



## La gestión de la industria del fútbol moderno y los desafíos actuales: revisión sistemática de la literature

*Modern soccer industry management and current challenges: systematic literature review*

### Authors

Daniel Getnet Admit<sup>1,2</sup>  
Zelalem Melkamu Tegegne<sup>1</sup>  
Sisay Mengistu Alemu<sup>2</sup>

Bahir Dar University (Ethiopia)  
Hawassa University (Ethiopia)

Corresponding author:  
Daniel Getnet Admit  
[getnetdaniel1985@gmail.com](mailto:getnetdaniel1985@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Soccer is known as the "global game" because it is very popular in many parts of the world. Numerous studies have been conducted in different parts, segments, and levels of the soccer industry. However, the findings are inconclusive, unidirectional, and contradictory.

**Objective:** to analyze contemporary management practices, challenges, and future perspectives in the soccer industry. **Methodology:** This systematic literature review was conducted. A total of 540 articles were initially recorded from Google Scholar, SCOPUS, and JSTOR. Through inclusion and exclusion criteria, 83 published materials that met the inclusion criteria were thematically analyzed.

**Results:** The findings reveal that global outlook with fidelity to local roots, changing commercial partnerships, changing media landscape, cultural aspects in the football playground, and game attractiveness are major patterns identified in globalization and its development. In particular, specific rules and regulations, the nature of competition, ownership, leadership and governance are also current variants in the management of soccer. **Discussion:** These are crucial ingredients for understanding the future dynamics of global soccer and represent challenges and dilemmas for the industry.

**Conclusions:** A massive or single research study on the current practices, issues, and possibilities of the modern soccer industry at the local, sub-regional, continental, and international levels is feasible.

### Keywords

Challenges; contemporary management; practice, soccer industry management

### Resumen

**Introducción:** El fútbol es conocido como el "juego global" porque es muy popular en muchas partes del mundo. Se han realizado numerosos estudios en diferentes partes, segmentos y niveles de la industria del fútbol. Sin embargo, los hallazgos no son concluyentes, unidireccionales y contradictorios.

**Objetivo:** analizar las prácticas de gestión contemporáneas, los desafíos y las perspectivas futuras en la industria del fútbol. **Metodología:** Se realizó esta revisión sistemática de la literatura. Se registraron inicialmente un total de 540 artículos de Google Scholar, SCOPUS y JSTOR. A través de criterios de inclusión y exclusión, se analizaron temáticamente 83 materiales publicados que cumplieron con los criterios de inclusión.

**Resultados:** Los hallazgos revelan que la perspectiva global con fidelidad a las raíces locales, las asociaciones comerciales cambiantes, el panorama cambiante de los medios, los aspectos culturales en el campo de juego del fútbol y el atractivo del juego son los principales patrones identificados en la globalización y su desarrollo. En particular, las reglas y regulaciones específicas, la naturaleza de la competencia, la propiedad, el liderazgo y la gobernanza también son variantes actuales en la gestión del fútbol. **Discusión:** Estos son ingredientes cruciales para comprender la dinámica futura del fútbol mundial y representan desafíos y dilemas para la industria.

**Conclusiones:** Es factible un estudio de investigación masivo o único sobre las prácticas, problemas y posibilidades actuales de la industria del fútbol moderno a nivel local, subregional, continental e internacional.

### Palabras clave

Desafíos; gestión contemporánea; práctica; gestión de la industria del fútbol

## Introduction

Soccer is a prominent and highly lucrative domain within the expansive realm of the worldwide entertainment sector (Miragaia et al., 2019). In this industry, there are 130,000 professional players and more than 4,400 professional clubs around the world (García-Sánchez, 2007), with 211 Federation de international soccer association (FIFA) member associations. The respective football associations can organize 65 percent of national top-tier competitions; 54 percent of domestic competitions around the world follow a traditional home-and-away format; and 88% of competition organizers negotiate collective TV rights deals collectively (García-Sánchez, 2007). Football is "the only truly global game, played by every country," and is "one of the few phenomena as universal as the United Nations (UN) having 211 members (García-Sánchez, 2007), more than the members of the UN (Erdogan, et al., 2020) and the International Olympic Committee. Football's global popularity is evident in its widespread participation and viewership. With 211 member countries, FIFA is a world leader in representation. This global reach is further exemplified by the fact that most national and domestic competitions adhere to a traditional home-and-away format, making soccer a universally recognized and cherished sport worldwide.

The contemporary soccer industry faces various challenges related to its management practices. These challenges include the dynamic nature of the industry, which is influenced by market conditions and managers' competence (Skibinska & Kott, 2015). The soccer industry has evolved into a significant industry with multiple stakeholders, and understanding its value and interrelationships is crucial (Yiapanas, Thrassou, & Vrontis, 2023). Technological advancements in equipment pose challenges in enhancing athletic performance and security (Bafna & Saini, 2019). The economic growth of professional soccer has led to organizational changes and the need for modern management practices, such as controlling, planning, risk, and financial management (Bacs, 2014). Environmental factors also play a significant role in the success of soccer clubs, and success on the field may impact the strategic future of the club (Cross & Henderson, 2003). Effective soccer managerial approaches focus on factors affecting club success, including athletic performance, security, organizational changes, and environmental factors, using modern practices like controlling, planning, risk management, and financial management (Getnet, 2023, 2024).

Soccer organizations can improve their leadership and governance practices by adopting good governance principles and professional management techniques. This can encompass the integration of commendable governance strategies, such as the promotion of transparency, the enforcement of accountability, and the establishment of efficient decision-making mechanisms (Green & Ghaye, 2018). Additionally, organizations can benefit from analyzing the relationship between governance and financial and sports performance, as clubs with good governance tend to have better financial performance and return on assets (Green & Ghaye, 2018). The global commercialization of soccer has also led organizations to transform their management practices so that they can learn from the strategic international development approaches of successful clubs (Tomlinson, 2014). Therefore, Studying successful clubs' strategies can offer insights for adapting to global commercialization in soccer, fostering unity, collaboration, and improved leadership.

Positive sporting results, profit generation, long-term sustainable business, and international qualification, if applicable, are the primary goals of all clubs (Zülch, Palme, & Jost, 2020). To achieve any of these aims, each area or department of a professional club requires long-term, sustainable approaches and development tracking measures. Internationally, football clubs have multiple aims (Zambom, Lera, & Iraizoz, 2017) or concurrent goals (Parganas, Liasko, & Anagnostopoulos, 2017). These goals and objectives were aligned with their objectives. Some clubs produce sporting results as their output (Lozano & Villa, 2023; Villa & Lozano, 2016; Zambom, et al., 2017). Other clubs will have a social profile as their output (Perez, Carlos, & Alen, 2022). Financial profiles are another possible output for clubs (Pérez-González et al., 2022).

The literature on management challenges and future prospects in the modern soccer industry is limited because no comprehensive assessment has been conducted to determine management methods, obstacles, and future possibilities. This research gap hinders the determination of whether managing the industry requires specialized managerial knowledge or generic management principles. However, scholars argue that quality management practices can contribute to an industry's success. To



close this gap and gain valuable knowledge, further studies in this area are required. This systematic review assesses the current literature on the soccer industry's management practices, challenges, and future perspectives.

## Method

This systematic review focuses on contemporary soccer industry management practices, current challenges, and future perspectives. This systematic review was conducted according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Ceban et al., 2022). The PRISMA declaration offers a standardized method for conducting systematic reviews, thereby guaranteeing the openness and repeatability of the study procedures.

### Procedure

#### *Search Strategy*

The reviewers collected different articles using specific keywords, i.e., "football industry," "football management," "football business," "practice of football," "challenges of football," "industrialization of football," "contemporary football management," "governance of football," and "traditional management of football," and combined searches were performed.

#### *Screening*

We used three primary criteria, modified from (Gough, 2007), to evaluate the quality and relevance of the research collected to screen papers pertinent to this systematic review question: We carefully considered each study's research question and evaluated whether it was in line with the goals of the systematic review to identify the topic's relevance. Furthermore, we assessed the methodological relevance by determining whether the selected techniques were appropriate for answering the study topic. Finally, we closely examined each study's research methodology to ensure that it was applied correctly and successfully before evaluating the methodological quality. These criteria allowed us to establish the relevance and quality of the studies retrieved for our systematic review.

#### *Inclusion criteria*

The systematic review included relevant articles or reviews that aligned with the research's key words and objectives. This ensured that the selected articles were directly relevant to the topic under investigation. Additionally, to guarantee the inclusion of current and recent research, the study only considered English-language publications that were published after 2000. In addition, the review included the search times of scholars between September 1, 2023 and September 10, 2023, G.C., ensuring that the most recent and pertinent research was included. After data extraction, a thorough synopsis of the discoveries and outcomes was provided, paying close attention to each theme identified.

#### *Exclusion criteria*

The exclusion criteria were articles published in a language other than English, Articles that analyze keywords, articles that are not contextualized to the theme of the review, and articles that do not clearly respond to the objectives of research and its purpose were excluded in this study. Articles that did not meet the minimum quality and relevance standards were excluded. Furthermore, articles with duplicate or incomplete data were excluded from the study.

Figure 1. Screening and Identification of Articles

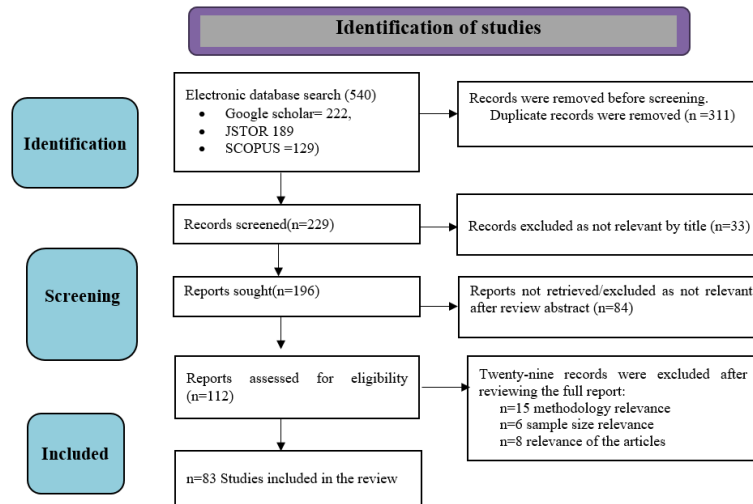
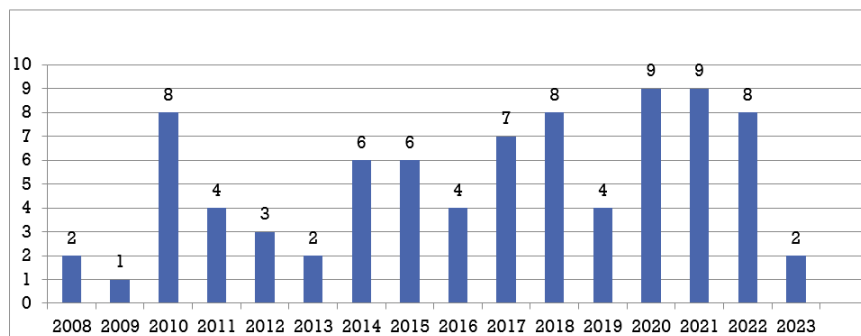


Figure 1 illustrates a visual representation of the execution and inclusion criteria of the articles. The process involved initial identification of the articles through Google Scholar, JSTOR, and SCOPUS, resulting in 540 records. After completing the bibliographic research, the authors independently examined the list of titles, abstracts, and related full text to include those that met the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria focused on articles that specifically addressed the intersection of soccer industry management. Only articles that clearly aligned with this focus were included in the final analysis. This rigorous selection process ensured that the research was comprehensive and relevant to the study objectives. After excluding 311 irrelevant records, the remaining 311 articles were subject to a thorough assessment of eligibility. From this, 122 full articles were considered, and ultimately, 83 articles were found to meet the inclusion criteria and were subjected to a comprehensive analysis.

## Results

Figure 2 presents a comprehensive summary of the publications per year and their distribution across years. This graphical representation facilitates the swift and unambiguous comprehension of information, thereby enabling the detection of trends and patterns in research.

Figure 2. Number of publications per year



The number of publications per subtheme is shown in Figure 3. This chart visually represents the distribution of publications across different subthemes. This allows easy comparison and analysis of the relative importance and popularity of each subtheme based on the number of publications.

Figure 3. Number of publications per theme

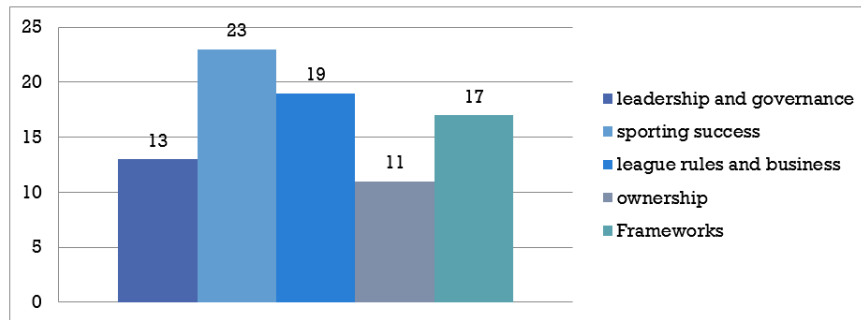


Figure 4 summarizes modern management in the soccer industry and the challenges it faces. The findings indicate how challenges can be categorized into five groups. This categorization allows researchers and stakeholders to delve deeper into specific aspects of leadership, governance, measuring frameworks, business models, ownership, and changes in football management frameworks. These subthemes provide a comprehensive overview of the key areas of concern within modern football industry management and current challenges. By examining the number of publications within each subtheme, individuals can gain valuable understanding of the extent of focus and curiosity in tackling these challenges.

Figure 4. Management of the modern soccer industry and its current challenges



## Discussion

### *Leadership and Governance*

The soccer industry's recognition as a business has led to the need for corporate governance principles. However, the sector presents unique challenges that require different approaches and mechanisms for corporate governance. The concept of collective board leadership can advance both fields, whereas the governance of charities requires more subtle forms of leadership. The football industry has undergone significant changes, with multinational teams, global marketing industries, and increased ownership by impersonal shareholders transforming domestic and international competitions (Garland, Malcolm, & Rowe, 2013, Farquhar, Machold, & Ahmed, 2005, Ferkins, Shilbury, & O'Boyle, 2018; Lambert & Lapsley, 2010, Garland et al., 2013, Dimitropoulos, 2011).

The soccer industry's sustainability is in jeopardy because of these changes, resulting in issues such as financial instability and uncertainty. To address these challenges, strategic development choices must be based on empirical research and the involvement of key industry stakeholders. Sound governance methods are also required to encourage and assist the regulation of football players (Farquhar et al., 200, Tomlinson, 2014; Garland et al., 2013; Yiapanas, Thrassou, & Vrontis, & Parrish et al., 2019). Several key factors influence this industry, including good governance through transparency, accountability, and financial control. The application of stakeholder theory helps create a transparent system and balanced power structure, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interest of sports and its stakeholders. Corporate governance quality, including board size, independence and ownership, significantly impacts the profitability, viability and financial performance of football clubs



(Mrindoko & Issa, 2023; Liang, 2014; Dimitropoulos & Tsagkanos, 2012; Tomlinson, 2014, Dimitropoulos, 2011).

Therefore, soccer organizations can improve their leadership and governance by adopting good governance principles and professional management techniques. By adopting these practices, soccer organizations can increase professionalism, improve financial performance, and reduce administrative problems. Prioritizing good governance is essential for soccer organizations to enhance their capacity to add value to the business of soccer (Green & Ghaye, 2018; Tomlinson, 2014; Kilpatrick, 2013).

### ***Measuring Frameworks for Sporting Success in soccer Clubs***

Sporting success in soccer clubs can be measured using various indicators, such as the attraction of talented players and the achievement of victories at both national and international levels. Another perspective is considering the club's capacity to generate market income and meet consumer demands through both commercial and on-field performance. The relationship between sporting performance and financial performance can be analyzed to understand the impact on the club's stock price. However, it is crucial to note that on-field performance is also significant (Klobucnik, Plesivcak, & Vrabei, 2019; Frost & Halabi, 2007; Abbas, 2022; Guzman, 2021; Kozma & Kazai, 2015).

Various measuring frameworks offer both benefits and limitations in the assessment of sporting success in soccer clubs. The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) and Public Sector Scorecard (PSC) frameworks provide a strategic approach to managing sports clubs, considering both on-field and off-field success, stakeholder involvement, and commercial success. The soccer Management Quality Score (FoMa Q-Score) framework comprehensively assesses management quality in terms of sporting success, financial performance, fan welfare maximization, and leadership and governance. Analytical valuation models based on crowd valuations from social media offer dynamic sporting human capital disclosures that capture the intellectual capital of football clubs (Kozma & Kazai, 2015; Zulch et al., 2020; Rubio et al., 2022; Bouzidis, 2018; James & Miettinen, 2010; Arraya, 2022).

However, the lack of a framework for measuring the social and community impact of soccer clubs limits their ability to justify differential treatment and engage with communities proactively. Marino emphasized the relationship between sporting success and economic variables, emphasizing the collective nature of sporting success and its contribution to a team's long-term value. A study on strategic factors influencing sporting success and financial wealth identified leadership, human capital, value creation, and a distinctive capabilities system as key factors. The challenges faced when measuring sporting success in football clubs include going beyond domestic success, translating occasional surges in international revenues into a sustainable flow, understanding the complex relationship between on-field and off-the-field success, and adjusting to shifting conditions and industry obstacles (Kozma & Kazaine - Onodi, 2017; Frost & Halabi, 2007; Gurel, Ekmekci, & Kucukkaplan, 2012; Lepschy, Wasche, & Woll, 2018; Kelly, Lewis, & Mortimer, 2012)

### ***Soccer Club Business Models and Sporting Success***

Soccer clubs face numerous challenges in their business practices, including constant adjustments to changing environments and anticipating internal variability determinants. They maximize profits through strategic marketing opportunities that connect with games or matches. Organizational changes have led to modern control, planning, risk and financial management, emphasizing the importance of corporate governance in avoiding problems related to the use of performance-enhancing supplements. Unanswered questions regarding financing, such as the impact of risks and the market value of capital costs, remain unresolved. Soccer clubs are increasingly operating as business-oriented organizations that use strategic marketing activities to maximize profits and achieve success both on and off the field. Changes in international professional soccer have significantly impacted the success of certain clubs, leading to the adoption of new strategies in European soccer leagues. A value-based approach to strategic marketing is advocated for football clubs, emphasizing the need to re-examine and develop value propositions and identify true competitors (Ciechan-Kujawa & Perechuda, 2022; Kolawole-Abon & Adebayo, 2021; Bacs, 2012; Nichol & Duffy, 2017; Nagy & Bácsne, 2014).

A structured business model approach can help analyze and improve managerial performance in professional European soccer clubs. However, concerns persist about the industry's structure and its



ability to support reasonable business expectations. The future direction of football clubs as a business practice involves a focus on marketing, value creation and strategic analysis to achieve sustainable success (Kolawole & Adebayo, 2021; András & Havran, 2015; Vrontis, et al., 2014; Buck & Ifland, 2023; Cross & Henderson, 2003)

Incorporating strategic marketing into operations and services can help soccer clubs attract spectators and supporters, promote matches and club products, deliver services effectively, and create a positive physical environment. Understanding and adapting business models to the changing environment and internal determinants of variability is crucial. Additionally, making smart choices in player recruitment by monitoring relevant parameters that predict market value can contribute to the growth and survival of football clubs (Abon, 2020; Ciechan-Kujawa & Perechuda, 2022; Kolawole & Adebayo, 2021; Baouan et al., 2022; Buck & Ifland, 2023).

### ***Ownership of soccer Clubs and Sporting Success***

Wealthy individuals increasingly own soccer clubs, raising concerns about club owners' motives and interests. Owning a soccer club presents financial and operational difficulties and corporate governance challenges. The increasing level of financial and operational difficulties often stems from wealthy individuals without community or club history. Financial sustainability is also a challenge, as many clubs struggle financially at the grassroots level, relying heavily on external funding sources (Kelly et al., 2012; Cordery & Baskerville, 2012; Nagy & Bacsne, 2014; Bacs, 2014; Ciechan & Perechuda, 2022).

The growth of soccer and the increase in membership numbers pose challenges in managing the infrastructure and resources needed to support the growing number of participants. The most effective ways for a soccer club to be maintained depend on the club's objectives and priorities. Different ownership structures have different impacts on management efficiency and financial performance. Private investors can reduce efficiency in French professional soccer clubs, whereas European clubs typically maximize utility through complex goals that may not always be fully compatible. The pursuit of global market growth and commercialization can come at the expense of social and cultural value (Nagy, 2013; Nagy, 2012; Bull & Whittam, 2016; Rohde & Breuer, 2018).

The most effective ownership structure for a soccer club depends on finding a balance between financial objectives, sporting success, and social and cultural value. Different types of ownership models offer both benefits and drawbacks. Private sector ownership models, such as stock listing and private investor models offer the potential for professionalization and financial stability but prioritize profit maximization over community and social value, leading to conflicts of interest and neglect of heritage. Government ownership in Iran may lack professionalization standards and hinder clubs' growth and competitiveness. In Italy, influential entrepreneurial families can lead to conflicts of interest and opacity in commercial formulas (Amirnejad, Elahi, & Yazdi, 2018; Bull & Whittam, 2016; Farauddello & Gelmini, 2019; Adams, Morrow, & Thomson, 2016; Breuer, 2018).

### ***Changes in soccer management frameworks and sporting success***

The commercialization of soccer has led to significant changes in soccer management frameworks, including the transformation of industry practices and strategic international development. The development of digital broadcasting and increased commercial income has brought both opportunities and challenges to soccer clubs. The commercialization of football has led to a fundamental transformation of management practices and strategic international development, with the formation of departments such as marketing, communications, and work with fans (Memari, et al., 2021; Zulch et al., 2020; Moraes, et al., 2022; Green & Ghaye, 2018; Samur, 2017; Yiapanas, Thrassou, & Vrontis, 2020).

However, the market forces of commercialization, such as pay-per-view television, have also destabilized many sporting competitions and institutions, leading to chronic financial losses among professional sports clubs. Additionally, the commercialization of soccer has led to changes in the culture and identity of soccer clubs, resulting in discontent among soccer fans. Despite these challenges, commercialization has provided clubs with opportunities to establish their brand, bring in revenue, and ensure long-term success (Green & Ghaye, 2018; Samur, 2017; Moraes et al., 2022; Bacs, 2014).



The Chinese government's investment in the soccer industry has created opportunities for growth and development, although challenges such as high operational costs and competition from media outlets remain. The best practices for managing football in a commercial environment include adopting new management models, using relationship marketing and commercial guidelines, implementing supply chain management, exploiting football's inherent advantages, and focusing on building a traditional football identity. These practices help in attracting and retaining fans, generating and managing revenues, ensuring sustainability and viability, improving industry productivity, and satisfying the needs of footballers and supporters (Chadwick & Hamil, 2009; Hassan & Hamil, 2011; Krabbenbos, 2013; Chadwick & Hamil, 2009; Manoli & Kenyon, 2018; Memari et al., 2021; Zhang, 2020).

## Conclusions

The astonishing expansion of modern sport occurred during the twentieth century, starting with the leading political and industrial nations of Western Europe and the United States and spreading worldwide. As demonstrated by this systematic review, generalizable knowledge regarding modern soccer management can be a valuable resource for soccer administrators seeking to become more aware of the challenges associated with the field. Considerable progress has been made in the field of soccer management in recent years. However, the assessment revealed some deficiencies that future investigations must address to yield more invaluable insights into the factors governing victory.

By tackling the existing obstacles encountered in modern soccer industry management practices and current challenges, future studies can provide a deeper understanding of successful tactics and resolutions. By employing meticulous theoretical structures and research methodologies, researchers can provide recommendations grounded in empirical evidence, thereby elevating soccer management standards. The primary goal of this comprehensive assessment is ultimately to offer direction for forthcoming scholarly undertakings, thus making a valuable contribution to the advancement of this particular discipline and facilitating the establishment of more effective management in the football industry. As a result, a massive or single research study on the current practices, issues, and possibilities of the modern soccer industry at the local, sub-regional, continental, and international levels is feasible.

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### Authors' and translators' details:

Daniel Getnet  
ZelalemMelkamu  
Sisay Mengistu

getnetdaniel1985@gmail.com  
melkamuzelalem@gmail.com  
livsis@gmail.com

Author/translator  
Author  
Author

