

Module 4. Managing politics and policy in women's football business

Most business enterprises engage in strategic planning, although the degrees of sophistication and formality vary considerably. Conceptually, strategic planning is deceptively simple: analyse the current and expected future situation, determine the direction of the firm and develop means for achieving the mission. In reality, this is an extremely complex process which demands a systematic approach for identifying and analysing factors external to the organisation and matching them with the firm's capabilities. (Wehrich, 1982, p. 54).

Section 1. Introduction

This reading draws on the insights and concepts that have been outlined across this course, with a view to developing a strategic approach to managing politics and policy in women's football business. It begins with a discussion of how politics and policy have always and will continue to permeate sports in general and women's football in particular. Given this state of the world, I advocate for the value of a strategic approach to the management of policy in women's football business.

The remainder of the reading outlines a methodology for systematically mapping and developing strategies for managing the policy environment within which a given women's football business venture operates – using the well-established strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) framework. Throughout, my emphasis adopts the viewpoint of a women's football organisation – be it a league, an elite club, or a business centred on training and development. Fundamentally, the SWOT framework is designed to assess how a commercial organisation intersects and interacts with the wider environment within which it is embedded. Section 3 outlines the SWOT framework in detail, discussing its function in the wider process of strategic planning. I focus particular attention on the applicability of this framework for dealing with policy and politics in women's football business. With this framework established, I go on to outline how this approach can be applied to the strategic management of policy, beginning in section 4 by discussing how a women's football business can build a profile of its inputs and goals with a view to establishing an overall profile, capturing its current strengths and weaknesses. In section 5, I outline how to identify opportunities and threats that an organisation faces in both the current and likely future political and policy environment



in which women's football businesses are embedded, outlining examples and discussing wider industry trends.

Sections 6 and 7 focus on how to build on a SWOT framework to develop, implement, and iterate a strategic approach to managing politics and policy in women's football business. I discuss how to conceptualise strategy according to the level at which they affect an organisation and the time horizon over which they operate. In particular, I caution against adopting an overly static model of strategic planning, which is a common shortcoming associated with the SWOT approach. Instead, I emphasise that women's football businesses, through their own activities and by engaging with aligned groups and policy entrepreneurs, can proactively shape the political and policy environment within which they operate. Due to this complex, interactive dynamic, I advocate for regular updating and iteration of women's football organisations' strategies for managing politics and policy. In the final section of this reading, I recap the key lines of thought and insights that have been developed and reflect on the promising, but fundamentally uncertain future of politics and policy surrounding women's football business.

Section 2. The inevitability of politics and the importance of strategic policy management in women's football business

"Whoever you are, or want to be, you may not be interested in politics, but politics is interested in you" (Marshall Berman).

There is an understandable tendency among people who love sport to resist or deny the influence of politics. This sentiment is encapsulated in the often-heard refrain that 'sport and politics should do not mix.' From an emotional standpoint, such a view is entirely understandable; sports regularly provide moments of brilliance and beauty that are unmatched in the mundane world of politics. In some instances, sports can offer a space where it is possible to suspend ethnic and political divisions, and build bridges between communities. Because of its global appeal and the low cost of participation, football is seemingly particularly well-suited to offering a 'politics-free zone' for players and spectators.

Indeed, the Football 4 Peace (F4P) initiative, which has used football over 20 years as a means of building connections in divided communities including Israel, Northern Ireland, and South Africa, works on precisely this basis. In their study of the impacts of F4P in Israel, Schulenkorf and Sugden (2001) note:

F4P projects are presented as taking place in neutral, politics-free zones, and all project participants – players, coaches, parents, administrators – are asked to leave their political views and ideological positions outside the project zones.



Within this relatively safe space, participants engage in a variety of sporting and cross-cultural activities. (p. 238).

Even outside of such charged environments, there are many who advocate that football, and particularly women's football, should be seen as apolitical. For instance, following the England Women's Team's recent home victory in the European championships, O'Flynn (2022) lamented: "why cannot we enjoy England's football win without politicising it?". While I feel that this particular call was simply an attempt to resist some uncomfortable truths that undermine O'Flynn's personal political standpoint, I am not unsympathetic overall to the desire to deny the interdependence of sports and politics.

With that said, I do not believe that those working in or engaging with women's football business have the luxury of pretending that football is separated from politics or unaffected by policies. Indeed, few sports are better placed to understand just how impactful the decisions of policymakers can be than women's football, given how the game was strangled by bans in states that are considered giants of the male football industry for much of the 20th century. To put it simply, if politics and policy can operate to ban a sport for one gender (at least, at an elite level), then it is wilful blindness to pretend that sport is not a matter of politics. Women's football is particularly affected by politics and policy, precisely, because of its historical oppression. This has led to a sport that appears to be dramatically underdeveloped in terms of financial and infrastructural resources. Writing in the *Financial Times*, Kuper (2022) asks:

Where would women's professional soccer be now without bans? Tennis is a natural benchmark, since it was never banned, and women manage their own competitions. In 2019, the men's ATP tour reported revenues of \$159.4mn, and the women's WTA \$109.7mn. The latter sum equalled 69 per cent of the ATP's income, or 41 per cent of all tennis circuit revenues. It seems reasonable to assume that women's football, but for the bans, could have taken a similar share of the soccer market. According to consultants Deloitte, European football generated €28.9bn in 2019, almost entirely from the men's game. If the European Commission were to

fine the men's game a mere 5 per cent of revenues, that would be €1.45bn for one year. But in fact, the harm has reverberated for a century. (para. 20).

If politics and policy has held down the development of women's football, should not politics and policy be mobilised to redress the balance? Interestingly, Archer and Prange (2019) follow precisely this logic in assessing some of the moral and philosophical arguments for fully equal pay in men's and women's football. They assert that the role of football associations in the historical injustice of banning women's football in so many places "provides plausible grounds for thinking that many associations not only have moral reasons to pay their men's and women's teams equally, but that they also have a moral obligation and a political responsibility to do so" (p. 416). Whether or not you agree with this line of thought, in the fundamental sense of politics as being concerned with who gets what, when, and how (Lasswell, 2018), it is difficult to ignore the argument that women's football business is fundamentally political.

There are also wider definitions of politics, that encompass not just rules and resources, but see politics as being concerned more widely with "the authoritative allocation of values" (Easton, 1965, p. 3). That is to say, the domain of politics is to be found in the various processes through which societies formally enact their values in the form of policy. This aspect of politics is most visible as values change or evolve. When politics and policy fail to engage, instances of injustice can be seen as 'natural' or as reflecting human nature. It is only in times of flux that we come to understand the arbitrating role played by politics and policy. In this view, women's football business is engaged with politics and policy as an aspect of the commercial world, but one that is culturally embedded – reflecting societies' evolving norms and values in the domain of gender. Pope (2019) writes:

Football does not operate in a vacuum. If misogyny is rife in wider society, this transfers to the football arena. (...) Yet important battles are being won. Society is making it clear it will not turn a blind eye to misogyny any longer. Recent examples of misogyny in football draw a grim picture, but the media reported these incidents widely and critically, and the public voiced its objections loudly. Yet, wherever there are advances in gender equality, there is also a backlash. And this is often

more severe in environments traditionally dominated by men – like football and politics. (para. 19).

I believe that it is clear that politics and policy are of vital significance to the operation of women's football business. While ignoring this reality may provide greater enjoyment of individual sporting moments, it is perilous for anyone directly involved in women's football business. Consequently, it is important to develop an approach to managing politics and policy for those working in women's football business, and I present a well-established framework for doing so in the next section.

Section 3. SWOT analysis as a tool for strategically managing politics and policy in women's football business

In the previous section and across this course, I have argued and sought to demonstrate that managing politics and policy is a core aspect of operating in the world of women's football business. Here, I seek to move from the descriptive and analytical insights that we explored heretofore, towards a more applied emphasis, by laying out an approach that women's football businesses can adapt to develop a strategic plan for managing politics and policy.

The framework that I propose involves conducting a SWOT analysis as part of a wider strategic planning process for managing politics and policy. Let us begin by outlining what a SWOT analysis is, and how it can be conducted. Benzaghta *et al.* (2021) outline the core elements as follows:

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis has become a fundamental tool for organisations to evaluate their position in the market and is widely used to analyse the internal and external environments of organisations during times of indecision. The four components identify either internal or external considerations. Strengths refer to the internal elements of an organisation that facilitate reaching its goals, while weaknesses are those internal elements that interfere with organisational success. Opportunities—external aspects that help an organisation reach its goals—are not only positive environmental aspects, but also opportunities to address gaps and initiate new activities. Threats, on the other

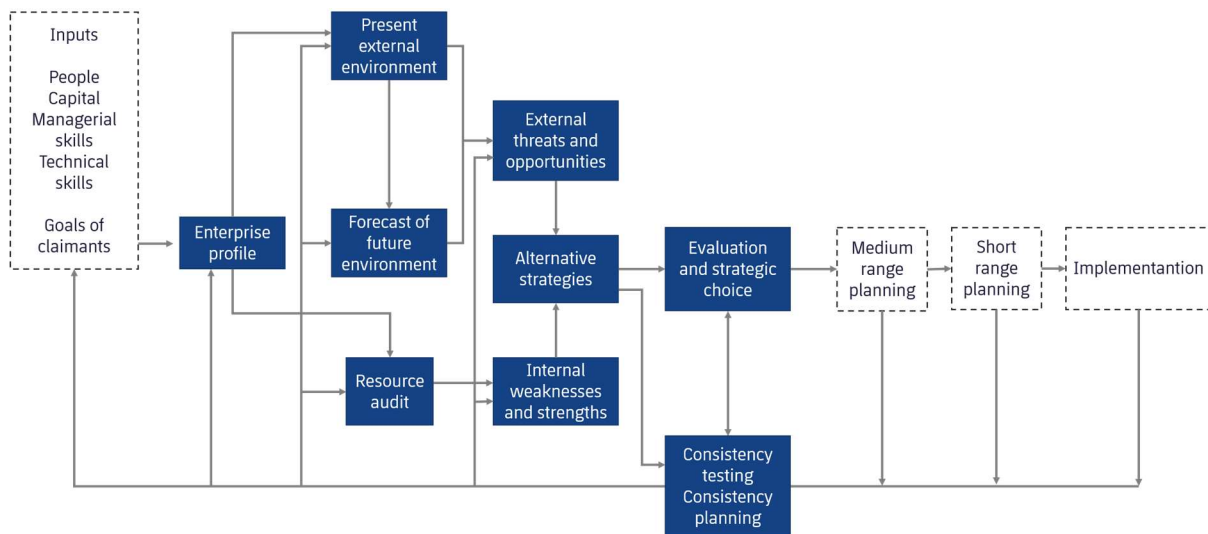


hand, are aspects of the organisation's external environment that are barriers or potential barriers to reach its goals. (p. 55).

The use of SWOT analysis for strategic planning goes back, at least, to the 1950s, and its widespread influence can be traced to its adoption as an analytical tool in courses offered by Harvard Business School in the early 1960s (Leigh, 2009). Benzagtha *et al.* (2021) note that the use of SWOT analysis is prevalent across a range of industries and activities, demonstrating the flexibility of this approach. I find the SWOT approach particularly appealing because it is designed to deal with precisely the intersection of internal characteristics and external forces that confront individuals and organisations in women's football business seeking to manage politics and policy.

With that said, two of the principal criticisms of SWOT analyses are that they can fail to drive actual changes to the strategies and activities of organisations and that they present a somewhat artificial distinction between internal and external factors – failing to account for the capacity of businesses to shape the environments within which they operate (see: Hill and Westbrook, 1997 for a detailed unpacking of these critiques). In order to adapt to the first of these critiques, I follow Weihrich's (1982) model for incorporating SWOT analysis into a wider process of strategic planning. The flow chart describing this process is reproduced in figure 1, below. While I will go into greater detail about individual components of this process as the reading unfolds, what I want to emphasize here is the function of the SWOT framework – namely, facilitating the evaluation and choice of strategy for businesses. It is also important to note the iterative and cyclical nature of this process; testing, planning, and implementation of strategies are not the 'end point' of the process, instead, they continually feedback to further inform a business's understanding of its strategic situation. Secondly, I emphasise that women's football businesses are not without agency to shape the political and policy environments within which they operate. Indeed, I argue that, where policy threats or opportunities are particularly consequential for a women's football business, a strategy of active engagement in the political/policy process is advisable.

Figure 1. The strategic planning process



Source: Wehrich, 1982, p. 55.

With the overall framework for managing politics and policy in women’s football now established, we can begin to explore the particular elements of the process. We begin this in the next section by outlining how to go about developing an enterprise profile.

Section 4. Developing an enterprise profile

At the heart of any strategic planning process, lies a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of a business. While these matters often seem relatively obvious on the surface level, a close exploration often reveals that there is ambiguity about the nature and purpose of many businesses. Weirich (1982), for example, notes that “top executives wrestle with such fundamental questions as: ‘What is our business?’ ‘Who are our customers?’ ‘What do our customers want?’ ‘What should our business be?’” (p. 55).

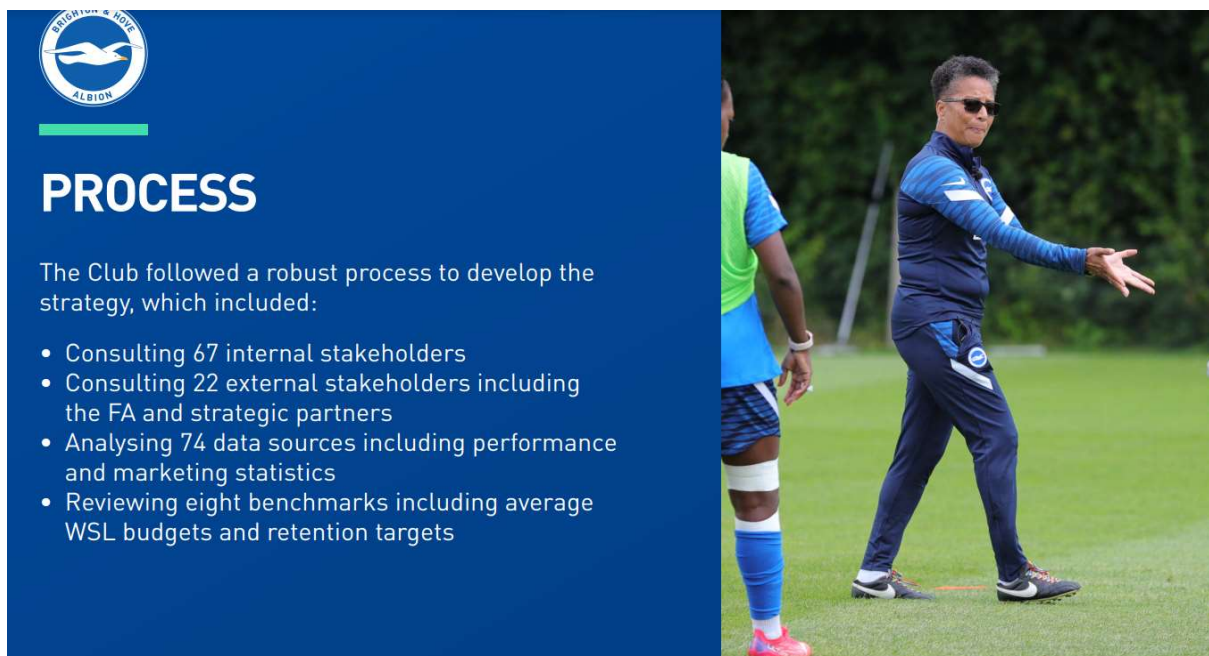
Women’s football businesses certainly face multiple claims about what their core goals should be. Not all of these are mutually exclusive. For instance, UEFA (2022) report research indicating that 44 % of clubs report their women’s football investment was driven by a desire to give back to the local community. At the same time, they show that 46 % of integrated clubs reported that their women’s team has drawn a significant number of new clubs. As such, several of the core goals of a women’s football business, developing commercially, providing societal benefits in terms of participation and social change, and driving for success at the elite level, can be integrated into an overarching football-driven mission. In many cases, women’s football businesses will already have a clear understanding of their inputs and goals – often established in the form of a regularly updated mission statement. Where this is not the case, or where a women’s football business is in an early phase of development, developing such an understanding is a worthwhile endeavour.



An interesting recent example of the culmination of developing a clearly articulated business profile in women's football can be seen in Brighton and Hove Albion's (2022) *Women's Football Strategy: Pathway Towards Top 4* strategy document. This document outlines a clear goal, which centres on elite-level performance: to be a top-ten club in the Premier League, and a top-four club in the Women's Super League. In order to develop this vision, it builds a strategy encompassing player pathways and recruitment, performance coaching, medical and player well-being, and marketing and communications. Part of this strategy involves close consideration of existing strengths and weaknesses in order to identify key enablers and potential obstacles to achieving the club's core goals.

Developing this vision and strategy was an intensive process, with figure 2 below reproducing the strategy that documents a summary of the actions that led to its release. As you can see, these preparations involve extensive consultation both within the club and of key external stakeholders, as well as a deep analysis of a range of informing data. All of this demonstrates that creating a clear and well-developed enterprise profile is not a throwaway exercise that can be completed via a few hours of brainstorming. However, the value that it provides to a business is that it enables a clear understanding of its core mission, which provides a solid basis for future planning and development.

Figure 2. The enterprise profile process undertaken by Brighton and Hove Albion to develop their 2022-2024 women's football strategy



Source: Brighton & Hove Albion, 2022, p. 5.

On the basis of the inputs to and goals of the business, an analysis can be made of the strengths and weaknesses of the business as it stands. While every individual women's football business will vary according to its inputs and goals, there is a growing set of

resources available, to understand the strengths and weaknesses of a given business in this industry. UEFA's (2022) *Business Case for Women's Football* provides an excellent research base for consideration – it includes assessments of the extent and growth of the fanbase for women's football in Europe (an estimated 144 current fans, projected to grow to a fanbase of over 328 million in the next 10 years), and notes the relative youth and affluence of this fanbase. Furthermore, it projects a 6-fold increase in the overall value of women's football business in Europe in the next decade – estimating a value of 686 million euros by 2033, driven primarily by skyrocketing sponsorship opportunities. It notes consistent research evidencing the positive brand image enjoyed by women's football, as well as highlighting the rapid improvements in the technical quality of the women's game that have taken place in recent years.

Many of the current key weaknesses in women's football business discussed in the same document are related to low levels of media exposure – with survey evidence noting that 37 % of men's football fans who do not follow the women's game stated that a lack of media coverage presents a key barrier (with less than 10 % of potential fans across Europe making a similar point about the men's game). Another current weakness common to many women's football businesses is relatively low and generally inconsistent match day revenue – with barriers including a lack of local promotion, issues around access to the main team's stadium for integrated clubs, and scheduling at a relatively inconvenient time. While, as noted above, the positive image enjoyed by women's football represents a source of commercial strength, the continuing prevalence of misogynistic beliefs and behaviours among some segments of supporters in the men's game also represents a potential weakness to be overcome for integrated clubs (Fair Game, 2022).

While the above-discussed strengths and weaknesses are industry-wide, they may or may not be applicable to a given women's football business. The important thing when developing a SWOT analysis is to produce a bespoke assessment of the individual business, and these examples are meant as a source of inspiration, rather than the final word on relevant strengths and weaknesses of businesses in the women's football industry. Let us now turn to the external aspect of the SWOT process – the political and policy environment.

Section 5. Identifying political and policy opportunities and threats

In order to make sense of the political opportunities and threats facing women's football businesses, it is necessary to provide a detailed assessment of the current political and policy landscape. One can begin this process by characterising the most relevant actors in the governance network affecting the business and considering the current state of their policies across Lowi's (1972) categories. As discussed in readings 1 and 2, contemporary football governance involves a variety of actors and agencies. Public governance actors include supranational, national, regional, and local/municipal governments. These actors set the wider social and economic contexts within which all



businesses operate, and can also intervene more directly in the domain of sport. State governance actors' regulative activities include economic and business regulation, labour rights, and (particularly important for women's football business) the development and enforcement of equalities legislation. State agencies also usually have significant regulative authority surrounding the development of infrastructures, such as training facilities and new stadia. These actors also exercise significant distributive and redistributive authority – being responsible for a range of specific investments in sport, as well as developing the wider infrastructures that sports businesses rely on. Public governance actors are increasingly intervening in constitutive policy in business, with a growing trend toward public audit of female representation, most notably with the EU recently adopting a directive providing sanctions for companies of more than 250 employees failing to progress towards gender balance targets in senior roles (Rankin, 2022).

Non-state governance actors germane to women's football business include the associations and international federations that govern club and international women's football. As we have discussed in the previous readings, these governance actors are responsible for substantial regulative, distributive, and redistributive policies directly affecting women's football businesses. In table 1, I provide a matrix that can be used as the basis for a structured assessment of the political and policy opportunities and risks facing a given women's football business.

Table 1. Political risk and opportunity matrix for SWOT analysis in women's football business

	Regulatory policy	Distributive policy	Redistributive policy	Constitutive policy
Political and policy opportunities	State governance actors: Non-state governance actors:	State governance actors: Non-state governance actors:	State governance actors: Non-state governance actors:	State governance actors: Non-state governance actors:
Political and Policy Threats	State governance actors: Non-state governance actors:	State governance actors: Non-state governance actors:	State governance actors: Non-state governance actors:	State governance actors: Non-state governance actors:

Source: own source.

While each business will uncover different political and policy opportunities and threats, here I discuss some examples that can be carried forward into this type of exercise among women's football businesses. The regulative policies of public bodies can create both opportunities and threats. For instance, changing regulations allowing for more straightforward administration of projects aimed at growing participation may make a women's football business in this domain more viable. On the other hand, obtaining planning permission for a new training facility may create difficulties that threaten the viability of a club's expansion strategy. A particularly volatile and difficult to predict aspect



of the regulative environment at the moment concerns how transgender athletes should be treated in competitive sports. Buzuvis (2021) demonstrates the ambiguity and complexity facing sporting organisations addressing this issue in the United States, and table 2 recreates his analysis of the various aspects of public governance that are potentially in play in this regard, concluding the following:

There is no uniform law or policy governing the participation of transgender athletes in the United States. Instead, there is a patchwork of both public and private law that has direct or arguable bearing on legality of policies that restrict or condition participation by transgender athletes. (p. 448).

Table 2. The public, regulative policies relevant to transgender participation in sport in the contemporary USA

Category	Example	Application to Sport	Application to transgender rights
U.S. Constitution	Equal Protection Clause	Applies to government-run sport programs, including those in public schools.	Courts have found that the Equal Protection clause protects transgender rights in cases other than athletic participation.
Federal civil rights statute	Title IX – sex discrimination in education	Applies to sport opportunities in the educational setting (secondary and post-secondary)	Not expressly, but courts have interpreted the law prohibition sex discrimination to also cover discrimination on the basis of one’s transgender status.
	Title VII – discrimination in employment	Applies to sport organizations in their capacity as employers.	Not expressly, but courts have interpreted the law prohibition sex discrimination to also cover discrimination on the basis of one’s transgender status.
State statutes	California	Applies to sport organizations and facilities that are open to the public (public accommodations); applies to athletic opportunities provided by school.	Expressly includes transgender status as a basis for non-discrimination.
	Idaho	Expressly bans transgender girls from competing in girls’ and women’s sports at the high school and university level.	

Source: Buzuvis, 2021, p. 444.

Public governance actors also have significant distributive and redistributive powers affecting women’s football businesses. Here, the key resources at stake are financial in nature – though the development of wider infrastructure (for instance, improved public transport links to a stadium) can also be seen as a form of resource distribution by public governance actors. There are significant opportunities in this domain for women’s football businesses, with UEFA (2022) noting the following:



The significant societal value generated by women's and girl's grassroots football presents an opportunity to access public sector funding. Investing in the women's game is a way in which key stakeholders can demonstrate their social impact and strengthen their engagement with the national authorities that can provide financial assistance. It can also help them develop relationships with commercial partners, opening up key investment and revenue streams. (p. 19).

The threats that arise in terms of public resource allocation relate to two issues – resource allocation that changes the competitive environment in which a women's football business operates and the reliability of such funding in the medium to long term. Regarding the first of these risks, there is always a possibility that new competitors can emerge or strengthen in the industry backed by this kind of funding, which can impinge on the competitive advantages enjoyed by a business. Secondly, politics is a fundamentally volatile enterprise – regular elections as well as wider social and economic fluctuations can see the priorities of governance actors changing, meaning that public funding or infrastructure projects are not always delivered as initially planned – so an over-reliance on this type of funding is a potential risk.

In terms of constitutive powers, there is a sense in many of the Association and Federation of Women's Football strategies that we have reviewed in this course of seeking to 'get ahead' of pressures from public governance actors for greater gender diversity in the governance of football. This represents a good point for us to shift our consideration to non-state governance actors affecting women's football policy. Here, the key actors are national and international football associations and federations. While, in the past, many of these actors exercised regulative policy to ban elite-level women's football, in the current context they are a source of significant political and policy opportunity. Regulative policy now supports and endorses the development of women's football, although still leaving clubs and associations considerable discretion. In the domain of constitutive policy, the drive across these organisations to increase gender diversity in key governance roles creates significant opportunities for individuals seeking to build a career in women's football. It also creates business opportunities in providing training for high-level female football administrators.

In terms of resources, non-state actors control significant financial flows in policy areas affecting women's football business. While many argue that the resources that these governance actors dedicated to the women's game are still very unequal (see, for

instance, Kuper, 2022), they have still increased significantly relative to previous periods. In addition to the direct financial resource opportunities provided by these actors, there is an increasing provision of training and expertise for building women's football businesses available. These resources provide policy opportunities for businesses centred on elite-level women's football, but there are also significant resource opportunities in ancillary domains of women's football business related to growing participation, developing and training high-level coaches and administrators, and community engagement. The threats in this domain relate to the relative opacity of the processes via which these resources are distributed. There is a risk of businesses with political connections or insights into the running of non-state football governance actors being 'frozen out' of resource provision.

Beyond assessing existing political and policy opportunities and threats, it is important to develop a set of forecasts on the most likely future trajectory of relevant politics and policies. Predicting future policy developments is not a straightforward task. There may be instances when a forecast simply concludes that there is little certainty about the road ahead. However, a solid awareness of the nature of the policy process can be insightful – and different governments and associations are at various stages of the policy process. If a policy programme has recently been agreed; for instance, there is a good chance that the focus will shift to implementation in the short to medium term.

Generally, there is a movement towards an increased focus on growing the women's game globally – although there are considerable geographical discrepancies in the state of policy development. A common approach in such circumstances is to examine those states and regions where policy is most developed, as the 'policy learning' and 'policy entrepreneur' dynamics that we outlined in reading 2 make these likely to be adopted elsewhere. However, the optimal approach to understanding the course of future developments in policy relating to women's football business is ongoing engagement with governance actors as well as professional networks. This will be a key component of my recommendations on developing and iterating a strategic management approach in the next two sections of this reading.

Section 6. Building a strategy to address politics and policy in women's football business

As I discussed when outlining the SWOT analytical framework in section 3 of this reading, one of the major critiques of this framework is that it is possible for SWOT analyses to fail to be carried through into strategic planning and decision-making. In this section and the next one, I therefore discuss how to make sure that such analysis connects meaningfully to the operation of a business. In order to do so, I begin by outlining the nature of strategic planning and decision-making. Bryson's (1988) influential definition runs as follows:



A strategy is a pattern of purposes, policies, programmes, actions, decisions and/or resource allocations that define what an organisation is, what it does and why it does it. Strategies can vary by level, function, and time frame. This definition is purposely broad, in order to focus attention on the creation of consistency across rhetoric (what people say), choices (what people decide and are willing to pay for) and actions (what people do). Effective strategy formulation and implementation processes will link rhetoric, choices and actions into a coherent and consistent pattern across levels, functions and time. (p. 77).

The value of the SWOT approach is that it can be used to both enumerate and evaluate a range of different strategies that capture the overlaps of its component elements. In table 3 below, I present a commonly used matrix for developing strategic alternatives on the basis of a SWOT analysis. This approach allows for the consideration of four strategic intersections. The first of these is the 'strength opportunity' (SO) intersection. As Weirich (1982) notes: "Successful enterprises, even if they temporarily use one of the three previously mentioned strategies, will attempt to get into a situation where they can work from strengths to take advantage of opportunities" (p. 60). To the extent that such strategies can be identified, they represent the optimal means for developing a business in an opportunity-rich environment. Strength-threat (ST) strategies, on the other hand, actively seek to leverage the strengths of a business to minimise exposure to threats. Strategies addressing business weaknesses can either seek to leverage external opportunities to minimise weakness via weakness-opportunity (WO) strategies, or look to adapt internally to minimise exposure to external threats via weakness-threat (WT) strategies.



Table 3. Strategic configurations arising from SWOT analysis

	Opportunities (external, positive)	Threats (external, negative)
Strengths (internal, positive)	<p>Strength-Opportunity strategies</p> <p>Which of the company's strengths can be used to maximize the opportunities you identified?</p>	<p>Strength-Threats strategies</p> <p>How can you use the company's strengths to minimize the threats you identified?</p>
Weaknesses (internal, negative)	<p>Weakness-Opportunity strategies</p> <p>What action(s) can you take to minimize the company's weaknesses using the opportunities you identified?</p>	<p>Weakness-Threats strategies</p> <p>How can you minimize the company's weaknesses to avoid the threats you identified?</p>

Source: [online table of strategic configurations arising from SWOT analysis], (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/3qSaBA7>.

Let us consider some plausible examples of these strategic options that might arise through this type of analysis of a women's football business and its intersection with politics and policy. SO strategies obtain where a women's football business or organisation has a clear competitive advantage or strength that allows them to successfully harness a policy opportunity. For instance, a women's football club with a well-established community presence could identify that it is particularly well-suited to harness public funding to increase levels of participation in women's football. In this situation, there is a confluence of strengths and opportunities that points towards a strategic plan of engaging with an identified state-funding program. ST strategies in women's football business can be seen where women's football businesses use their high public profile to pressure governance actors to deliver on funding or regulatory change. We explored a striking example of this dynamic in reading 3, when looking at the advocacy of the England Women's football team following the 2022 Euro home victory.

The current political and policy environment is relatively well-suited to a WO strategy for women's football businesses that are struggling to gain commercial traction and/or media exposure. Indeed, these very weaknesses can be a significant source of leverage when seeking to harness opportunities in regulative, distributive, redistributive, and constitutive policies.

The current policy strategies of many football associations and federations operate largely in a framework of providing opportunities to address existing weaknesses in the women's football industry – so identifying such weaknesses is not an obstacle to exploiting a range of policy opportunities. Indeed, having a clear understanding of the nature of weaknesses hindering the development of a women's football business is essential to engaging with policymakers as part of a WO strategy. Similarly, the WT



strategy can be seen in the acknowledgement of many major integrated football organisations that significant investment is needed in their women's teams. The underdevelopment and lack of resource invested in these teams, relative to their male counterparts, can create a significant risk in political and policy terms – this risk resides both at the reputational level, with clubs at risk of being 'called out' for neglecting their women's sides, and at the formal level – with risks arising in terms of equalities legislation. As such, women's football businesses may be able to present themselves to other football organisations as potential partners in implementing a WT strategy.

It is important to note that, while this approach provides a conceptual system that is very useful in managing policy, there may arise instances that do not fit perfectly into the framework outlined in table 3. Nor is it the case that a business can adopt only one strategy – it may be decided to develop a more agile approach that seeks to deploy a variety of strategic options in parallel. What is important in using this approach is that it should be tailored to the specific attributes and circumstances facing your business. While I have outlined a wide variety of policies affecting women's football business, not every policy will affect every business in the same way. Furthermore, it is important to realise that this type of analysis and planning is a process, rather than an event – analyses and strategies should be regularly updated in the light of the experiences of businesses, a theme which is the focus of the penultimate section of this reading.

Section 7. Implementing and iterating

Thus far, this reading has largely focused on a static approach to employing a SWOT framework for managing politics and policy in women's football business. In this section, I explore the twin concepts of implementation and iteration. My overarching argument is that women's football businesses are more likely to succeed as a whole when knowledge about policy opportunities and threats is widely shared, and where clear feedback loops to governance actors are established to improve policymaking.

In the first place, once a strategy (or combination of strategies) has been selected, communication and implementation move to the forefront. In terms of communication, the connections built during the early phases of a SWOT analysis both within a business and between the business and its stakeholders create useful avenues for disseminating strategy. Jones (2008) presents the following, powerful argument for emphasising communication as a key aspect of strategy implementation:

Some research was conducted into why many strategies seem well conceived but poorly executed. It concluded that whilst many organisations have some success with their strategy, almost nine out of ten organisations failed to fully implement

their strategy as they had planned. The first figure in this research suggested that, of all the staff in the organisations involved, only 5 per cent of them understood the strategy. A different and more recent survey suggested that this figure was around 8 per cent. I suspect the difference is not significant. This limited understanding of strategy amongst its staff is an important issue for an organisation. Even if the figures were out by a factor of ten, that means only half know what you are trying to achieve. If only one person in 20 understands your strategy (and presumably that one is executing the strategy) what opportunity are you missing with the other 19? It also raises the question, 'Whose strategies are the other 19 executing?' It is not just a question of communication. It is also a question of trust. In a 2005 survey of 1100 employees by Mercer Human Resource Consulting in the UK, just 36 per cent of workers trusted management 'to always communicate honestly'. A similar survey of 800 US employees found that 40 per cent of respondents felt the same. (p. 12).

While 'implementation' is presented visually as the final phase in Wehrich's (1982) Strategic Planning Process presented in figure 1, it is important to note that there is a flow of activity that runs directly from implementation back to the beginning of the strategy process. This captures the principle of iterative implementation. While it is important to develop a well-thought-out approach to managing politics and policy, direct experience in delivering this strategy provides by far the most useful data. Mike Tyson's memorable aphorism that 'everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth' comes to mind here. The key is to accept that implementation will rarely go perfectly, and to be prepared to integrate the lessons learned during the implementation phase to iterate policy management.

One important point to bear in mind is that developing insight into policies and politics represents a significant upfront investment of time and (in some cases) resources. More than anything else, developing industry connections that intersect with policymakers is the best way to develop cutting-edge insight, but these connections cannot be forged instantly. One high-potential source is to connect to existing networks in women's



football business. An example of such a network centred in the UK is Women in Football is presented in figure 3. While not solely focused on politics and policy, connecting with other individuals or groups in such networks can provide a rapid route to gaining hard-to-come-by expertise on trends in the domain of women's football policy. Such aggregations can also provide a means for feeding back to policymakers and driving policy change.

Figure 3. Professional networks as a means of gaining political and policy insight



Sharing professional expertise

Women still remain significantly under-represented in executive and board positions in the football industry. It is our mission to change this, whether through career enhancing mentoring schemes or seminars and workshops at our events. By bringing together inspirational women from across the industry at regular networking events held throughout the UK and online, we hope to chip away at some of the barriers holding women back in their careers.



Source: Women in Football, (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/3DDLihq>.

Section 8. Conclusion

This reading has sought to outline an applied approach to managing politics and policy in women's football business, that you can take from this course into your professional life in that industry. The key takeaways from the chapter are the following:

1. because politics and policy are so intertwined with women's football business, managing them is a necessity.
2. The SWOT framework can be deployed in order to identify political and policy opportunities and threats of different types, and how they intersect with the strengths and weaknesses of a given women's football business.
3. Adopting this approach allows for the identification and selection of strategies that best marry the intersection of business characteristics and external policy dynamics.
4. Communicating and iterating strategies for managing politics and policy is important to make sure that such exercises can be well-implemented, and connecting with other professionals can be a valuable part of doing this

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