

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN EUROPEAN SPORT CLUBS: ANALYSIS AND CLASSIFICATION OF ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMS

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countries, which are under the common EU framework, can reveal effective CSR attributes/types.

Research design and data analysis:
Data were collected based on the website information the sport clubs provided. A total of 19 sport clubs websites were analyzed. The sample included professional elite-level football clubs from five countries: France, Germany, Italy, Spain and UK. These countries have some of the most successful and popular football clubs worldwide and represent the different administration CSR practices existent in Europe. In addition, those clubs also had the best performance record as well as the best CSR practices among clubs. Analysis was conducted in two stages. First, a preliminary analysis identified the clubs that had implemented CSR programs. The second stage of analysis included the web-based content analysis of documents, articles, and reports. The advantage of this method is that it is systematic and inter-subjectively comprehensible and provides for a detailed content of the nature and types of CSR efforts and initiatives the clubs are currently addressing. Given the strong allegiances of fans and the connection between team and community, this would be an appropriate vehicle for a team to communicate their efforts in this area. Each author independently classified the CSR programs, and then the authors discussed their individual findings to determine the specific categories of CRS programs.

Abstract

Aim of paper and research questions:
This study seeks to understand Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in European sport clubs by analysing and classifying the CSR activities and programs. Specifically, the study had two objectives: (1) To conduct a web-based analysis of documents, articles, and reports of the European sport clubs that already have CSR programs in place and (2) To determine the attributes and the type of those CSR programs.

Literature review:
Academic research on CSR in the realm of sport has begun to examine the discrete benefits that philanthropy, community outreach, cause-related marketing, employee volunteer programs and other socially beneficial activities have on the organization and its constituents (Babiak & Wolfe, 2006, 2009; Walker & Kent, 2009). A growing number of professional teams and leagues in North America have demonstrated high commitment to CSR by investing substantial organizational resources into developing different programs (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). Similarly, professional sport clubs in Europe have adopted CSR programs as a means to achieving strategic organizational goals (Brietbarth and Harris (2008). The European club system is traditionally community-driven (Brown, 2000), which helps foster socially-responsible efforts. Moreover, the European Union constitutes an active trading block promoting CSR, which cultivates a framework for establishing partnerships that provide opportunities to European sport clubs to benefit from adopting sustainable business models and integrate CSR in their long-term planning (Brietbarth & Harris, 2008). However, there has not been undertaken to date a systematic examination of the attributes and types of CSR programs that are adopted by European clubs. An analysis of the variety of CSR programs in different European

Results:
The analysis indicated the following categories: education/youth development, community/social inclusion, environment/sustainability, health, urban regeneration, international projects, and racism. Although there were some differences in the CRS activities among the clubs from different countries, results indicated that most CSR efforts were focused on programs related to education/youth development, community/social inclusion, health, and international projects. CSR initiatives associated with environmental sustainability, racism and urban regeneration were present but less emphasized. Results also indicated that some of the categories were not mutually exclusive but rather interrelated.

Discussion and conclusion:
This study represents an initial exploration of CSR programs in order to reveal the agendas of European football clubs that direct CSR efforts. The categories identified in this project are consistent with the EU's statement on the societal role of sport, which suggests that the CSR activities of sport clubs both influence and are influenced by broader environmental and cultural factors in the European context. By understanding the foci of CSR programs we can grasp their nature and outcomes. Additionally, this can illustrate the motives that lie behind the adoption of those programs, and improve our understanding of the distribution of benefits. Future research should extend this line of inquiry to a more comprehensive population of European sport clubs, which would allow for cross-continent comparisons with professional sport clubs in the United States. Additionally, this study sets the stage for future research to investigate the following critical issues related to these findings: (1) how organizations highly committed to social change differ from organizations with low commitment on the identified dimensions; and (2) patterns of adoption and reporting of CSR practices among teams that have shown little regard for social issues.

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