

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



# Measuring the Strategic Performance of Football Clubs Using the Balanced Score Card Technique

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## ABSTRACT

**Background.** Football clubs' strategic performance should be evaluated as an essential subject in strengthening competitive advantage rather than concentrating on the financial elements of a club's operation, as has traditionally been the case. Sports managers are now looking for strategic technologies that will assist them in obtaining precise and dependable information on how their teams are genuinely doing. This helps them improve customer satisfaction and strengthen their relationship, which leads to more money for football teams. **Objectives.** The goal of this study was to use the Balanced Score Card in Najaf Football Club to show financial and non-financial indicators in evaluating the club's long-term performance. **Methods.** An empirical quantitative research approach based on economic and non-financial data was applied in this case. The club's strategic success may be evaluated based on non-financial data and information to move away from the conventional assessment based solely on financial data and information. The Balanced Score Card, which Kaplan and Norton made, was used to look at how well we did. **Results.** Although the measures of customer perspective (16.55%), internal operations (43%), education, and growth (32.84%) for Najaf Football Club decreased, the measures of the financial perspective rose (31.93%). But because the football business is unique, it needs to pay more attention to customers and internal processes (such as training and recruiting professional players) to reach a level of customer satisfaction that improves the rest of the balanced scorecard. Although the financial perspective measures increased in the study, other perspectives, such as customer service, internal operations, education, and growth, showed disappointing results. This highlights the sports managers' narrow concentration on the financial element alone rather than on improving the rest of the perspectives, which is one of the most important components in achieving success and being competitive. **Conclusion.** It is possible to conclude from the findings that the managers of Najaf Football Club should pay more attention to non-financial measures related to the customer and seek to achieve his satisfaction, with the need to increase the focus on internal operations such as increasing productive training hours while attracting experienced and efficient players as a result. It is essential for all club staff, including managers and players, to have the appropriate degree of education and development for the club to maintain a competitive edge over the long term.

**KEYWORDS:** *Balanced Score Card, Strategic Performance Evaluation, Football Clubs.*

## INTRODUCTION

Football teams' competitive standing may be improved by using various strategic performance evaluation techniques. Currently, sports managers are attempting to establish a very powerful and

beneficial competitive position for international football teams and emphasize the athletic experiences of customers and their continuous interaction with these entities (1).

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Furthermore, the literature on strategic performance appraisal supports the notion that strategic performance evaluation is heavily influenced by four fundamental perspectives (2): the financial perspective, the customer perspective, the internal operations perspective, and the education/growth perspective (3). In this regard, the literature on strategic performance appraisal supports that the financial perspective heavily influences strategic performance evaluation, the customer perspective, the internal operations perspective, and the education/growth perspective (4).

A powerful instrument for strategic performance evaluation has been developed to include the four viewpoints' implications in both the corporate and sporting worlds (5). We see that many teams, including Real Madrid, Barcelona, and Manchester United, and sports leagues, such as the Champions League, are applying the balanced scorecard to achieve short and long-term competitive advantage (6). The Iraqi National Football League (NFL) has applied for a strategic reassessment. As a result of this case. Identity, as well as the strong bond that brings fans of sports teams with their teams. In the past, sports teams and clubs had a competitive advantage in drawing fans and amateurs. However, as the number of sports institutions and new media outlets has grown, the rivalry to attract sports consumers has intensified (7-9). The money consumers spend on entertainment is increasingly being competed for by sports teams and leagues with other leisure choices, such as hotels, restaurants, theaters, and so on. However, professional sport has embraced a more commercial approach, and as a result (10), strategic performance evaluation as a highly effective instrument for differentiating oneself from rivals has become a more popular issue for sports teams and leagues to discuss and learn about. For clarity (11), a balanced scorecard may be described as a method for turning an organizational purpose and strategy into a collection of performance measurements that serve as a framework for carrying out the plan in practice (12).

In addition to accomplishing financial objectives, it considers non-financial objectives among those the organization should strive to fulfill. Achievement of the company's non-financial objectives will positively impact the company's financial objectives. Because of the institution's selected strategy, it is necessary to manage financial assets and liabilities effectively.

Still, it is also necessary to effectively manage the unit's non-financial assets, financial assets, and liabilities (11, 12).

Besides financial assets, evaluating financial and nonfinancial performance levels and using balanced scorecard measures enables institutions to develop relationships with current customers in order to maintain and satisfy them, or to seek new customers and enter new target markets, gain customer loyalty and satisfaction, develop and expand, and develop new products or services, etc. (13). Customers' happiness is reduced when they get a rapid response and do not have to wait for a lengthy period (14). Workers' skills and experience contribute to enhancing the ability to conduct operations and improving the quality of services (15, 16).

Our research indicates that, because the sports industry is a large-scale industry that includes the sale of media rights and sponsorship deals, in addition to the sale of food and sports memorabilia, the process of evaluating the performance of this industry is becoming more complex and requires increased attention. As a consequence, the writers place less emphasis on the non-financial components of football teams (17). Many professional football teams' operations have gotten more sophisticated in recent years, with a greater emphasis on financial elements (18). When it comes to football, resources and qualifications are the most important products, as shown by player performance and level of competition. Added value is created as a result of the interactions between these elements (18, 19).

A new instrument for evaluating football teams' success from a strategic viewpoint is thus required, one that considers both financial and non-financial variables. This approach is used in business to examine the performance of an industry and is known as a "balanced scorecard" in certain circles (20). According to the research, we can better comprehend and assess performance if we view the football business as a service sector (21).

Nonetheless, more research should be done with the financial resources of football teams. In addition, in each performance assessment process, financial and non-financial inputs are combined to develop the services offered to clients due to the evaluation (17). Their clubs' competitive positions are important for sports club managers to know. This will help them trade

for things or services from other sports clubs that help their clubs be seen all over the world and earn more money (22). In recent years, the balanced scorecard has gained widespread adoption among business units, as organizations have adopted the balanced scorecard in their desire to improve their capabilities in strategic management as a result of a variety of internal factors (translating the vision into specific measurable goals, priorities for operations (23), resource allocation, and strategy delivery) and external (translating the vision into specific measurable goals, priorities for resource allocation, and strategy delivery) and external factors (increasing competition, increasing customers and their needs, changing the structure of markets) (24, 25).

According to research and studies, traditional financial measurement systems are inherently flawed, and a need for broader and more accurate standards has arisen in order to accelerate the process of gaining experience, learning, and changing the methods of planning businesses and services (26). For football clubs and teams, the balanced scorecard is a market that achieves a set of features and characteristics that enables sports managers to achieve a balance between short-term goals, which include operational goals (selling tournament tickets, advertisements, stadium rents, and the number of working hours) and long-term goals, which include strategic goals (winning championships, achieving financial targets, and winning championships) (selling and buying professional players, and entering into investments in banks or other developing or internationally renowned sports clubs) (13-20, 22). In this situation, the measurements and goals for shareholders and consumers (income and investment returns, product pricing, and marketing ratios) must be balanced with internal KPIs for operations, innovation, learning, and development. Professional sports organizations are always in rivalry with one another to recruit and keep customers. All are required to provide services to the end customer and manage the information flows that accompany those services (26). Consequently, we discover that the sports business comprises a simplified financial equation that incorporates stadiums and training fields, which indicates the invested capital from which financial outputs are obtained, such as

matches sold to consumers and broadcasted on television and radio (26, 27).

It is possible to evaluate football club performance strategically from the perspectives of all relevant parties: management, players, coaches, sponsors, media, and spectators. This is reflected on the possibility of increasing investment opportunities more clearly through a group of directors of sports institutions who apply for the balanced scorecard. Indicators Football clubs' long-term debt repayment capacity is expressed through indicators of financial performance that are impacted by changes in the surrounding environment and the market and are connected to metrics such as liquidity (23-25). These indicators indicate particular aims and measurements aimed at attaining specific goals connected to the size of the club, the level of operating income, the return on capital used, the ratio of net profit to sales, and the growth of cash flow in the club (1). These measurements are tied to the end outcomes of performance and are not capable of predicting future performance due to their insufficiency in predicting future performance (2).

In the absence of other measures related to the customer, which is the guiding factor for the financial goal, such as providing products that meet the needs and desires of the customer in the market and striving to achieve customer satisfaction, sales are positively affected, which leads to an increase in profit margins (3). A sports manager can identify unit customers and market share in their target market segments by using customer metrics, which are available online. They are the most fundamental indicators of the effectiveness and quality of the outcomes obtained via the execution of the plan and the safety of its implementation (4). Customer satisfaction, retention, acquisition of new customers, market share, and the amount of agents accounts in target markets are some of the metrics used (5). Incorporating the financial perspective with the customer's perspective results in a clear vision for the management of football clubs about the satisfaction of the customer, allowing them to pursue one of the strategies associated with cost reduction (ease of purchase and use) or quality (high price relative to the market). Customer that is better or different from the competitors, allowing them to pursue one of the strategies associated with (7-20, 22).

The provision of fresh, innovative services or items with unique characteristics that entice customers and provide them with sufficient pleasure that they ignore the price they will have to pay in exchange for these goods or services is authorized (10). When taken together, these characteristics suggest that the unit is prepared to give value to customers in a more superior or distinct manner than rivals (11). The unit either provides a commodity at a cheap price while preserving product quality (a cost-reduction leadership approach) or makes it simple to acquire and use (a user-friendliness leadership strategy) (12). Alternatively, to provide a superior quality and distinct item at a higher price than the competition (Quality Leadership Strategy) (15). For example, a new inventive product with unique features that attracts customers and increases their happiness to the point that they are willing to ignore the price they will have to pay for the product. When it comes to internal operations, there are certain differences between businesses and football clubs in terms of the aspects involved. The sport is represented by cadres of instructors and coaches, training camps, professional athletes, and high-quality sports equipment (1-30). The internal process metrics of sports clubs are focused on the value chain of the organization and their objectives of increasing

efficiency, productivity, quality, and comprehensive quality management (31). Internal operations necessitate the identification of the most critical operations that must be invested in in order for football clubs to be able to generate value that differentiates their products and attracts customers in competitive markets, which is reflected in the satisfaction of shareholders who receive the highest returns on their investments (6-18, 28, 32, 33). The last viewpoint of the balanced scorecard is the perspective of education and development, which is discussed more below. The development and improvement of the skills and expertise of the administrative staff, technicians, or players, through scientific and practical training, are represented in the foundations that the sports club management must adopt to generate the growth and improvements necessary to achieve its long-term goals (17-19). This is especially true for players, who are the primary source of the club's competitive advantage (6-12).

On the other hand, the perspectives represented by the balanced scorecard are not different from each other. Instead, they work together; each view affects the other in some way (14). In Figure 1, the balanced scorecard is used in evaluating the strategic performance of football clubs.

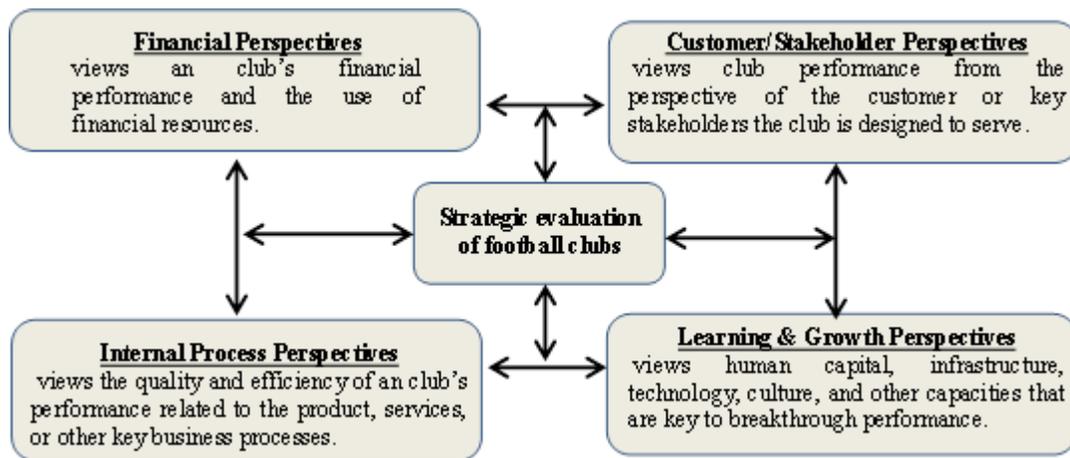


Figure 1. Strategic Evaluation of Football Clubs (34)

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Design.** The current research is applied, and its purpose is a type of applied study.

**Participants and Procedures.** The current research community included the administrative and financial staff, as well as the financial and

non-financial statements of the Najaf Al-Ashraf football team, which is one of the sports clubs of the Iraqi Football Association.

**Instrument.** In the current research, both financial and non-financial quantitative data were collected.

Applying the measures related to the balanced scorecard perspectives on financial, customer, internal operations, education, and growth (Tables 1-4) adopted by Kaplan and Norton, 1999 in evaluating strategic performance (26, 27). The amounts of the financial statements were translated from the Iraqi dinar to the equivalent in US dollars at the exchange rate (IQD to USD in 2021 = 1480). The period from 2021 was chosen because observations and interviews were conducted.

## RESULTS

Using the data presented in Tables 1-4, the findings indicate that the balanced scorecard can be used to evaluate the strategic performance of local

football clubs to achieve results that are appropriate for all sports activities and events offered by the club to gain a significant competitive advantage. This means that quantitative data supports the study's theoretical model; more support for this assertion may be seen in the findings of Table 5, which provide further evidence. In the next section, we'll look at the indicators and outcomes in the context of the balanced scorecard's standard performance indicators. On the whole, based on the findings of the initial study (Table 5), it can be concluded that, of all the current perspectives, the financial outlook and the customer perspective are the ones that have the most significant influence on the attitudes of internal operations, education, and development.

**Table 1. The Financial Perspective of the Football Club**

Measurement	Financial Equation (\$)	Results
Return on investment= (Net profit/ Total assets) *100	(315,7500/ 13,250,000) *100	2.4%
Return on equity= (Net profit/ Owner s Equity) *100	(315,7500/ 6,050,000) *100	5.2%
Sales revenue growth= {(Sales current year - sales prior year) / sales prior year} *100	{(2,225,000 -1,985,000)/ 1,985,000} *100	12.1%
Sales profitability= (Net profit / Net Sales) *100	(315,7500/ 2,225,000) *100	14.2%
Quick liquidity ratio= {(Current Assets- Inventory) /Current liabilities} *100	{(9,139,000 -85,000)/ 7,200,000} *100	125.75%

**Table 2. The Customer's Perspective of the Football Club**

Measurement	Financial Equation (\$)	Results
Market share = (Total club sales volume / Total sales volume in the industry sector) *100	(2,225,000 /10,585,000) *100	21%
Growth in sales volume = {(Sales volume for customers in the current year - Sales volume for customers in the prior year) / Sales volume for customers in the prior year} *100	{(2,225,000 -1,985,000)/ 1,985,000} *100	12.1%

**Table 3. The Football Club's Internal Operations Perspective**

Measurement	Financial Equation (\$)	Results
Available resources= (Current Resources / Total Club Resources) * 100	(536,000 /2,225,000) *100	21%
Players Productivity= Number of matches / total training hours) * 100)	(52 /245) *100	27,5%
Percentage of commitment to training= (Produced training hours / total training hours) * 100	(197.5 /245) *100	80,6%

**Table 4. The Education and Growth Perspective for the Football Club**

Measurement	Financial Equation (\$)	Results
Rotation of players= (Number of players leaving the club / Total number of players) * 100	(4 / 25) *100	16%
Growth in training and qualification expenditures= {(Training and qualification expenses for the current year - training and qualification expenses for the previous year) / training and qualification expenses in the prior year} * 100	{(513,000 - 385,000)/ 385,000} *100	33.2%
Percentage of the main players= (Number of primary employees / total number of employees) * 100	(11 /25) *100	44%
Increase player rewards= (Bonus paid for the current year - Bonus paid for the previous year / Bonus paid in the prior year) * 100	{(63,000 - 45,000)/ 45,000} *100	40%
Growth in development research expenditures= {(R&D expenditures for the current year - R&D expenditures for the previous year) / R&D expenditures in the prior year} * 100	{(11,000 - 8,400)/ 8,400} *100	31%

Table 5. The Results of Applying the Balanced Scorecard to Evaluate the Strategic Performance

Perspective / Measurement	Standard	Results	Evaluation
<b>Financial</b>			
Return on investment	2 -2.5 %	2.4%	High
Return on equity	2- 6 %	5.2%	High
Sales revenue growth	Above 7.5 %	12.1%	High
Sales profitability	10 - 20 %	14.2%	Average
Quick liquidity ratio	90 – 95 %	125.75%	High
<b>Customer</b>			
Market share	27.5 – 35 %	21%	Low
Growth in sales volume	7 – 9 %	12.1%	High
<b>Internal processes</b>			
Available resources	Less 15 %	21%	High
Players Productivity	Above 55 %	27,5%	Low
Percentage of commitment to training	50 -80 %	80,6%	Average
<b>Learning and growth</b>			
Rotation of players	Above 20 %	16%	Low
Growth in training and qualification expenditures	39 – 51 %	33.2%	Average
Percentage of main players	40 – 45 %	44%	Average
Increase player rewards	5 – 15 %	40%	High
Growth in development research expenditures	Less 30 %	31%	High

## DISCUSSION

Using the balanced scorecard approach, this study sought to determine the strategic performance of Al-Najaf Al-Ashraf football club in terms of its overall performance. Previously, sports managers relied on financial indicators to evaluate the performance of their clubs. However, developments and significant shifts in the goals of sports clubs as an indicator of social welfare and a The story of the plans of sports clubs is reflected positively on increasing the interest of the community as it is a good source of income for hotels, restaurants, and the media. This imposed the necessity of shifting from a financial evaluation process to an evaluation process based on a set of financial and non-financial indicators, which aids in providing information as a major source that achieves the club's objectives. In the study's findings, it was discovered that adopting the balanced scorecard provided a clear picture of the club's strategic success from four different viewpoints (financial, customer, internal operations, education, and growth). As shown in Table 5, this research result is consistent with the findings of a previous study conducted in an industrial environment using a balanced scorecard while considering the sports industry's unique characteristics. It is also clear that the sports industry's financial perspective measures have increased (Return on investment, Return on equity, Sales revenue growth, Quick liquidity ratio). The shares are calculated from the club's financial standpoint. Still, they are closely tied to the supporters' (customers') happiness with the

club's sporting performance due to the distinct position the sports sector has in terms of distinctiveness. A decrease in player productivity and average percentage commitment to training, as well as a decrease in some indicators of the education and growth perspective (rotation of players, growth in training and qualification expenditures, and percentage of leading players), all of which are correlated with the stock market value, are also confirmed by the results of internal operations. Using a balanced scorecard, sports managers may get a strategic understanding of their teams' current competitive condition, allowing them to make informed choices based on financial and non-financial data. Suppose the Najaf Football Club management wants to increase the value of its shares. To do so, it must improve the indicators of internal operations, education, and growth while taking advantage of the cash surplus that customers have generated to achieve positive results for the club's competitive position in the marketplace. The Balanced Score Card is nothing more than a technique for achieving a balance between financial and non-financial indicators because any increase or decrease in one of the indicators will have the same effect on the other hand to the same degree as the increase or decrease in the other indicator.

## CONCLUSION

Financial measurement is no longer adequate to give the facts and information required by sports managers, and this measurement may result in incorrect judgments being made

throughout the assessment process. While financial assessment may be suitable in the short term, it is not beneficial for addressing the needs of sports management in the long run. Studies have shown that the balanced scorecard's function was not limited to measurement but also included the creation and reformulation of strategy, providing managers with the chance to establish the most effective techniques for achieving the measurement goals. The capacity of this technology to react to environmental factors provided the management with more flexibility in amending and reformulating the plan in response to changes that occurred due to the advancements. After conducting several studies, the researchers developed a model for measuring the strategic performance of football clubs, which links

The strategic execution of the club as a whole with the strategic performance of the sub-perspectives (financial and customer-facing operations), as well as the strategic performance of the club's education and growth initiatives, in a way that provides all of the appropriate and interconnected information among all football club activities. It is important to note that the assessment of the strategic success of sports clubs varies greatly from that of industrial or commercial organizations. This is owing to the benefits of the activity as well as the wide range of resources and finance available to football teams in the United Kingdom. Financial and non-financial measurements will be reformulated and rearranged following the features of football teams, providing sports managers with a clear picture of their present performance. When charting a course for sports clubs to create a solid competitive position in the competitive environment, the technically balanced scorecard is the most crucial tool available. In addition to determining the tactical option, the strategic choice should be defined by the nature of the private work made by sports clubs. Instead of just

concentrating on financial considerations, it is necessary to include non-financial factors such as the client, internal operations, education, and development to succeed. The club's strategic performance, it appears, can be evaluated by strengthening non-financial measures related to the sound of the fans and meeting their demands; keeping the team's stars and increasing their efficiency while attracting the stars of good and valuable; reformulating plans to achieve national success, and selecting qualified and valuable coaches. Who knows the players' performance level and how to keep them there to please the fans and generate financial support for the club?

### APPLICABLE REMARKS

- It is providing a database that can be circulated to the rest of the Iraqi football clubs through four strategic perspectives: the financial perspective, the customer perspective, the internal operations perspective, and the education and growth perspective.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

*Study concept and design:* Ahmed Maher Mohammad Ali. *Acquisition of data:* Ali Noori Abdulzahra. *Analysis and interpretation of data:* Ahmed Maher Mohammad Ali. *Drafting of the manuscript:* Sarah Isam Khbela. *Critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content:* Sarah Isam Khbela. *Statistical analysis:* Hatem Karim Kadhim. *Administrative, technical, and material support:* Najaf football club. *Study supervision:* Maithm Malik Khaghaany.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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