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# Strategic Processes in Australian Golf Clubs: A Dynamic Capabilities View

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# Strategic Processes in Australian Golf Clubs

## Abstract

**Research question:** This paper addresses the following research questions: 1) To what extent do the procedural dimensions of the dynamic capabilities view explain non-profit sport organisations' adaptation to a changing environment? 2) To what extent do non-profit sport organisations develop routinised versus ad hoc dynamic capabilities?

**Research methods:** Guided by an interpretivist approach we conducted semi-structured interviews with senior managers of 20 Australian golf clubs. We coded data guided by the procedural dimensions of the dynamic capabilities view but with inductively emerging sub themes.

**Results and findings:** Our study demonstrates the usefulness of the dynamic capabilities view for investigating strategic processes within non-profit sport organisations. The three procedural dimensions - sensing, seizing, and transforming - captured the different practices undertaken within the golf clubs. Our findings suggest maturity of dynamic capability processes and success with using both routinised and ad hoc processes.

**Implications:** Dynamic capabilities are useful for understanding the ability of non-profit sport organisations to adapt. Furthermore, routinisation depends on the maturity of an organisation's internal management processes and the means available for the latter.

**Keywords:** dynamic capabilities; golf clubs; non-profit organisation; change management; strategic management

## **Strategic Processes in Australian Golf Clubs**

The environment is certainly changing for many non-profit sport organisations (hereafter called sport nonprofits). Sport nonprofits are confronted with increasing competition, interactive technologies, and changing socio-economic behaviours of sport participants (Amis et al., 2004; O'Boyle & Hassan, 2014). Sport nonprofits are receiving less public funding due to austerity policies (Parnell et al., 2019) and face further pressures from government agencies to adopt new policies, programmes, and structures (Kikulis et al., 1992). Threats for sport nonprofits also arise from commercial providers with more flexible, less costly, or more modern experiences (O'Boyle, 2017). The traditional membership-based club model relies heavily on volunteers (Shilbury et al., 2016), but volunteers are also in short supply. These environmental changes require sport nonprofits to develop strategies and constantly adapt (Doherty & Cuskelly, 2020; Hoye et al., 2020; Kikulis et al., 1995; Thibault et al., 1994).

Even though forprofit organisations and nonprofit organisations share a need for organisational strategy, the form of such strategies varies (Laurett & Ferreira, 2018; Moore, 2000; Thibault et al., 1993), and how nonprofits strategise is underresearched (Millar & Doherty, 2018). Thibault et al. (1993, p. 26) commented that “non-profit organizations do not necessarily ‘strategize’ in the same manner as organization whose goals are primarily profit oriented”. According to Thibault et al. (1994) sport nonprofits’ strategic choices are determined by the environmental context and their resources. So, whilst sport nonprofits need to ensure organisation-environment congruency, there are different paths to achieving this congruency.

Sport organisation strategy research relies heavily on the resource-based view (Amis et al., 1997; Gerrard, 2003; Smart & Wolfe, 2003). Some for-profit sport organisation studies have examined dynamic capabilities (Demir & Söderman, 2015; Lefebvre et al., 2020), but only a few in the context of sport nonprofits (e.g., Amis et al., 2004; Harris et al., 2020). Organisations acquire dynamic capabilities by developing the ability to perpetually create,

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extend, or modify its existing resources (Helfat et al., 2007). Numerous authors recognise the potential of dynamic capabilities to illuminate new approaches for understanding strategy in sport nonprofits (Gerrard, 2003; Harris et al., 2020; Helfat & Winter, 2011). Dynamic capabilities may help to explain and advance strategy formulation for organisations other than forprofit and national sport organisations (Harris et al., 2020; Helfat & Winter, 2011). Whilst the resource-based view (Barney, 1991) is well suited to static environments, it does not explain how organisations adjust their resource base to changing environments and demands. Therefore, we explore strategising of sport nonprofits through the dynamic capabilities view in the context of nonprofit golf clubs.

The purpose of this research is to examine strategic processes within Australian golf clubs. We propose that the dynamic capabilities view (i.e., creating, extending, or modifying resources) will extend our understanding of sport nonprofits beyond that provided by resource dependency theory (i.e., acquiring new resources).

### **Literature and Theoretical Framework**

Both the resource-based view (Barney, 1991) and the dynamic capabilities view (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997) contribute to the study of strategic management (Ferreira et al., 2016; Schilke et al., 2018). In the following section, we briefly review research on strategy in sport nonprofits. Then, we introduce the theoretical foundations of the dynamic capabilities view.

#### **Strategy Research in Nonprofit Sport Organisations**

Strategic processes in sport nonprofits are not identical to the strategic processes in forprofit organisations. Sport nonprofits often have limited capacities and capabilities to engage in strategic management and planning due to limited resources, time, experience, and short-term orientation (Millar & Doherty, 2016; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Thibault et al., 1993).

Foundational work on strategy formulation in sport nonprofits led to a framework for the

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analysis of strategy in sport nonprofits consisting of two factors: programme attractiveness and competitive position (Thibault et al., 1993). The non-profit context impacts strategy development, for example charities do not develop strategies the same way as national sport organisations (i.e., federations) (Doherty & Cuskelly, 2020; Thibault et al., 1993). Each organisation is subject to different “pressures” from stakeholder organisations that influence revenue sources and deliverables. These different pressures reflect the organisation’s primary “client” and original purpose (Moore, 2000). Thibault et al. (1994) apply their framework to national governing bodies and confirm the important fit between the environment and strategy, which they explain with the notion of contingency. Doherty et al. (2014) used organisational capacity to theorise goal achievement in sport nonprofits. Traditionally, sport organisation studies relied heavily on resource dependency theory to explain strategy as organisation-environment congruency (Babiak, 2007; Babiak et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2020; Misener & Doherty, 2013). The underlying premise of resource dependence theory is that organisations access resources through collaboration with other organisations (Babiak, 2007).

There is literature on strategy formulation in national sport organisations taking other strategic approaches such as the dynamic capabilities view into account (Harris et al., 2020). However, the literature on strategy formulation by sport clubs and associations normally combines the resource-based view with interorganisational relationship literature (i.e., resource dependency theory) (Babiak et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2020; Misener & Doherty, 2013). Contrary to the dynamic capabilities view, which postulates that organisations can develop internally the capability to adapt to environmental changes, the relationship literature argues that interorganisational partnerships are necessary to develop and implement strategies that allow them to achieve their organisational goals and purposes.

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### The Dynamic Capabilities View

The dynamic capabilities view is an extension of the resource-based view of the firm. The resource-based view posits that competitive advantage is a consequence of acquiring and deploying resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). Whilst well suited to static environments, the resource-based view does not explain how organisations adjust their resource base to changing environments and demands. Without an adjustment, a competitive advantage may not be sustainable in dynamic environments. The dynamic capabilities view fills that gap (Teece et al., 1997).

Helfat et al. (2007, p. 1) define dynamic capabilities as the “capacity of an organization to purposefully create, extend, or modify its resource base”. Many dynamic capabilities scholars have examined the specific micro foundations or the “processes that underlie dynamic capabilities” (Schilke et al., 2018, p. 397). Teece (2007) identifies three processes that underlie dynamic capabilities: sensing, seizing and transforming. *Sensing* includes identifying and shaping new opportunities and incorporates the learning dimension. Related practices to sensing include scanning, creation (of opportunities), interpreting (the environment), investing in research, and accessing new information and knowledge (to create opportunities) (Teece, 2007). To *seize* the sensed opportunity, the organisation pursues commercial activity, research, development, and innovation. Seizing sub-processes include defining the business model and value proposition, determining business boundaries and complementary industries, designing and implementing strategic decision-making processes, and building loyalty and commitment with customers and employees (Teece, 2007). *Transforming* refers to the “ability to recombine and reconfigure assets and organisational structures” (Teece, 2007, p. 1335).

Whilst many scholars agree on the processes underpinning dynamic capabilities, there is little agreement on other central characteristics (Ferreira et al., 2016; Schilke et al., 2018). A

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central debate is whether the underlying processes of dynamic capabilities are routinised. The routinisation debate has its origins in different foundational definitions of dynamic capabilities. A literature sub-stream around Teece et al. (1997) and Winter (2003), characterises dynamic capability organisations as routinised, whereas another influential sub-stream around Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) characterises dynamic capability processes as non-routinised ad-hoc adjustments. In between these polar extremes, Wohlgemuth and Wenzel (2016) encouraged organisations to partly routinise their dynamic capabilities. The field of dynamic capabilities would therefore benefit from a better understanding how routinised the processes should be. That might differ in other contexts, such as sport nonprofits.

Dynamic capability research has initially focused on forprofit organisations in industries and environments with rapid technological changes. Applying it to sport nonprofits could bring new insight on how these organisations formulate and implement strategies. Numerous previous studies suggest that there is great potential to examine dynamic capabilities within sport nonprofits (Gerrard, 2003; Harris et al., 2020; Helfat & Winter, 2011). Therefore, the first research question is: *To what extent do the procedural dimensions of dynamic capabilities explain nonprofit sport organisations' adaptation to a changing environment?* This might help to explain how sport nonprofits adapt to changing environments in the short-term but also how they remain viable in the long term. Furthermore, it is unclear whether these dynamic capabilities should be routinised or ad-hoc problem solving practices (Wohlgemuth & Wenzel, 2016). On this basis, we ask the second research question: *To what extent do these organisations develop routinised versus ad hoc dynamic capabilities?* With this article we contribute to 1) our understanding of the procedural dimensions of dynamic capabilities management; and 2) the general debate on whether dynamic capabilities rely on routinised or ad hoc practices.



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## Methods

Research needs to consider differences between humans as social actors to understand social phenomena (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). In this study, we use a basic qualitative methodology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) that employs an interpretivist epistemology and an inter-subjective ontology (Prus, 1996). Interpretivism holds that reality is socially constructed, subjective, and changeable. From an interpretivist view knowledge builds on subjective meanings of social phenomena, making multiple interpretations likely.

### Data Collection

#### *Sampling and Participants*

We used a stratified sampling approach to represent a balanced picture in terms of size geography and typology of the Australian golf club population and their approach to strategic processes (Emory & Cooper, 1991). Participants for our study were recruited from award winning and shortlisted finalists in the Professional Golfers Association of Australia (PGA) "Club of the Year" Awards for 2017-2019. Interviewing participants from award winning organisations is an accepted practice for studying innovation in sport organisations (Svensson & Hambrick, 2019). We invited club general managers, or if there was no general manager, board members to participate. The latter was the case for golf clubs without any paid staff or only operational paid staff. In these situations, we interviewed either the club's president or secretary. General managers, presidents, or secretaries all have a broad understanding of their organisations and are directly involved in determining strategy, organisational priorities, and practices. We conducted 20 semi-structured interviews, either face-to-face, video call, or via telephone. We achieved a near-equal distribution of the sample in terms of geographical location (i.e., different states and rural-urban mix), size, and club type (i.e., public versus private clubs). Participant details are described in Table 1.

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--- Insert Table 1 about here ---

### ***Interview Questions***

The interview guide covered five thematic blocks. We list these five blocs with one indicative question: 1) introduction (Can you tell me more about your current role here?); 2) innovation (Can you tell me about recent changes that you have introduced in the club?); 3) dynamic capabilities (Can you tell me about general activities or specific examples that allow the club to create, extend or modify its resource base?); 4) innovation and dynamic capabilities (Can you recall any examples where the club purposefully engaged in acquiring new resources or knowledge to innovate its core activity?); 5) interorganisational linkages (Please tell me about the types of external partnerships (if any) that your organisation has developed.).

### **Data Analysis**

We analysed the interview transcripts using Nvivo version 10. To address inter coder reliability and agreement, we followed the approach of Campbell et al. (2013). First, two researchers deductively coded the first interview transcript independent of each other, guided only by the general research question and definitions of key concepts. The key concepts determined first-order codes (i.e., sensing, seizing, transforming). Second-order themes emerged inductively. For example, under the first-order code of sensing, we applied the second-order code of “be proactive / plan ahead”.

After coding the first interview, two of the researchers discussed the reasoning and structure of their coding scheme. A revised coding scheme was then applied by each researcher to a second interview. This second coding round allowed to corroborate existing codes and to close cognitive gaps between the two researchers. After coding the second interview, the two researchers again discussed the evolving coding scheme. The focus was on

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developing a common coding scheme with a mutual understanding of the codes' and sub codes' meanings.

The two coding rounds and comparisons resulted in a commonly agreed coding scheme with various 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes. Both researchers coded a third interview using this coding scheme. Post-coding comparisons indicate a high intercoder reliability. In all cases in which only one coder had coded a text, the two researchers quickly achieved intercoder agreement leaving the initial assigned code or agreeing to code the text under another code. The researchers never disagreed on which sub code to assign on a particular text element.

The final coding scheme (i.e., first- and second-order definitions and examples) was once more discussed between the two researchers (see Table 2). In terms of unitisation we deployed meaning units whereby the researchers "marked as codable unit any portion of text regardless of the length to which they believed a code applied" (Campbell et al., 2013, p. 303). Finally, the principal investigator coded the entire data set with the commonly agreed coding scheme summarised Table 2.

--- Insert Table 2 about here ---

## **Findings**

In the following subsections, we identify practices to understand the procedural dimension of dynamic capabilities. We used Teece's (2007) typology of processes (i.e. sensing, seizing, and transforming) as overarching themes and identified a range of practices in each type of process.

### **Sensing Processes**

Our data provides overwhelming evidence for sensing processes. One of the most evident practice across all participants was "*(1) be proactive / plan ahead*". Club A, one of the larger

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clubs, had previously relocated from the suburbs to a peri-urban location. The General Manager explained “The club wanted to take its destiny [in its own hands] and be able to do something effective rather than be under pressure, with the passage of time, to be able to execute a plan for the future.” This citation shows foresight and long-term planning at the management level anticipating difficulties in maintaining the organisation’s activity in the initial location due to external pressures (e.g., neighbourhood, water access). According to Moore (2000), these abilities do not naturally feature in nonprofit organisations, but are evidence of the capability to adapt the resource base to changes in the environment (Teece et al., 1997). Club D is a medium-sized golf club located in an urban setting. For Club D, demand fluctuations, underpinned by both competition and weather conditions, triggered proactive planning. The General Manager noted, “There was certainly a conscious effort to try and look for opportunities to generate revenue during quiet periods.”

Another sensing-process practice was “(2) *conduct self-analysis*”. Participants often evoked the practice of conducting an honest and ruthless self-analysis as key to adapt to changes in the environment. Regional Club C explains:

What you do at an entry-level golf club is monumentally different than what, say a Royal Melbourne type of private golf club, is doing. So, what we're trying to achieve and what they're trying to achieve, there is a massive difference. There's no doubt that knowing who you are as a club is critical. I believe there are a lot of clubs that do not know who they are and what they're trying to do.

There is a similar statement from another regional club (Club B) of similar size:

I think what you've got to realise is that there's a whole sort of game out of range of golf clubs from the fairly small, and you know up to Royal Melbourne or something that kicks in at the other end. We have to just work to our limitations and the parameters we've got.

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The third practice that was clearly evident across the sample was “(3) *implement strategic planning*”. Club F is one of the larger semi-private clubs in the sample. Club F realised a strategic analysis and planning (indicating the preceding theme) that is “very aligned to business plans and marketing plans” according to the General Manager. Hence “there’s not a lot of things inside that plan that aren’t or won’t be achievable”. The practice of strategic planning is evidence for opportunity scanning processes and relevant interpretation of environmental changes (Teece, 2007). We found similar evidence in Club G, one of the very small clubs of the sample. The president of Club G stated “We have five-year strategic plans. Each of the strategic plans, we've outgrown in two years. We've achieved that with modest steps.”

These practices can all be characterised as future-oriented and building on solid knowledge concerning the status quo and its current developments. They mirror shaping, scanning, and opportunity creation (Teece, 2007).

The following “sensing practices” appeared across the data but to a lesser extent and were therefore only listed here: (4) *encourage external learning opportunities* and (5) *observe and listen to the environment and market*. These practices resonate with investing in research and learning opportunities to access new information, knowledge, and technology (Teece, 2007). Two sensing practices that are more marginal emerged from our data: (6) *organise brainstorming and downtime with staff* and (7) *provide internal training*. These refer to interpreting the environment and coordinate internal learning. Table 3 provides quotations to illustrate the practices 4-7 within the sensing process.

--- Insert Table 3 about here ---

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### Seizing Processes

Our data provided evidence for the following four seizing processes: (1) *investment in new assets as an activity*; (2) *leveraging existing resources*; (3) *monitoring and execute strategic planning*; and to a lesser extent (4) *releasing assets as a key activity*. Club E, a large rural golf club, outlined their investment to accommodate evolving customer groups and their needs.

The Club E General Manager stated, “We built a nine-hole Putt-Putt course and an auxiliary cafe and driving range to complement our golf facilities. That’s been going on for three years now, and it has become another good revenue centre.” This example shows that after having identified changes in the customers’ behaviour and desires, this club was able to adopt its resource (i.e., café and additional golf infrastructure) as well as competences (i.e., hospitality).

Club A went further in its development of resources and competences by investing in accommodation to diversify and complement their value proposition: “We acquired the property and 13 private cottages up the back of the property nestled into the hillside.” Table 3 provides further empirical examples from our data set to illustrate the practices (2) to (4) that operationalise the seizing process.

### Transforming Processes

Five practices emerged from data representing transforming processes: (1) *change traditions*; (2) *modify or develop new offers*; (3) *modify, re-arrange, or differently use existing resources*; (4) *integrate two initially different offers*; and (5) *coordinate skills and resources*. There were numerous examples of how changing traditions transformed a golf club and its resource/competence base. The General Manager of Club H, one of the larger clubs, shared the following:

We’ve had to open our doors and we have to be open. For quite some time, we were a club that was closed, in a way - closed mentally, closed in everything. We’ve had to open up and be welcoming and friendly. It is a cultural change that people are

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enjoying and they're taking to it, too. And they're taking to it because we ask them to, that's what people appreciate. They like being involved and being a part of something. It's a nice vibe at the moment. Although it's tough, everyone's on board to make it be successful.

Another significant change was related to human resource management, meaning what kind of people were recruited and what their main tasks were. The General Manager of Club M explained:

There was a significant change in staffing which brought about a different culture. That helped as well and the fact that there was the irrigation system that had been paid off. There was an opportunity to focus more on the strategic stuff. That was sort of initially generated from myself and then the board came on board to do the strategic side of things.

This quotation clearly illustrates another example of resource (i.e., staff) and competence (i.e., task orientation) reconfiguration due to a changing environment (i.e., emerging customer expectations). Table 3 provides further empirical examples illustrating the different transforming processes.

### **Routinised versus Ad-hoc Processes**

While already implicit in some of the quotations above, the following citations illustrate the routinised or ad-hoc nature of the identified practices. In the discussion section we elaborate on the reasons for the differing nature of processes with regards to their level of routinisation.

The main indicator of routinised practices were regular planning processes concerning both strategic and operational issues. For example, Club C explains “we have a small internal process called an MPS which is a Major Projects Submission which we run through a series of checkpoints and we identify whether we need to consult with members”. Club D highlights another example for the implementation of a regular processes:

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We then have an internal process where we collect feedback from our staff and then we go through depending on what it is whether it's some sort of financial analysis or using case based methods, but we will try and go through a pretty structured process of understanding the market and getting some marketing intelligence through that process.

Finally, regular processes were not only in place for planning and staff/client feedback purposes, but also for staff management and idea generation as indicated by Club E:

But as a management team, we meet on a weekly basis. I think we have a management meeting every week, obviously, just to go on with what's happening this week, or coming up in the week. And then, sometimes there were talking about other ideas and future ideas, as well.

In terms of practices that are ad hoc in nature, we identified notably absence of planning and a lack of goal setting as illustrated in the following quotes. Club B simply states: "I don't know, things just seem to happen". Club I explains, "...if something crops up or we've got something big coming on we'll just adjust accordingly." The latter statement indicates some level of adaptive capacity but without any intention of influencing and shaping the club's future through active planning and goal setting. Finally the challenges Club K experiences with the lease negotiation of the land they are using shows absence of anticipation and planning (i.e., routinisation): "Well, because we're in the middle of a lease negotiation, we're not intending to go anywhere but I mean we don't make too much of a long term plan. The main goal that I have here is to try and break even."

## **Discussion**

Research on sport nonprofits' strategy is predominantly based on the resource dependency theory (Babiak et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2020; Misener & Doherty, 2013). In contrast, Harris et al. (2020) utilised the dynamic capabilities view to investigate the ability of national sport



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organisations to create, extend and modify their internal resources and competences. The dynamic capabilities approach extends the resource-based view in a different way than the resource dependency view. It has different assumptions regarding how a firm adapts to the changing environment (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003).

Our research investigated the applicability of the dynamic capabilities framework in the context of Australian golf clubs, a new empirical context for the study of strategy in sport nonprofits. We addressed two research questions: 1) To what extent do the procedural dimensions of the dynamic capabilities view explain non-profit sport organisations' adaptation to a changing environment? 2) To what extent do these organisations develop routinised versus ad hoc dynamic capabilities? In the following subsections, we focus on each of the three procedural dimensions.

### **Sensing: Anticipation, Self-Analysis, and Strategic Planning**

Our results show that sport nonprofits that successfully adapt to environmental change act proactively. This is achieved by anticipating future challenges and generating solutions for potential environmental challenges. This requires a thorough, professional, and objective self-analysis. "Knowing yourself and your environment" is the first step to successful adaptation and this insight confirms that "the ability to access knowledge is an important part of [nonprofits'] competitiveness" (Ratten, 2016, p. 242). However, in addition to "accessing" knowledge, a sport nonprofit needs the ability to "create" new knowledge through an objective and thorough self-analysis. Overestimating or underestimating an organisation's resources and competences within the context of its changing environment hinders sport nonprofits to prepare properly for the future through strategic planning and proactivity which is a crucial element for goal achievement of (sport) nonprofits (Doherty et al., 2014; Laurett & Ferreira, 2018; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Slack & Hinings, 1992).

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Many of the organisations that we interviewed had only initiated the process of rigorous self-analysis and strategic planning. Hence, for these cases it was too early to judge whether they established a permanent dynamic capability in terms of “sensing”. However, some of the interviewed organisations referred to regular annual strategic planning exercises which indicates that the sensing dimension of procedural dynamic capabilities could be established as a permanent process, hence meeting the definition of a routine (Wohlgemuth & Wenzel, 2016).

### **Sensing: Knowledge Creation and Management**

Previous research highlights the importance of knowledge creation and management for the performance of non-profit sport clubs (Delshab et al., 2020), but also for the promotion of sport participation in public governing bodies of sport (Girginov et al., 2015). Our research adds to this emerging research on knowledge creation and knowledge management in sport organisations. Our results show that it is crucial for sport nonprofits to encourage new knowledge creation through dedicated brainstorming and discussion sessions with staff and volunteers, through specific external learning opportunities, through internal trainings and through an attentive attitude towards the environment. These findings resonate with earlier studies highlighting the importance of creative planning and creating opportunities for “thinking out of the box” (Doherty et al., 2014).

While these different practices of knowledge creation are perceived as crucial across our sample, we did not find much evidence for the internalisation, management, and retention of knowledge in the sport nonprofits. This refers to the processes and tools to separate the knowledge from individuals to make it permanently available in spite of internal organisational changes (e.g., staff turnover). The capacity to create and leverage important knowledge seems to be strongly linked to and controlled by the senior managers (Kor & Mesko, 2013). This impedes the organisations to develop organisation-specific knowledge

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and organisational learning as a dynamic capability that can be sustained over time and transformed into routines (Liu & Ko, 2012; Wohlgemuth & Wenzel, 2016). This effect is amplified by sport nonprofits' human resource capacity constraints that affect internalisation, management, and retention of knowledge (Misener & Doherty, 2009).

### **Seizing: Release, Leverage, and Invest**

Beyond accurate knowledge management and planning, our data revealed three processes that are crucial to harness emerging opportunities: first, releasing resources (i.e., letting go of assets), at the right time for example due to obsolescence; second, leveraging existing resources to the organisations' advantage (i.e., recombining existing resources), that a sport nonprofit possesses or has access to due to its interorganisational relationships in an attractive and effective manner; and, third, investing in new resources to plan for the future. Our data affirm Parnell et al. (2019) in their findings that relationships with key stakeholders are crucial to overcome challenges emerging from a changing and hostile environment (e.g., austerity policies, competing land use purposes). Relationships to both public (e.g., city council) and private (e.g., real estate developers or tourism businesses) actors are crucial to determine and execute the right decisions in terms of releasing and investing in new assets as well as exploiting the potential of existing resources whether they are tangible (e.g., golf course, land, access to water) or intangible (e.g., local reputation and notoriety) assets. To summarise, this finding supports previous studies that highlight the importance of interorganisational relationships to adapt to changing environments and to achieve organisational goals (Babiak et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2020; Misener & Doherty, 2009, 2013). However, in the light of our overall findings, this is only one element in a more encompassing dynamic capability that allow organisations to perpetually adapt resources and competences.

Sport nonprofits in our study tend to take the next step in developing dynamic capabilities by actively building, integrating and reconfiguring internal resources and

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competencies to seize new opportunities. Given its repeated use, some appear to have permanently acquired this dynamic capability. This suggests the capability is routinised. However, others react to environmental pressures indicating that seizing is an ad hoc capability.

### **Seizing: Execute, Monitor, and Adapt**

In addition to the management of resources through releasing, leveraging and investing, other seizing processes were also evident. These included the implementation and execution of the actions determined in the strategic planning process, monitoring the success of these actions, and potential adaption of the content of the strategic planning process according to changes in the environment. While in some instances these practices were formalised in a standardised management process, participants also spoke about more ad hoc executions. This highlights the ad hoc potential of these dynamic capabilities, especially when management means and expertise within the organisation was rare.

### **Transforming: Change Management**

The procedural dimension of transforming was evident in numerous examples of change management. Sport nonprofits had to instigate and manage changes of mind-sets and practices with regards to traditions in the play of golf, marketing, hospitality, information technology, and behavioural norms. Sport nonprofits that successfully managed this process are characterised by charismatic and persevering leaders who had coordinated this change process. Furthermore, they developed an organisational culture in both the management team and amongst the club members that facilitates the adaptation of strategic orientations and resource-bases.

### **Transforming: Coordinate, Recombine, Modify, or Integrate Existing Resources**

Finally, the sustained ability to coordinate, recombine, modify, and integrate existing resources to respond to changes in the environment is crucial for the development of dynamic

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capabilities. The ability to link with other organisations and integrate their resources is a key characteristic of the transforming dimension of dynamic capabilities (Jones et al., 2020). It is rare for a sport nonprofit to initiate recombining existing resources without calling on their partners in dual or network relationships (Wemmer & Koenigstorfer, 2015). The key to succeed is to activate internal and external stakeholders to be actors within the change process (Misener & Doherty, 2009). Once again, those sport nonprofits that had undertaken this kind of change management processes were able to acquire and internalise techniques and methods within the organisation. However, this dynamic capability was once more predominantly incorporated by the concerned managers that were able to develop dynamic capabilities at the individual level rather than a routine at the organisational level (Kor & Mesko, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

#### **Summary of Findings**

Our study demonstrates the usefulness of the dynamic capabilities view to investigate the reactions of sport nonprofits to a changing environment and related pressures. The three procedural dimensions sensing, seizing and transforming allow to clearly grasp the different practices undertaken within the diverse sport nonprofits that took part in our study to address environmental challenges and pressures. Concerning our second research question, our study shows that a determinant for the routinisation of dynamic capabilities is the maturity of the sport nonprofits. Maturity refers to the frequency and repetition of these practices to achieve mastery and skill but also to what extent these solutions and practices are internalised within the organisation and enable it to create organisation-specific knowledge and organisational learning available to all members of the organisation.

#### **Theoretical Implications**

Our theoretical contribution is twofold. First, we validate the usefulness of the dynamic capabilities view in the context of nonprofit sport organisations to investigate their ability to

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adapt to change through sensing, seizing and transforming processes. We therefore show that dynamic capabilities are not only relevant for private firms in environments with rapid technological change. Second, we contribute to the conversation on the routinisation of dynamic capabilities. Wohlgemuth and Wenzel (2016) argue that organisations with dynamic capabilities tend to be routinised at the strategic level, but are less routinised at the operational level. Rather than depending on the operational versus strategic level, our study indicates that routinisation depends on the maturity of an organisation's internal management processes and the means available. Overall, the sport nonprofits that possessed the essential resources to allocate time and expertise to strategic management and the necessary adaption processes and practices, were able to execute and implement dynamic capabilities routinely. Those sport nonprofits with insufficient resources allocated to this task, could only react ad hoc to adapt to unavoidable changes in the environment rather than acting proactively and developing the dynamic capability to constantly adapt the resource base to changes occurring in its environment, whether that was on the demand or on the supply side.

### **Practical Implications**

Our research clearly shows that sport nonprofits that are able to engage in the three different processes of dynamic capabilities are successful in adapting to changes in the environment. However, only those that are able to transfer those dynamic capabilities from the manager to the organisation are able to sustain them within the organisation over the long-term.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Limitations of our study are threefold. Our study is limited to one kind of sport nonprofits which are golf clubs. The study of golf clubs has some limitations due to some idiosyncrasies of this sport sector. For example, the concentration of golf clubs in particular locations indicate a surplus supply, which means a natural consolidation process can be expected. Some of the struggles that golf clubs are facing are related to changes inherent to the industry rather

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than environmental changes. Furthermore, the processes that supported an adjustment in this context, might not be applicable to other scenarios of environmental changes. These were not considered in our study. Future studies should investigate the usefulness of dynamic capabilities within other nonprofit sport organisations to explore its application further in the general sport management context. Furthermore, the role of board members in strategy development and dynamic capability enhancement could be a useful topic for future research.

Second, this study is a cross-sectional study that does not allow to observe changes over time with regards to the construction of dynamic capabilities over time. A longitudinal study would allow drawing implications on the role of various factors such as time, staff turnover, and leadership characteristics on the organisations' ability to develop dynamic capabilities, and whether they are routinised or not.

To conclude, this is one of the first studies in the field of sport management that investigates the ability of non-profit sport organisations to adapt to changes in its environment through the theoretical lens of dynamic capabilities. Given the huge attention that dynamic capabilities have received in general strategic management research on for-profit organisations, this is a much needed contribution and starting point for strategic management research applied in the context of non-profit sport organisations and should be seen as an invitation to join the conversation.

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### Tables

**Table 1**

*List of Participants*

State	Code	Annual budget (000)	Number of golf playing members	Number of social members	Number of staff	Position	Tenure	Type of club (accessibility)	Type of club (location)
VIC	Club A	7 000	1200	1500	75	General Manager	2007	private	Regional countryside
VIC	Club B	320	250		0	Committee member	2006	semi-private	Regional countryside
VIC	Club C		640		2	General Manager	2018	semi-private	Regional countryside
VIC	Club D		550		12	General Manager	2018	public	Metropolitan area
QLD	Club E	24 000	980	60000	160	Golf Operations Manager	2013	public	Regional countryside
QLD	Club F	5 000	1200		30	General Manager	2011	semi-private	Metropolitan area
QLD	Club G	25	55		0	President	2007	semi-private	Regional island
QLD	Club H		1318	155	43	General Manager	2018	semi-private	Urban area

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NSW	Club I	2200	750	350	23	General Manager	2007	semi-private	Regional countryside
NSW	Club K	2750	500	50000	30	General Manager	2011	public	Metropolitan area
NSW	Club L		900	650	70	General Manager	2013	private	Metropolitan area
NSW	Club M	2700	980		16	General Manager	2012	semi-private	Regional countryside
NSW	Club N		46		1	President	2014	public	Regional island
WA	Club O		650	140	10	General Manager	2018	semi-private	Metropolitan area
WA	Club P		600	200	5	General Manager	2018	semi-private	Metropolitan area
WA	Club Q	4700	1000	200	40	General Manager	2018	private	Metropolitan area
WA	Club R	2500	650	200	20	General Manager	2012	semi-private	Metropolitan area
WA	Club S		350			General Manager		public	Metropolitan area
WA	Club T	8600	1800		55	General Manager	2009	private	Metropolitan area
WA	Club U		40	10	0,5	Secretary	2016	semi-private	Regional countryside

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**Table 2**

*Final Coding Scheme: First and Second Order Themes*

<b>First-order themes</b>	<b>Second-order themes</b>	<b>Definitions of first-order themes</b>
Sensing	be proactive/ plan ahead; brainstorming- downtime with staff; encourage external learning opportunities for staff; implementing strategic planning; observing-listening to the environment-market; provide internal training for staff; self-analysis	The sensing/foreseeing/planning process refers to scanning for new opportunities and creating new opportunities. It is a learning an interpretive activity (Teece, 2007, p. 1322) which is "reflected in distinct organisational processes aimed at gaining a comprehensive understanding of the business environment and emerging opportunities and threats" (Schilke et al., 2018, p. 401)
Seizing	invest in new assets; leverage existing resources; monitor and execute strategic planning (decision-making); release assets	Seizing opportunities refers to "making strategic choices among investment opportunities and business models" (Schilke et al., 2018, p. 401)
Transforming	change traditions; coordinate skills and resources; integrate two initially separate offers; modify or develop new offers; modify or re-arrange or differently use existing resources	Transforming refers to reconfiguring an organisation's resources, structures and capabilities (Schilke et al, 2018, p. 401)

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**Table 3**

*Additional Quotes Illustrating Practices for Sensing, Seizing, and Transforming Processes*

<b>Processes</b>	<b>Quotations</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Sensing</b>		
(4) Encourage external learning opportunities for staff	We will send people away, including me. I travelled two or three times a year and the club funds all of that because the club wants me to go learn and find out what's cutting edge where are the gaps.	Club T
	A couple of superintendents were quite close to each other personally. They started working together a little bit more and then that grew and grew. We do it similarly with the general managers, so myself and the three neighbouring courses and we catch up every quarter go out to lunch. We just brainstorm what we're doing, what's going on, what's working, what's not. We're all competitors but the stronger golf is in our region and our area the more people are going to be playing golf.	Club R
	Staff's training is a big one for me. I'd much prefer to send somebody off to training and then they go in and bring [skills] back and try to transfer those skills.	Club Q
(5) Observe / listen to the environment-market	On a quarterly basis we do a staff survey. That's really feedback about how they're tracking but it also helps us identify at least from the staff's perspective where we're missing the mark from a process perspective, and pain points that they see regularly within the business. We do that along with a customer survey every quarter and we track that over time so.	Club D



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	We're continually reviewing what we do, whether we're doing it effectively, whether we're seeing much-changing market conditions.	Club F
	I guess, just hearing members, e-mails, surveys. Just hearing what people wanted. Just general managers being out on the floor talking and listening to people and getting information feedback. Talking to other clubs, what they're doing, and what works for them.	Club H
(6) Organise brainstorming / downtime with staff	Most of my senior management team has been here over 10 years but we still take the time out of day to day work. That's necessary to sit and brainstorm and just talk about all things and what we could do different to be unique and innovate.	Club A
	We then sat down with our operations team our department heads and we had them also provide information on the strategic plan for those various pillars and the goals and action items to reach those goals.	Club L
	We have a lot of senior staff and what I try to do is the monthly managers meetings or with the leadership team and brainstorm what can we do, what should we do, what are you seeing on the floor.	Club S
(7) Provide internal training	We have now an induction process, so board members understand their role and what they are expected to do. That comes with a workshop. It's about two hours of basic training with myself and the president of the golf club on financials and different things like that, client issues and their understanding what their role is on the board and so forth.	Club C
	So we've used the State Government 'Get Playing' programme, and received some funding out of there. And what we did with that funding two years ago was we organised a programme to train the committee, so that it could plan and run a successful event.	Club G

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Each of the department managers run two to three programs throughout the year. [...] They're all done out of hours and generally what we do is we take them to a restaurant or order in some pizza. [...] Twice a year we get together as a group and have training followed by a social activity. Club L

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### Seizing

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(2) Leverage existing resources	<p>Clubs got together and started meeting to how we can improve things and we involved the council and the tourism body. Then we have joint investment in marketing and they overlook the marketing for us and spend it with our authority. They've then realised the potential where golf is in the region and how it brings people in here from a tourism aspect. So they've now started investing money bringing major golf events to the region.</p>	Club R
	<p>When I got here, one of the key things I needed to do to, was find ways to make my part time employees more efficient when they're here. When you've got one girl that works in the office six days a fortnight and loses a full day to process the pays, it's just not working.</p>	Club P
	<p>So by engaging the juniors and looking after them for free and training them for free that then is securing the parents which is securing members and securing grandparents, securing sponsorship.</p>	Club N
(3) Monitor and execute strategic planning (decision-making)	<p>We have a small internal process called an MPS which is a Major Projects Submission which we run through a series of checkpoints and we identify whether we need to consult with members, whether these impacts other things like, e.g., wear and tear, all sorts of different things that we tick off to make sure that what we're going into the right direction, and trying not to overcommit us financially.</p>	Club C

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We do our financial analysis. Usually, if it's a major decision it will go to a board. It will be stress tested at board level. Club D

We've set budgets and targets that each department wants to meet and each of those department managers are more responsible to reach those budgets. Whereas before it wasn't necessarily them. It was more close enough is good enough. Now, we're trying to really drive those revenue streams to reach what we need. And the weekly meetings are keeping us on top. It is working, what we are doing. Club H

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(4) Release assets	We sold our land and moved four and a half years ago. Club A
	We had to sell the land to help build the infrastructure for the reticulation. Club O
	We've gone down the path of leasing that out to see if that changes our business. Club E

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### Transforming

(2) Modify or develop new offers	We ran focus groups with different groups of members four or five years ago. We developed a strategic plan all around the outcomes from those focus groups, which ultimately has led to us introducing things like the women's golfing program, our Friday night sundowner which has become very popular with live music and jumping castles for the kids and all sorts of things, obviously the restaurant itself which is a very contemporary space. These are things that ten years ago the club would never dreamed we would be doing. Club T
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We do a monthly shotgun start on a Thursday which is where all the members tee off at exactly the same time. They all then come into the clubhouse at the same time. They're all order their drinks together, they order the food together. There's a trophy donor for the day and the trophy donor has people attend the presentation. Now at first the members hated it and the staff didn't like it either because the staff were saying we're still pressured before they go out play golf it's really busy and then when they come in it's really busy. But the greater good in it is that one sponsor that we had for the first one, said sign me up for year, because I really liked that people attended my presentation. And the person that won the trophy was here and it built from that. Now we've got a sponsor for every one of these monthly events. And the members have adjusted to the fact that they all tee off at the same time and they like the fact that they all come in together.

Club P

We're seeing the driving range is definitely picking up. So, we've installed an undercover driving range with lights. We have time poor business people. So, we've put in lights and so they can come down and practice after hours.

Club  
M

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(3) Modify or re-arrange or differently use existing resources

We changed a few holes around and improved the course. At the time they borrowed 80 thousand dollars to start that program off to do about five or six greens. Then, we've done it over the last 20 years. We've done probably, two or three greens at a time and now we've finished that in 2016 and we've done all 18 greens. That's made a huge difference to the quality of the course, the quality of the greens, the enjoyment of the members and also the green fee players.

Club B

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There's a parcel land just adjacent to the golf course that was just a council detention basin. One of the board members at the time just thought, well, what if we could turn this into something and lease it and use it as a golf facility, a driving range, particularly. Club E

So we've shifted some of our human focus away from clubhouse operations more to golf-centric. Obviously, their roles are more aligned to the customers that are coming here, and more particularly the reasons the customers are coming here. So the customers are coming here to play golf. We're making sure that our human resources are in roles, that have KPIs and expectations that are more aligned to those customers. Club F

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(4) Integrate two initially separate offers We focus a lot on clients stay in that area with tourism, as well. So again, we try and promote Play and Stay groups to come up and enjoy a couple of days here, play some golf, and enjoy hospitality in [name of location] as well. Club E

For instance we're open four nights a week for meals and all the businesses on [name of location] drive the guests to the restaurants of an evening for free. And we drive all the guests home of an evening for free. So, it's a courtesy bus stop. It only works because we're on an island. Club N

We've been talking with tour operators and other suppliers to set up a come and stay and play type approach with winery tours, play golf, go to wineries, etc. [...] We want people to come down and visit the region and by offering them a holiday package including golf and winery tours etc. Club O

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(5) Coordinate skills and resources	My job and my role is to create an ongoing relationship with those sponsors and stakeholders.	Club E
	If you have a bright idea, but if you're stuck with the day-to-day running of it, the enthusiasm only goes as far as the single person.	Club G
	We've actively engaged with the mainland clubs and because we don't have a golf professional on the island. We utilise those golf professionals from the mainland and we fly them out and they do it like a week intensive course.	Club N

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