
ROLE OF CONTROLLING IN THE LIFE OF SPORTS UNDERTAKINGS

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Abstract

During the management of sports undertakings, the conscious financing of organizations often fades into the background. At these organizations, those conditions should also be elaborated which allow for the managerial decision support and the development of controlling system. We should find those controlling methods and tools which can successfully be applied in the life of a sports organization as well, which ensure the synchronization and coordination of the different processes. By doing so, the controlling ensures a higher level transparency and information supply for the decision-makers. In our treatise, we present one of the most important tools of the strategic controlling, namely the Balanced Scorecard and its application opportunity at sports undertakings.

Key words: *Balanced Scorecard, strategic controlling, performance measurement, sports undertakings, managerial decision support*

JEL Classification: M19, M29, M49

Introduction

The role of sports has significantly grown in the modern societies since the sports market went through an explosive development. This entailed an increase in the economic weight of sports. Sports became an independent industry where it represents a major part of the national economy. Initially, sports was just an entertainment in which the young people took pleasure. They were sometimes rewarded by those who liked their productions. A change occurred when the trained young people were performing their activities not for their own entertainment but for others. Thus viewers and sponsors appeared and paid for seeing the sportspersons. (András, 2003) After the strengthening of economic significance of sports, the sports model operating as a club needed to be replaced by the business model (Bácsné, 2015a). Since the sports activity had to be produced as a service and its owners became profit-oriented. (Vácz, 2010). In the developed countries, sports is already directed by the market and sports does not resort to state aids. In Hungary, sports as a market presence of the service is in its infancy (Bácsné, 2015b). In our country, the sports activity is low enough compared to the European relations. A small 7-9% of the adult population play sports regularly while this rate is between 21 and 50% in the EU countries. The sections still expect the aids from the state because the economic supporters still do not feel that their expenditure

would be refunded. We hope that, one day, sports will reach a level when sports can maintain themselves (Gyömörei 2014), (Győri – Beck, 2012).

According to Dénes (2015) sports economist, sports should significantly re-tailor its thinking and action mode. Management of the success sports should be changed. There are such spectacle sports which are very successful abroad but these are unknown in our country. And, the associations of well-known sports are in financial difficulty and they can rely on the government only. Power of the sports preferred by the market is in their value of advertising media that arises from their sporting goods demand and their spectacle. However, the other sports (canoeing, kayaking, and swimming) are esteemed in the number of Olympic medals only.

Considering the sports organizations, there are two groups: the sports club which is non-profit and the sports undertaking which is profit-oriented (Nowy et al, 2015). We can say that the need for sports takes huge steps in the 21st century which involves the development in the economic area of sports. The governments play key role in filling the financing gap that is required for the sustainable operation of sports. The governmental intervention and support are decisive in Hungary. Nowadays, larger and larger amounts are flowing into the sports, an increasing attention is paid to the social usefulness of sports activities, at the same time, numerous organizations are struggling for survival (Kozma-Kazainé, 2014).

The change occurred in the last period makes it essential to introduce some form of the managerial decision (Laáb, 2011) support which ensures that the managers of sports undertakings have the information being required for making the decisions in different decision-making situations. It would be important for the sports undertakings to apply the different decision support tools developed in the corporate practice thus a properly developed controlling system can contribute to the successes of decisions.

Task and role of controlling in the life of undertakings

Environment of the companies was continuously changing in recent years, an increasingly developing, non-transparent and rapidly changing environment characterizes the life of organizations. Today, only those organizations are able to retain their competitiveness which can give a positive feedback for the environmental changes (Darabos-Rózsa, 2015, Széles et al., 2014). Due to the unpredictable changes, the long-term predictions and plans have become unrealizable, it is already impossible to rely on the intuitions therefore the introduction of new solutions has become necessary. An increasingly greater emphasis has been placed on role of the controlling activity in the life of economic organizations, it has become necessary to divide the long-term plans into short-term plans, to observe the changes of environment and to compare these ones with the goals stated.

In Hungary, the role of controlling has continuously been developing and being appreciated since the 90s; it has become a management function (Blumné-Zéman, 2014). However, in the course of perusing the specialized literature, we can meet significant differences regarding the concept of controlling, that's why it is important to clarify that there is a wrong conception according to which the controlling is identified as being equal to the checking. In the approach of Horváth (1995), controlling is one of the subsystems of the management that supports the management of company by a continuous observation and recognition of the changes in environment as well as an adjustment to the change in order to reach the goals of undertaking. It can

be achieved by observing the external-internal environment, determining the objectives and comparing the two ones. Consequently, in this case, the organization pursues the direction with the controlling tools in view.

So, the controlling is an emphasized subsystem of the management system organizations which undertakes the (strategic and annually operative) planning from the functions of management (leadership) and it performs the analysis of differences by supervising the realization of plan and actual data as well as merging them. It provides an own organization and information system for coordination and regulation of these tasks. As a result, it gives the management an appropriate control and decision-preparing tool for a dynamic follow of the environmental changes (Körmendi-Tóth, 2011).

Anthony - Govindarajan (2007) focuses of the controlling process of management during which the leadership influences the members of organization in order to accomplish strategy of the organization. *"By controlling, we mean a cooperation of the management and the controller. Controlling also embraces the whole process of targeting, planning and control for the basic activity and the management processes. Controlling includes such activities as decision making, interpreting, prescribing and regulating. Consequently, the managers should perform the controlling activity because they make decisions about the goals to be achieved and the excepted extent of these ones, they determine the content of plans, and they are responsible for the results."* (Horváth, 1995)

A condition for the operation of controlling system is to apply different tools, for which the accounting information system can ensure information (Tóth, 2014). It may include for example: the managerial accounting, the IT support and development of such a controlling system which contributes to an effective operation of the controlling system as well as organizational methods supporting the controlling.

Strategic and operative controlling

The area of controlling has increased by examining the environment changing dynamically, the persistence of the cruel competitive situation and the appearance of the strategic thinking. A demand has appeared for ensuring the long-term future of the undertakings, analysing and predicting the environment therefore the attention of managers has increasingly turned towards the strategy and its permanent revision. The area of strategic controlling has evolved in this way. Accordingly, based on the time dimension, we distinguish the kinds of controlling from each other: the strategic and the operative ones. We can get to know the definition of the two types of controlling and the difference between them based on Körmendi and Tóth (1996) and Sebes (2013). The strategic controlling supports the management of company to act in a target-based way for the long term and to be able to adjust to its environment. The economy, profitability and liquidity are primarily at the centre of operative controlling; the emphasis is on reaching the goals set above. Taking the given goals and resource possibilities into consideration, the operative controlling gives the management some information for making decisions being necessary for the day-to-day operation. In our opinion, these two types of controlling cannot be separated from each other in the corporate practice because they integrally belong together therefore their operation should be elaborated fully compatible.

The strategic controlling deals with the accomplishment of strategy and the system of its processes as well as the opportunities and dangers; its task is to word the strategy and goals, to actualize the strategy and to intervene in its accomplishment

(Kownatzki, 2013),. The vision and strategy of the company show the long-term goal. The company having no strategy can lose the conscious direction of its future, its activity is formed by the permanently changing environment and position but without direction and goal. Simultaneously with the rapid environmental change of undertakings, the strategic controlling has come to the front that means a long-term foresight and planning. It starts and happens in the present but it points to an unclosed future.

According to Hanyecz (2009), we can rank the strategic controlling tasks among three groups:

- Supporting the strategic planning work of management, drawing up the strategic plan
- Dividing the strategic plan into operative plans
- Monitoring and checking the execution of the strategic plan

At dividing the strategic plan into operative short-term plans, we have to examine the practicability of strategy and the effect of operative decisions on the strategy. In order to reach the goals of controlling activity and accomplishment of the activity, it is indispensable to quantify the strategic goals stated by indices. Insofar as the strategic goals are quantified by using the indices selected properly then there is an opportunity for the feedback and an intervention in case of differing from the plans.

In the course of evolving the controlling activity and the controlling system, the tasks of the controller include that the controller needs to choose the necessary tools, methods and techniques in order to reach the goals. It is not a simple task to choose the indices being necessary for characterizing the complex operation of an undertaking. The processes chosen have to adapt themselves to the activity and size of the company to be analysed and to the goals to be reached by the analysis. In case of the analysis of the accounting reports, we can meet a lot of simple or complex indices and correlation systems. In the following, we present those possible opportunities that, based on the recommendations of specialized literature, the sports undertakings can boldly apply on a daily basis even without high level accounting- and financial expertise in order to ease their managerial decisions and daily operation. It is recommended to compare the values and components of the indicators with the planned and actual values quarterly or biannually thus it can be clear from the differences whether the undertaking is on the planned way. Thus the managers will have opportunity to intervene during the operation.

In order to support the controlling activity, several kinds of strategic performance measurement systems and indicator systems have been developed, such as Balanced Scorecard Indicator System (Kaplan – Norton, 1993), Management by Objectives (Drucker, 1954), Tableau de Bord (Epstein -Manzoni (1997), Performance Pyramid (Lynch – Cross, 1991), Performance Prism (Neely et al. 2004).

Balance Scorecard as a strategic controlling tool

Undoubtedly, the most widely used performance measurement system is the Balanced Scorecard (balanced indicator system) developed by the doubles of Kaplan and Norton. According to the researches of Kaplan and Norton, the managers are aware of what effect the measurement has on the changes of performance, despite this, they rarely reckon the measurement system as an integral part of their strategy (Kaplan - Norton, 2004).

The focus is on the achievement of the long-term financial goals, however, in addition to these ones, other factors being necessary for reaching the financial goals are also included. There are four equivalent viewpoints considered by BSC: the financial performance, the customers, the operating processes as well as the learning and development (Hágen - Kondorosiné, 2011; Zizlavsky, 2014). The system places a larger and larger emphasis on the process of managing the non-material resources as well. The Balanced Scorecard is such a strategic indicator system that keeps the focus on the financial indicators. However, the financial approach itself is not merely suitable for evaluating the activity of organizations of the information era successfully. That's why the financial indicators representing the performance of the past should be completed with such indicators (causing performance) that provide information about those factors which mostly influence the performance of the future (Orbán, 2014). The indicators of BSC should be deduced from the well-established vision and strategy of the company. The system seizes the organizational performance from the four viewpoints mentioned before. By applying the BSC, managers of the company can understand, beyond the financial performance, how the company can create value for its future consumers, in which area the internal processes should be improved in order to create values (Dajnoki, 2015) and what investments should be provided in order to increase the future performance. So BSC defines the value-creating activity and focuses on it as well as BSC uncovers those factors which mostly contribute to the achievement of the long-term financial efficiency and competitiveness. One of the pillars of BSC is that the indicators should form the part of an information system being accessible to all employees at each level of the organization. BSC is not only an ad hoc collection of some financial and non-financial indicators (Agostino - Arnaboldi, 2012). The indicators are deduced from the mission and strategy of the organization (company or organizational entity) during a top down process thus the system is not other than a splitting of the mission and strategy into particular goals and indicators. The indicators create a balance between the external indicators being important for the customers and owners, the critical operational processes and internal indicators characterizing the developmental learning capacity. The indicator system is balanced since it equally contains the outcome indicators presenting the performance of the past and the factors, performance causers mostly influencing the result.

In the course of forming and using BSC, it is very important to map the cause and effect relations. The relation between the goals and indicators should be defined in order that the indicators can be managed and valued. The cause and effect relation should embrace all four viewpoints of BSC.

The Balanced Scorecard elaborated properly is composed of outcome indicators and performance causers. We should keep in mind that the outcome indicators on their own do not appoint the way for reaching the required result without the performance causers. The performance causers are able to provide direction for the operation but these ones give information about whether the steps taken and the observable tendencies can effect towards the direction of reaching the required result. The well-structured Balanced Scorecard contains the appropriate rate of the outcome indicators (posterior indicators) as well as the performance causers (indicators pointing ahead) in reference to the strategy of the business unit selected (Szívós, 2007).

Applying the Balance Scorecard at the sports undertakings

The corporate performance measurement systems can fulfil the management supporting function in the case if these ones adjust to the internal and external environments of the company. The most important goal of Balanced Scorecard is to support the accomplishment of strategy. Originally, it was developed for undertaking operating in the profit-oriented sector but there is an increasing interest in the method in the non-profit-oriented sector as well (Kozma - Kazainé, 2014c). Its major cause is that the available resources are also limited in case of these undertakings, the demand of social control increases and the rivalry between the organizations has appeared in this sector as well. With regard to the application at sports organizations and sports undertakings, we haven't got a lot of experiences yet. But, in case of some sports, we can find published results, opinions; these areas are football, handball, ice sports and tennis as well.

In his treatise, Nagy (2013) refers to a questionnaire survey that was performed in Germany at the team of League 1st-3rd in connection with the application of controlling tools. 53 associations and capital companies participated in the survey. The experiences have shown a very positive attitude to the application of controlling tools; it was cleared from the survey that 9.09% of the organizations apply Balance Scorecard as a strategic controlling tool.

In its treatise of 2004, IFUA Horvath & Partners examined the application of Balanced Scorecard in case of the football organizations. Evolving the Balanced Scorecard can be regarded as a pioneering initiative in the world of football because VfB Stuttgart was the first club among the teams of Bundesliga which applied the approach increasingly spreading in the management of companies. Based on their statement, it can be said that the Balance Scorecard was introduced at the team of VfB Stuttgart first in the history of this sport, the effects of which were valued really positively. In the course of the work carried out, the experts have mapped and analysed the wide range of organizations, operators acting in the environment of Stuttgart, inter alia, the professional sports clubs, viewers, fans, organizations directing the championship, different representatives of the media, service providers related to the sport and the sponsors. During the analytical work, they have identified the objectives and expectations of different operators, the system of activities interconnected as well as the performance relations existing between them. In the knowledge of the environment meaning the operational framework, particular goals, actions and indicators measuring the realization of them have been defined which can be interpreted at different levels of the company. The indicator system, which is also supported informatically, includes a total of 130 indicators. The most important 30 indicators give the management of the club overall information about the realization of goals while the remaining 100 indicators give the leader of the subdivisions regular information about the operation. In evolving the index number system, the following things appear as strategic goals: creating a capital intensive and stable economic background, reducing the significant debt (IFUA Horvath & Partners, 2004).

In their treatise, Kozma - Kazainé (2014a) view the lack of information and the lack of managerial engagement as obstacles of spread of the method. They thought important that BSC should be such a useful index number system which is easy to understand and can also be easily interpreted by the sports leaders. Their examinations confirmed that the four viewpoints - financial, customer, operational processes, learning, development - determined by Kaplan-Norton (2004) can properly be in case of the sports organizations as well, with the completion of that an emphasized

attention should be paid on the most important performance dimensions of the sports undertakings i.e. the sports performance as well as its placement within the index number system. At the same time, the sports performance should not be managed separately but it should be built in the viewpoints of the index number system. And they went to the conclusion that, at the sports organizations, this position should be occupied by the customer point of view instead of the financial point of view being on the peak of hierarchy in the originally profit-oriented sector. Regardless of that the sport success is also determining from the point of view of financial sustainability today since the operation of organizations should be placed on a business basis through the expanding trade opportunities.

In their treatise, Kozma – Kazainé (2014b) examined the opportunity to evolve the Balanced Scorecard indicator system in case of a first-class handball team. In the course of evolving the customer point of view, different consumer groups were separated. In our opinion, the fans compose the most important customer group from a strategic point of view since they positively influence the demand of other customer groups and consumers by their presence and cheering. This is followed by the sponsors who have some trade and political interests in the sponsoring. Here, such indices can also be applied that do not differ from the ones used in other sectors. This can be, for example, market share, attendance of the matches, average customer spending. In addition to this, the following things can be used: number of the non-match day programs, annual growth of the attendance, newly concluded sponsorship contracts, number of matches broadcasted in the national media, consumer activity and managing the reputation and brand name may also be important.

The financial point of view is also an important area since the final goal of the sports undertakings can be ensured only by creating the available financial sources and operational conditions (Becsky-Nagy, 2015, Katits, 2002). In their treatise, Kozma – Kazainé (2014b) determine that the first step of valuing the financial performance should be the determination of the revenue sources relating to the different consumer groups. The most important task of the management is to increase the revenue from it (Nagy, 2013). The aid provided by the central and local governments is a peculiar form of the revenue sources which can appear in different forms (Herczeg, 2015). According to Kozma – Kazainé (2014b), the indices analysing the investments and profit on the own asset have a major role in the traditional sectors; the analysis of these indicators are problematic in case of the majority of sports organizations since most of them produce loss and the profit pursuing does not belong to their most important strategic goals. The indices of effectiveness can basically be applied at the sports organizations as well since here is also a goal to utilize the available resource effectively. In case of this issue, there could be a problem that market price cannot be interpreted at each performance output (e.g. in case of the social usefulness), as a result of it, their summation is not possible. The gross margin can be used as an index on the events compared the total expense on the players to the successes of sport. It is also important to note the importance of utilizing the key devices, facilities which largely influence the financial success of the organization. In most cases, these tools are not in the possession of sports organizations directly but operated by the local governments (Becsky et al, 2015).

According to Kozma – Kazainé (2014b), the viewpoint of operational processes focuses on those processes which contribute to the achievement of sport success and customer satisfaction and these ones also influence the financial dimension through the costs. One of the most important activities is to organize the “*exploitation*” of sport performance. Sport performance includes the support of physical, mental and technical

abilities of the sports persons which provide a base for the successful performance on the field. In addition, an active activity is necessary on the player market as well as it is required to elaborate the system of junior players. In the facilities serving as location of the events, such services should be provided, not limiting the quality of product, which produce defence for the fans and their families. The following things can be indicators: e.g. goals scored, matches won, building the junior players in, number of security measures by matches.

According to Kozma – Kazainé (2014a), the viewpoint of learning and development is essential for the continuous innovation of basic activities, for this, the further training of employees is a priority task. The professional players have the most critical role in the sports organizations because they are the centre of sports activity and they draw attention of the consumers and the public to the team. Of course, the other employees also contribute to the success of team, including the management, trainers, the administrative- and background team as well.

In his treatise, Becsky (2011) also examined the opportunity of applying the Balances Scorecard in case of team sports; the model compiled by him is as follows.

In case of the customer points of view, Becsky (2011) has marked three groups such as the viewers, the sponsors and the parents. In our case, he suggests the following three indicators:

- Visitors, fans: good performance by the team, good quality matches, suitable ticket prices, quality of service, team image, club loyalty, merchandise, VIP section service
- Sponsors: valuable and effective advertising space, sponsorship with returns, media presence, growing corporate value, management of sponsors, number of fans match attendance
- Partners: successful adult team, adequate vision for the reserve team, talent care with high professional quality, appropriate information regarding plans and objectives

In their presentation of 2011, Bács-Patai (2011) highlighted the role of importance of strategy creation in the sports, they identified the possible stakeholders such as the media, fans, sponsors, viewers, sports entrepreneurs, facility operators, sports clubs, players, competitors, the trainers and referees, the state, international organizations, clubs being close to the borders and the hobby sportspersons. They worded the possible Balanced Scorecard goals of the Hungarian Tennis Federation such as the utilization of the favourable possibilities around the tennis talents appearing periodically; relying on the provincialist sponsors, social capital; nurturing more great outstanding sports(wo)men from a wide mass base; involving sponsors being interested economically; obtaining aid of the state by the results. They worded the following as target indicators:

- Customer point of view: attractiveness of the website, customer satisfaction index, number of the players participating in the competitions
- Financial point of view: adhering to the financial plan, world ranking positions and points
- Operational processes: introducing an online entry system, world ranking positions of the player participating
- Development, learning: introducing a performance evaluation system according to the logic of BSC, number of persons participating in specialised programs, number of persons obtaining trainer qualifications

Conclusion

It can be stated that the controlling activity and the different controlling tool can also give the sports undertakings such a managerial decision supporting system that allows for harmonizing and coordinating the processes realizing in the life of undertakings, it can ensure the transparency and the information flow therefore it can contribute to the discernment of the managers and the managerial decision-making. By using the Balanced Scorecard balanced indicator system, the organizations can recognize the external and internal changes in time, their possible effects thus the necessary interventions and actions can be performed in time. Of course, in order that it could come true, it is not enough to properly compile the Balanced Scorecard system in accordance with the peculiarities of the sports organization but the indices should continuously monitored monthly, quarterly, the appropriate result can be ensured in that case only.

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