

The relationship of interorganisational citizenship behaviours and product innovation: a study of two French sport clusters

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Aim

The major purpose of this research is to investigate how interorganisational citizenship behaviour (ICB) influences product innovation in sport clusters. This informs the understanding of the source, ownership, control, and diffusion of innovation in interorganisational relationships. Additionally, we map out relationships and interactions between industry sectors and their organisations in specific sport related clusters. This creates a better understanding of cluster benefits and the interorganisational relationships and behaviour that underpin them. Finally, we provide insights with regards to industry restructuring in the context of sport organisations. This permits an assessment of the functioning and the long-term sustainability of sport cluster as a delivery system for sport products and sport disciplines.

Overall, this research aims at higher overall innovativeness and value creation within a cluster as a whole, and for individual cluster organisations. The authors' intention is furthermore to interpret the results in a wider context, such as other sport or consumer goods markets with similar characteristics, and locations with similar conditions.

Theoretical background

Sport clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected and interdependent organisations, specialized suppliers, service providers, related firms and associated institutions that focus on a particular sport or related sports. (Porter, 2008; Shilbury, 2000). Autry, Skinner & Lamb (2008) define ICB as discretionary interfirm behaviour that is not part of formal contractual agreements but that promotes the effective functioning of the group of organisations. Shilbury (2000) argues that a cluster is the value chain for all involved organisations. Supply chains in sport cluster can even go beyond its boundaries as the sport cluster may be embedded within a larger innovation and technology cluster. Innovation is the combination of inventions and the exploitation of market opportunities. It is a "creative force" which is especially important for sporting goods firms because technology is an important consumption lever. Sporting products are technologically complex products that are often required to fulfil incompatible characteristics (e.g. strong and low weight) (Desbordes, 2001). We suggest, that sport clusters present a favourable environment for the development of ICB, which might be a potential driver for innovation.

Methodology

Multiple case study method is used to pursue both theory verification (i.e. the extant cluster model) and theory construction (i.e. a new model of ICB and product innovation). We compare four different sport clusters, each representing one case. We selected them according to two criteria, sports (sailing or surfing) and location (France or Australasia). The cases were selected for theoretical reasoning. Equipment intensive sports were chosen because they provide potential for product innovation. The two locations all feature well developed industries for either sailing or surfing. The four case studies permit literal and theoretical replication while remaining manageable in the framework of this research project. (Yin, 2009). The data collection is guided by the central research question: "How does ICB influence product innovation in sport cluster?" and a set of subordinated research questions. We use four different data sources: interviews and observations as primary data sources, and documentation and archival data as secondary sources. A generic cluster map, derived from previous cluster research, identified key organisation types within each cluster. At least one organisation per type is used for primary data collection. Interview participants were the CEO, marketing manager and/or R&D manager. There were 22 semi-structured interviews, one unstructured in-depth interview and four explorative interviews conducted. Observations were made at four cluster events. Documentation and archival data was obtained from cluster members as well as from the internet. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and summarized in mini-cases. Those are validated in consultation with interviewees. Primary and secondary data is triangulated in case reports that permitted both intra- and inter-case analysis.

Results

Results from the first case suggest different subgroups and subsets of relationships in the cluster. We identify the following nine organization types in the sailing cluster in France: shipyard, naval architect, marine equipment, sail/rigging, services, media/communication, racing team, education/research, and governance body. Racing teams and governing bodies have most relationships to other organisations types. Marine equipment firms tend to have strong relationships to other marine equipment firms and research/ education institutions. The behaviour between the cluster members indicates ICB dimensions such as altruism, loyalty, tolerance, conscientiousness, and advancement. The role of ICB for innovation is often described in bilateral business relationships, informal partnerships or multilateral projects. The data indicates evidence for the existence of interorganisational citizenship behaviour and its positive influence on innovation, especially product innovation.

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