For Iraq, embracing these technological advancements could lead to significant improvements in the sports sector, aligning it more closely with global standards and practices.

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