

GATS COMMITMENTS AND LIBERALIZATION OF THE SPORTS SERVICE INDUSTRY: WTO COMPLIANCE AND POLICY CHALLENGES

COMPROMISSOS DO GATS E LIBERALIZAÇÃO DO SETOR DE SERVIÇOS ESPORTIVOS: CONFORMIDADE COM A OMC E DESAFIOS POLÍTICOS

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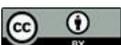
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Abstract

The GATS has brought significant alterations to the liberalization process of the services sector worldwide it encompassing the sports service industry. The sports service industry is the individual who administers and delivers a myriad of services related to professional and amateur sports, and includes event management, athlete training, distribution, arena operations, and overseas service in the entertainment and economic industry. It is essential to realize how GATS commitments arise when focusing on sports services because the sports industry contributes greatly to the world development of the economy, trade liberalization strategies, and facilitation of cross-border services. At this point, researchers have not conducted much research on how the sports service sector fulfills GATS commitments using the procedures of compliance with WTO and policy implementation. This research gap study is relevant in the process of trying to set export policies on sports services that are appropriate to their exclusive nature. The research highlights the novel insights into the different versions of the application of GATS to the countries of the WTO, as well as the discrepancies between the international policy requirements and the national laws. The author attempts to address this

Resumo

O GATS trouxe alterações significativas ao processo de liberalização do setor de serviços em todo o mundo, abrangendo a indústria de serviços esportivos. A indústria de serviços esportivos é composta por indivíduos que administram e prestam uma infinidade de serviços relacionados a esportes profissionais e amadores, incluindo gestão de eventos, treinamento de atletas, distribuição, operações em arenas e serviços no exterior na indústria do entretenimento e econômica. É essencial compreender como os compromissos do GATS surgem quando se concentra nos serviços esportivos, pois a indústria esportiva contribui significativamente para o desenvolvimento mundial da economia, estratégias de liberalização comercial e facilitação de serviços transfronteiriços. Até o momento, os pesquisadores não realizaram muitas pesquisas sobre como o setor de serviços esportivos cumpre os compromissos do GATS usando os procedimentos de conformidade com a OMC e a implementação de políticas. Este estudo sobre a lacuna de pesquisa é relevante no processo de tentar definir políticas de exportação de serviços esportivos que sejam adequadas à sua natureza exclusiva. A pesquisa destaca as novas percepções sobre as diferentes versões da



research gap using GATS regulations and sports services industries to conduct research into the domestic policy management and compliance with the WTO issues faced by nations. The methodology to be used to analyse documents used in this study is a qualitative approach based on a systematic literature review (SLR). The results demonstrate that the little liberalization of the sports services industry in the GATS principles and tension between the trade requirements and local policy guidelines and different practices of GATS commitment follow-up by WTO members. The findings reveal that governments need to formulate special policies that combine the global market liberalization trends and the nature of the sports services sector in the course of achieving international commitments and national interests.

Keywords: Sports Service Industry. GATS. WTO. Liberalization. Policy Challenges.

aplicação do GATS aos países da OMC, bem como as discrepâncias entre os requisitos da política internacional e as leis nacionais. O autor tenta abordar essa lacuna de pesquisa usando os regulamentos do GATS e as indústrias de serviços esportivos para realizar pesquisas sobre a gestão da política interna e o cumprimento das questões da OMC enfrentadas pelas nações. A metodologia a ser usada para analisar os documentos utilizados neste estudo é uma abordagem qualitativa baseada em uma revisão sistemática da literatura (SLR). Os resultados demonstram a pouca liberalização da indústria de serviços esportivos nos princípios do GATS e a tensão entre os requisitos comerciais e as diretrizes políticas locais e as diferentes práticas de acompanhamento dos compromissos do GATS pelos membros da OMC. As conclusões revelam que os governos precisam formular políticas especiais que combinem as tendências de liberalização do mercado global e a natureza do setor de serviços esportivos no curso do cumprimento dos compromissos internacionais e dos interesses nacionais.

Palavras-chave: Indústria de Serviços Esportivos. GATS. OMC. Liberalização. Desafios Políticos.

1 INTRODUCTION

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) functions as a WTO-established regulatory system that controls international services trade consisting of banking together with telecoms and transportation sectors. GATS works to develop free market conditions through both simplifying trade restrictions and making service sectors available to international operators. Against the background of increasing globalization and increased trading in sports services, a GATS's inclusion of sports services has been a source of challenging policy issues. Although sports are important economically and culturally, academic works have focused minimally on how countries shape their domestic laws to further comply with trade rules of the world while leaving the need for the research urgent. GATS effectively assists worldwide market growth for many sectors but the sports services sector faces growing complexity when applying GATS principles

(Khaskheli & Zhao, 2025). The sports service industry containing professional sports alongside sports broadcasting with event management and sports-related tourism has developed substantially in the global economy. Entertainment along with health promotion, employment opportunities, and regional development belong to the essential functions of this vital service domain (Nsour, 2023). The prevalence of the sector does not match its limited pace of liberalization because it must overcome distinct regulatory along policy obstacles.

Member countries face simultaneous possibilities and obstacles regarding sports service liberalization through their GATS commitments (Panizzon & Bisong, 2024). Through GATS members can establish international sports sector competition but these regulations present challenges to domestic public interests and cultural values along with local industries. WTO compliance requirements interfere with national policy authority in sports services because these requirements create a core problem when implementing liberalization policies (Meyer, 2021).

The study focuses on analyzing how WTO member countries interpret and implement GATS agreements, especially pertaining to the sports service sector, in order to show differences between international trade demands and domestic policies. The research focuses on the compliance with policies and the particular problems of the sports services segment with the aim of explaining the approaches to trade liberalization corresponding to the individualities of sports industries.

The scholarly work lacks focused studies about GATS implementation in the sports service industry mainly through examination of regulatory obstacles and adherence requirements. Several studies examine GATS' general effects on service industries yet only limited research exists about how countries handle WTO requirements in sports service activities. This review investigates the compliance challenges that countries experience when they implement GATS commitments for liberalizing their sports services industries.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 An overview of GATS and its impact on service sectors

The World Trade Organization (WTO) framework established GATS in 1995 to serve as a fundamental multilateral arrangement for trading services internationally (Citaristi, 2022). Through global service trade regulations, the agreement fosters the progressive market opening for services across different industries. Through its framework, the agreement expands domestic markets to foreign competition so service providers win equal opportunities with local enterprises. GATS consists of three central principles which include Market Access provisions and National Treatment standards together with a Specific Commitments framework (Gari, 2024). Market Access and National Treatment represent two fundamental principles of GATS while Specific Commitments form the third core principle. The Market Access provision in GATS establishes that foreign service providers must have equal freedom to develop their businesses within the domestic market space (Daza, Delimatsis, & Molinuevo, 2022). GATS guarantees that the treatment of foreign service providers stands equivalent to that of native service providers (Elliott, 2019). The implementation of GATS proves challenging for distinctive sectors especially sports services because these sectors receive limited recognition within the framework (Dash & Bhattacharjee, 2024). This produces an insight deficit regarding how GATS influences market liberalization in such industries. All service sectors fall within the scope of GATS although the major practical effects resulted from the reforms in telecommunications finance and transportation industries. GATS enables major market deregulation in every service sector while allowing foreign businesses to enter domestic markets (Benz & Rozensteine, 2021). National sensitivities usually protect the cultural policies sectors of agriculture entertainment and sports from full liberalization while other services face more open competition under GATS. The sectors are subject to GATS coverage yet limited progress in liberalization emerges because of the conflict between trade freedom and cultural and public well-being safeguards.

2.2 Sports service industry: characteristics and liberalization

Under the GATS framework sports service industry activities span from professional sports down to sports management through sports broadcasting and sports tourism (Gounden, 2020). The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) categorizes sports services through business, recreational, and cultural divisions which include sports management and event organizing alongside fitness facilities and broadcasting live sports and international tournaments. The unique regulatory and cultural aspects of sports services have limited liberalization measures even though they fall under GATS categories (Chaitoo, 2020). Several service sectors have benefited from the GATS framework but its effect on the sports services industry remains insufficiently documented. Studies indicate that the sporting service deregulation which Focuses on cross-border investments and professional sports league partnerships strengthened worldwide sports competition (Sayeg, & Malik, 2024). The emergence of liberalization concerns threatens to weaken sports industry growth in countries at different developmental stages particularly among emerging economies. Sports broadcasting rights and media partnerships have undergone internationalization which increased foreign investments within national sports leagues. The field of research about sports services remains underdeveloped because GATS effects on less commercial segments including local sports leagues and youth development have not received sufficient attention (Zhou, 2024). The GATS framework needs deeper analysis to establish the relationship among cultural aspects, national identity, and local sports infrastructure protection.

2.3 WTO compliance and policy challenges

The WTO operates compliance procedures that force member countries to follow GATS and other agreements' rules (Wolff, 2022). The Dispute Settlement Body forms part of these mechanisms by acting as the primary body for settlement between member states while they enforce WTO agreements. Failed countries regarding GATS commitments must face WTO dispute resolution which might result in either penalties or corrective measures. The enforcement mechanisms showing effectiveness for trade rules operate mostly to the benefit of established economic powers due to better ability to

progress through dispute resolution processes. Sports services under GATS face many difficulties when countries adopt this liberalization framework (Ahmed, 2024). Market entry and treatment provisions of GATS have created difficulties for countries seeking to maintain their regulatory independence. The implementation of domestic sports regulations which address player transfer systems together with broadcast rights and major event hosting regulations comes into conflict with GATS obligations because countries want to retain authority over their sports markets (Ononye, 2024). Under GATS Mode 4 allows professional services including sporting professionals to experience short-term relocation for service provision in foreign territories (Gupta, 2024). The temporary worker provisions under GATS create anxieties about professional sports talent moving from developing nations toward wealthier nations thus removing key workforce capabilities from local sports businesses. Sports broadcasting rights liberation created public discussion about media monopoly power and broadcasting earnings distribution because it benefits large multinationals more than local stations. National sovereignty emerges as one of the most disputed matters within the scope of sports services and GATS (Schubert, 2024). Nations continually support their ability to make sports industry regulations that uphold domestic priorities which protect home athletes and establish fair competitors while aiding local sports programs.

2.4 Comparative case study evaluation

The impact of GATS commitments in the sport services sector is poorly researched, but the analysis that has been done so far shows that there is a wide deviation in liberalisation results across different countries. The ability to regulate and ease in to WTO is more of the developed economies, where the developing economies are burdened by a lack of institutional support and conflicting cultural views. The difficult compliance in developing economies is disregarded, and the cultural impediments in Western societies remain (Zhang et al., 2024). The joint analysis of these scenarios can show how the geopolitical and economic environment influences the implementation of GATS.

2.5 Generalization of results between themes

According to the body of literature, it is noted that there are associated challenges that are occasioned by GATS implementation on digital trade, preserving culture, and keeping up with regulatory standards. Research points out that when a market is opened to more access due to liberalization, such as a more open digital market, domestic culture assurances, and the protection of local industries are usually conflicting (Azmeah, Foster, & Echavarri, 2020). When the digital platforms help in opening the markets, then the cultural policies tend to limit the growth. The convergence of the results leads to the assumption that the successful adoption of GATS in sports-services is dependent on the integration of economic liberalization and the measures aimed at safeguarding of cultural heritage and freedom of domestic policy.

2.6 Literature gap and the need for further research

The sports service industry lacks research regarding the effects of GATS on the sector despite an expanding body of literature about the impact of GATS on the service sector. Studies mainly concentrate on well-established service sectors like telecommunications and finance even though this leaves an unknown area about the impact of GATS on sectors including sports. The literature currently lacks a comprehensive analysis of GATS's sports service effects and its effects on national freedom to set policies together with the balance between market openness and domestic sports advancement. Studies about the direct effects of GATS on sports services remain scarce particularly in developing nations because these countries struggle with implementing local regulations while preserving local culture and achieving economic development goals in sports. Studies about the sustained effects of sports liberalization remain thin regarding the movement of athletes, media rights control, and worldwide sports market entry processes. Research must focus on this omitted area to understand GATS's specific effects on sports services while evaluating its relation to local sports growth. As a way of meeting the special challenges sports services face, there must be a research effort that enhances the WTO compliance mechanisms that would not override regulatory powers of countries, but still met their multilateral obligations. GATS has

introduced a lot of liberalization to most of the service industries, but very limited research exists regarding its impacts on the sports services. The complexity of sports industry reform should be further analyzed with the GATS, but countries need to work out plans to manage the WTO requirements. Potential future trade policies and other negotiations that may be aimed at the sports service sector will require the results of this research in making informed decisions.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research method

The research paper will employ the qualitative research methodology to examine GATS commitments and identify the effect of the commitments on the service industry of the sport. Policy provisions, economic structures and regulatory mechanisms are aspects that are lost in the quantitative analysis, which could only be identified through the qualitative methods. With the emphasis made on the WTO compliance and the policy constraints experienced in sports services, the research design is extremely comparable to the objectives of the study, in the context of seeking a detailed discussion of the influence of GATS on the sector and regulatory issues it entails. The approach is beneficial because it reveals the multifaceted systems that quantitative tools usually overlook at the time of evaluation of multifaceted and evolving international policy rules Skarbek, (2020).

3.1.1 Research design

The method of the review is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design approach to obtain the entire data collection and analysis. SLR allows the researcher to arrange his/her strategy when he/she gathers and integrates academic results across sources. The review is systematic in locating and examining academic literature on the WTO GATS framework alongside its implications on liberalization of the sports services industry and the policy challenges posed by the WTO compliance requirements. The review collects information on various reliable sources to combine their results without

ruling out the applicable views. The research design adheres to the accepted principles of SLR to provide transparency of the methodology and precision and minimization of bias of the researchers during the process of article selection.

3.1.2 Data collection

The review is based on secondary data that was gathered in the form of scholarly sources such as Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus, and JSTOR. The study will be based on the databases of peer reviewed publications that offer credible academic data to be used in analyzing the information. In this paper, we will invest effort in research on documents that analyze GATS commitments along with WTO compliance and structure of international trade laws to liberalize sports services. The application of peer-reviewed literature increases the reliability of the research findings since they confirm the official sources contained in the study. The study began by the review of fifteen publications that are related to the context of the study. The publications were evaluated using systematic review procedures, which sought to confirm their relation to primary research subjects. The chosen study examines the GATS factors and liberalization of the sports service industry and WTO regulations and compliance issues.

3.1.3 Data synthesis

These studies were classified depending on the theme areas that included compliance with the WTO rules, culture heritage maintenance and the different regulatory hitches that affected the countries to open their sport services market. The synthesis revealed the context of different countries to determine the realization of tasks of the GATS with positive gains realized and the barriers of liberalization identified.

3.2 Inclusion criteria

The research paper selection framework was in accordance with the primary objectives of the study. Two requirements are demanded in terms of the selection of the research.

1. The study should be published in peer-reviewed journals or indexed conferences that are accessible in Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus, and JSTOR databases.
2. Research to be conducted should focus on service liberalization by way of GATS commitments but with particular reference to sports services industry.
3. Productive studies on the subject must either give theoretical results or offer empirical evidence regarding the WTO compliance challenges as well as the policy implications and the impact of GATS on sports services markets.
4. The study must examine the way the trade policy and international law and the economic factors interact with sports services in the process of global market penetration.

3.3 Exclusion criteria

The exclusion criteria were carried out as research completion. Articles were not included in the research when:

1. The focus of the study remained restricted in scope because it failed to directly connect GATS with international trade law in the sports services framework.
2. This paper failed to deliver significant empirical results that addressed either service market liberalization or WTO compliance issues in sports sectors.
3. The research appeared in non-academic or unverified sources while an insufficient level of data failed to support the reported findings.
4. The paper moved away from its central research scope with regards to WTO compliance and policy difficulties during sports service liberalization.

A series of studies was eliminated through the application of these criteria which led to the selection of relevant papers that fulfilled all required conditions. The reviewed research papers focus on fundamental aspects of the study questions which enhances our comprehension of the discussed material.

3.4 Justification of methodological choices

Systematic literature reviews (SLRs) require a transparent methodology according to the PRISMA framework (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). Boolean logic operators "AND" "OR" and "NOT" formed the basis of the search methodology which retrieved suitable research findings from various databases. The conducted study selected 20 fit-for-inclusion results from its predetermined screening process. The screening process resulted in reviewing in depth the 15 studies that survived the assessment. Fifteen finalized studies survived assessment procedures because other studies did not meet the standards of relevance or methodology. Quality standards followed by the final set of studies produced reliable outcomes for the review.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The review follows ethical guidelines through its practice of accurately recognizing and citing all original authors and sources. The research explores secondary information from public academic publications because it collects no original human or proprietary information. The systematic review included findings only from chosen studies that maintained safe parameters for eliminating data collection and analysis biases. The review, does not deal in unpublished or confidential information as it does not violate intellectual property rights and academic integrity throughout. The methodology used creates a solid frame through which the researchers are able to answer the research goal and make crucial findings on the GATS commitments and sports services industry liberalization with specific reference to WTO compliance and policy issues.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

Table 1

Summary of selected studies

Citation	Aim/Title	Findings	Theme
Ramazanov, (2021)	"World Trade Organization: The Role of Developing Countries in the WTO"	GATS compliance remains challenging for developing nations particularly when it comes to the sports industry.	WTO Compliance & Developing Countries
(Banerjee et al., 2024)	"E-commerce in Trade Agreements: Strategies and Options"	The limitations found in GATS commitments work to restrict the ability for countries to liberalize their digital and sports service sectors.	E-commerce & Trade Agreements
(Krishnan & Nair, 2024)	"Economic and Legal Impact of Free Trade Agreements on the Economy"	The liberalization brought by FTAs creates higher market competition which harms smaller business sectors including sports services operations.	Economic Impact of FTAs
Gagné, (2024)	"Preferential Trade Agreements and Cultural Products"	The establishment of FTAs promotes cultural homogeneity which causes negative effects on parts of the economy like sports services.	Impact of FTAs on Cultural Products

4.1.1 Theme 1: GATS commitments in trade liberalization

Research on this theme focused on the impact of GATS commitments on the process of liberalization of a number of services sectors particularly in the sports sector. Banerjee, Mukherjee, and Srishti (2024) examine the WTO framework rules used in negotiations of the trade agreement by India. The study reveals the challenge that India faces on its e-commerce sector due to its restrictive GATS undertakings that curtail its trade liberalization potential. These findings are of advantage to the sports services sector since online digital sports venues are growing. This situation is shifting the world trade

environment and the process of sports services liberalization, which requires India to adjust its policy strategies (Banerjee et al. 2024). They are keen on paying attention to the areas where the trade limits are to be restricted as little as possible.

Ramazanov (2021) explains how developing nations encounter difficulties because of their struggle to match domestic policies with WTO requirements particularly within the service sector. According to his analysis GATS promotes potential gains but developing countries encounter various compliance hurdles when they open the sports services sector for trade. The complete GATS compliance demands substantial investment into infrastructure along with financial resources for these developing nations.

4.1.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: impact of trade agreements on domestic economies

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) create various economic effects on national economies with sports services as a part of the analysis. The economic and legal analysis by Krishnan and Nair (2024) specified the difficulties of micro, small, and medium enterprises in Kerala which are affected by Free Trade Agreements. Their analysis indicates that service sector deregulation through these agreements creates more competition that brings advantages to some sectors yet presents challenges for sports service providers who struggle to compete with international rivals.

Gagné (2024) studies the negative effects of preferential trade agreements on cultural products in ways that mirror sports industry concerns about protecting national identity. Gagné identifies preferential agreements as promoters of trade yet they produce standardized outputs which pose difficulties for sports services whose delivery depends on local cultural elements. Presently the sports service sector fights against the challenges stemming from liberalization because the introduction of foreign sports content threatens to disrupt local market patterns.

Table 2*Represents the summary of selected studies*

Citation	Aim or Title	Findings	Theme
Zhao, (2023)	Examine the liberalization of cultural and recreational services	Sports services encounter resistance to liberalization as a result of different national cultural policies.	Liberalization's Impact on Sports
(Leal-Arcas, Balzano, Deethae, & Skybova, 2020).	Evaluate challenges in GATS implementation.	Multiple nations experience obstacles in meeting their GATS commitments especially when dealing with sports-related sectors.	GATS and Sports Industry Challenges
(Chandy & Bhardwaj, 2020).	Investigate the regulatory challenges of GATS non-discrimination in sports	States face barriers in their power to implement cultural regulations related to sports under non-discrimination standards.	GATS and Sports Industry Challenges
(Noonan & Plekhanova, 2020)	Assess the impact of liberalization on tourism and related sectors like sports.	The process of liberalization creates external stress that disrupts local sporting systems in sports industries.	Liberalization's Impact on Sports

The research conclusions based on the available literature examine the various facets of sports service market liberalization that takes place with GATS undertakings alongside the relevant WTO compliance and policy aspects.

4.1.2 Theme 2. WTO, GATS, and sports industry liberalization

The sporting industry encounters distinct difficulties in opening up under the GATS section of WTO since specific service sector commitments prove challenging to liberalize. The close relation between sports services and national cultural traditions and public policies causes several WTO member nations to resist their liberalization. The study of Zhao (2023) demonstrates that nations apply different measures regarding cultural and recreational services during trade negotiations as these services tend to remain protected by binding national restrictions. Non-discrimination clauses in the GATS restrict national policy choices especially regarding sports services which face

competition between trade liberalization and cultural preservation needs (Noonan & Plekhanova, 2020).

4.1.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1. Enforcement of GATS commitments

GATS Commitments face multiple obstacles during their enforcement phase for numerous nations. The general obligations found in GATS present major challenges during implementation particularly when it comes to sports because nations resist surrendering control of domestic events and policy regulation (Leal-Arcas, Balzano, Deethae, & Skybova, 2020).

4.1.2.2 SubTheme 2.2. Impact of liberalization on local sports systems

Liberalization policies create unknown effects which limit domestic sports industries from maintaining self-governance according to some scholarly opinions. Liberalization creates external influences on local sports organizations which affect the complete spectrum of talent recruitment to team selection (Chandy & Bhardwaj, 2020).

Table 3

Represents the summary of selected studies

Citation	Aim/Title	Findings	Theme
(Ravuvu, Gounder, & Smith, 2021)	“Assess the effects of trade agreements on local service sectors, focusing on small nations”	International economies large and small struggle to preserve their sports authority while fulfilling WTO membership obligations.	Small Nations and WTO Adherence
Araujo, (2022)	“Investigate the export of EU regulatory models in global services agreements”	All worldwide sporting service providers must adapt their policies according to EU regulations at the expense of certain local interests.	EU Regulations and Global Sports Services
(Stock, & Stock, 2024)	“Examine the role of creative sectors, including sports, in global trade liberalization”	Strengthening involvement of sports services in creative economies generates challenges for sustaining authentic	Sports in Creative Economy and Trade Liberalization

		cultural aspects through the process of globalization.	
Gulotta, (2024)	“Analyze the impact of WTO frameworks on emerging technologies”	Research and development in sports neurotechnology presents barriers when attempting to apply GATS provisions in this field.	Emerging Technologies and WTO Frameworks

4.1.3 Theme 3. Challenges in GATS compliance and the impact of external influences on sports

Sports services under GATS face distinctive problems regarding both WTO regulatory compliance and national interest protection. The sports service sector experiences challenges under GATS because it requires countries to find balance between their responsibilities toward international regulations and their domestic policy requirements.

According to Gulotta (2024), sports-related novel technology innovations such as neurotechnologies make it difficult for states to fulfill their commitments under GATS. Technological change progresses quickly enough to create difficulties for following GATS regulations because sports-related services crossing traditional boundaries frequently struggle to meet policy requirements (Gulotta, 2024). Araujo (2022) shows how the European Union employs its policy power to force developing nations into adopting service standards that oppose their domestic sports requirements (Araujo, 2022). According to F.Stock and A.Stock (2024) the creative economy embraces sports along with other components while they observe how external cultural and regulatory conflicts represent prevalent liberalization challenges (F.Stock & A.Stock, 2024). According to Ravuvu et al. (2021) small countries deal with complex issues of sustaining independent sports policy control and meeting GATS requirements when tourism sports form a prominent sector of their economy (Ravuvu et al., 2021).

Table 4*Represents the summary of selected studies*

Citation	Aim	Finding	Theme
(Pant, & Chakraborty, 2024).	“To investigate the impact of service orientation on manufacturing exports.”	The implementation of service-oriented sports services enhances export capabilities to strengthen economic performance as GATS advances its strategies for market deregulation.	Impact of Service Orientation on Manufacturing Exports.
Gao, (2022)	“To explore the role of digital services in enhancing trade in Asia-Pacific.”	Streaming platforms along with sports broadcasting activities function as major digital services to boost regional growth through market liberalization of sports services.	Digital Services and Trade Agreements in Asia-Pacific.
(Rahman, & Rahman, N. 2022).	“To assess the impact of digital trade provisions in RTAs on service sectors during crises.”	Through digital provisions of RTAs sports services can continue operations during crises while meeting GATS requirements and fostering market openness.	Digital Trade Provisions in RTAs during Crises.

The economic liberalization of sports service industries under GATS subjects three main aspects to evaluation: digital services trading, regional trade agreements and manufacturing export dynamics enabled by services. These themes provide detailed examinations of the mentioned aspects to explain their relationship with WTO commitments and emerging trends in sports service industries.

4.1.4 Theme 4. Digital services trade and trade agreements

Digital services trade within Asia-Pacific represents a vast market that affects sectors including sports industry. Gao (2022) establishes digital services act as fundamental elements that advance regional economic integration through sports broadcasting and digital platforms which drive the sports service industry toward liberalization. Studies show that proper digital trade policies should facilitate cross-border

service operations that promote sports media rights and streaming platforms fundamental to GATS commitments.

4.1.4.1 Sub-Theme 4.1. Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) and crisis management

M.N. Rahman & N. Rahman (2022) investigate in their study how Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) affect sports services along with other services during times of crisis. India together with Asia-Pacific nations have started applying digital trade measures as a tool to manage pandemic-related challenges in their economies. These provisions boost digital service delivery because they support the WTO's initiative to liberalize sports sectors under GATS regulatory standards. The authors stress that efficient trade measures should enable sports services to operate without interruptions during crisis situations.

4.1.4.2 Sub-Theme 4.2. Service orientation and manufacturing exports

The paper by Pant & Chakraborty (2024) examines the positive influence of a service-centered approach on industrial export activity in developing countries. The research demonstrates how service-centric industries which encompass sports services generate major export development. Sports event management together with broadcasting services enable manufacturing industries to boost their economic performance while supporting WTO service liberalization goals under GATS commitments.

The integration between digital services and RTAs and service orientation creates the mechanism through which countries liberalize their sports service industry in compliance with GATS commitments. Each single piece of research demonstrates how different elements of service provision function to expand sports sector worldwide market integration and development.

5 DISCUSSION

The research is aimed at showing the positive and negative effects sports services face when they accept GATS commitments in the form of trade agreements. As Banerjee et al. (2024) and Ramazanov (2021) describe, countries making GATS commitments may

face barriers that may limit the development of their sporting markets. The authors of Krishnan and Nair (2024) and Gagné (2024) specify the ways in which Free Trade Agreements cause economic tension on local industries and loss of cultural identities, which raises the primary concerns of sport service operators. These findings are consistent with the analysis objectives of this study since they indicate balance levels between liberalization and protectionism that can be used in policy formulation to pursue both WTO adherence and homegrown sports business sustainability.

Research on GATS commitments and sports service liberalization introduces crucial challenges that countries face in keeping the WTO regulations in line with their own sports industries. According to Zhou (2023), cultural factors influence the process of countries having legalized athletics services since they are likely to prevent trade agreements that will harm their cultural conserved sports. The non-discrimination requirement of the GATS places regulatory obstacles to national interests to manage the sectors that hold cultural significance like sports (Leal-Arcas, Balzano, Deethae, and Skybova, 2020). The implementation of the GATS agreements becomes very difficult in high-priority areas because the level of increased openness could possibly harm the domestic management structures. Market liberalization and the pressure put on them by this pressure increase the pressure on national sports organizations, which weakens their control locally (Chandy & Bhardwaj, 2020). The paper establishes the fact that, despite GATS facilitating trade freedom, it implies significant barriers to states trying to control their sport and culture spheres in the global system.

Studies indicate that GATS introduces sports service liberalisation, but this process occurs without national policy making without a number of complications. The intricate factors that have shaped the regulatory environment of sports services are due to the technological demands of global trade agreements and their regulatory demands as per Araujo (2022) and Gulotta (2024). F.Stock and A. Stock (2024) argues that cultural values in sports and economic value are in constant conflict with GATS liberalization standards, which poses a threat to the authentic sports identities in the local community. Ravuvu et al. (2021) demonstrate that smaller countries that retain sports tourism experience too much the effects of the trade agreements that generate conflicts between global liberalization and the local protection policies. The research aims were focused on examining the WTO compliance barriers and policy contradictions in sports service

deregulation under GATS, since newly developed research proves their analytical validity.

The reviewed literature provides the necessary information regarding the relations between GATS commitments and deregulation of the sports service industry. Gao (2022) asserts that digital services are crucial as they enhance sports broadcasting and media, hence helping in the liberalization efforts of GATS. Since it's a growing digital infrastructure, sports service sectors are subject to significant developments, given the fact that the infrastructure simplifies the cross-border trade and facilitates accessibility in addition to enhancing market scopes. The necessity of RTAs that include digital trade provisions, as M.N. Rahman and N. Rahman (2022) suggest, is important since it allows sports services to continue operating according to the WTO standards in case of crisis situations. This flexibility in these difficult times allows for maintaining stability across the boundary of sports services.

As Pant and Chakraborty (2024) demonstrate, the growth in the economy of a country is achieved through service-based approaches when the manufacturing sectors are embracing sports services, since these integrated sectors provide export opportunities. All the WTO objectives are supported by this expansion of the services due to the commitments of GATS that the member states have to comply with. The literature demonstrates that GATS liberalization of sports services allows economic benefits by the ability to be connected digitally with geographic flexibility and agreements based on services and approaches regarding global trade.

5.1 Findings synthesis across themes: analysis and key takeaways

A survey of the study reveals a trend and discrepancies and relevant conclusions that define the role of GATS in the sports services industry.

5.2 Regulatory issues and cultural safeguards

Numerous accounts of the problems are raised when GATS attempts to strike a balance between liberalization and national cultural and regulatory protection. The developing ones, like it is in the case of India, are burdened with the lack of resources and

with the difficulties of adaptation to the modern rules. The GATS pressure of freedoms to trade is often in conflict with preserving the culture and local values (Banerjee et al., 2024; Gagné, 2024).

5.3 Inequality in compliance across countries

Better regulatory framework will enable the developed nations to adhere to GATTS commitments easily. Developing nations, however, face big hurdles in adapting their policies to the GATTs commitments and a significant part of it is related to their financial and institutional constraints. These variations demonstrate the sheer variety in the conformity to GATS across countries depending mainly on their economic and regulatory capabilities (Ramazanov, 2021; Leal-Arcas et al., 2020).

Both the advantages and disadvantages of promoting the economy instead of preserving the culture are presented.

Liberalization is at times seen to compromise the local cultural heritage and attribute economic victory to it. The findings are continuing to indicate that importation of sports contents and sports multinationals is likely to threaten local sports enterprises. It creates the situation in which the creation of greater economic growth is incompatible with the preservation of the cultural heritage of the country (Krishnan and Nair, 2024; Zhou, 2024).

6 CONCLUSION

This paper throws light on the multifaceted problems raised by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and what influence it has on the sports service industry. GATS has helped to improve market entry as well as liberalization in several ways but when it comes to sports services, its application has been a challenge. Particularly, the developing countries are likely to be unable to reconcile the GATTS requirements with the cultural rules and domestic regulatory frameworks. There is variability in the level of compliance with obligations as laid down by GATS whereby economic and institutional capabilities of the countries influence the degree of compliance to these agreements. Personalized policies are needed to mediate between the

efforts of liberalizing the world markets and safeguarding cultural values of the nation and internal sporting establishments. The liberalization of sports services globally provides controversial outcomes to sports service liberalization in the world and some nations have succeeded to introduce GATS, others have to evade or fight against it due to cultural, economical and political factor. The fight between the development of the international trade liberalization and the maintenance of the cultural identity at the local level is still going on, especially in the sports industries dominated with the cultural values.

6.1 Future direction

Researchers have to consider the GATS obligations analysis in the long-run and its impact on sports service industry of both advanced countries and underdeveloped countries. Comparison of the sports service industries as per the varying degrees of economic maturity could prove the unique road blocks that the various groups of countries encounter. Even more investigation on the contribution of digital services, such as sporting streaming service as part of the GATS framework, could offer some light on the liberalization of sporting service in the digital age. Further studies are required to examine the connection between GATS adherence, domestic sport infrastructure, and the conflict between international adherence to high standards and national policy sovereignty in developing economies where the nationality and economic perspectives are inextricably linked.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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