

SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT IN THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY: SETTING THE STAGE

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Aim of abstract

The football industry has been transformed from under-financed sport mostly driven by voluntaries to a major high- profile industry. Consequently, managing football organizations nowadays involves the application of management theories, principles and strategies that are no different to managing organizations in other sectors as long as these are customized and adjusted to the football industry (Hoye et al., 2008). This study addresses this issue by employing a Supply chain management (SCM) approach to develop understanding of the football industry and football club management.

Theoretical background

Every single organization can be conceived as involved in a supply chain relationship. Christofer (1998) defined the supply chain as network of organisations that are involved (through upstream and downstream linkages) in the different activities and procedures that produce value in the form of products and services into the hands of the end consumer. SCM is the process of planning, executing and controlling the relationships of activities carried out by different supply chain members or business units in order to extract value for the end customer (Lambert et al., 1998). This study focuses on SCM within the football industry. The football industry has gone through massive

development in recent decades, which is characterized by the increased commercialization of the game and the escalated importance of broadcasted demand of football. As a result, football consumers nowadays come against different offers at different times under different circumstances. The variety of offers create an array of consumer groups such as; spectators and supporters, satellite fans, club members, media, sponsors (corporate partners), other clubs, and local communities. All of these consumer groups are interlinked and are simultaneously bundles of the football club value captures (Dolles and Söderman, 2013) and members in the supply chain network.

Football club's supply chain network produces "products" such as football entertainment, football players, and football merchandise to end users (Dolles and Söderman, 2013). The supply chains actors of football products demand the development of effective and well-organized supply chains to deliver products, services, and information to a variety of customers and consumers (Sparks, 2010). Whether it is a the supply of products or services connected to match day, the availability of the new kit in stores, or the desire to buy new players or sell; making sure that the "right products are in the right place at right time" cannot be left unplanned. Given the significance of supply chains to the delivery of football product to consumers there is remarkably little written on the topic of sport logistics and supply chain management. This study addresses this gap and adds to the advancement in the field by identifying the supply chains of professional football clubs and their network actors – suppliers, customers, and consumers.

Methodology

A comprehensive systematic literature review is currently being conducted as a research methodology to accomplish the aim of the study. The review consists of two parts, the prior part concerns literature associated with the descriptors "SCM in SMEs" as European professional football clubs share many of the same characteristics as small-and-medium size enterprises (SMEs) (Moore and Levermore, 2012). The literature was systematically collected from the academic databases Science direct and Emerald Insight. A methodological decisions analysis of collected articles is also currently in progress with the aim to answer the key question, how is/can SCM be adjusted to SMEs in varied industries?

The latter part concerns literature provided by SPORTDiscus related to football club management and the football industry with the aim of defining a professional football club and their characteristics, and the special features and characteristics of the football industry. By examining and contrasting these two parts, this study will develop a theoretical framework, which links the characteristics of football clubs and their industry with the fundamentals of SCM. Moreover, it identifies football clubs supply chains and portrays the supply chain network of the football industry.

Discussion and implications

Sport management scholars are claiming for better management practices as their practices are seen as outdated and amateurish (e.g. Hoye et al., 2008). – this study attempts to address that. Amongst the proposed insights developed by this study is the understanding of the supply chain network of professional football clubs and the interrelated roles between supply chain members. Which is the foundation and a key element of SCM. This knowledge provides a picture

on what supply chain members produces specific output in the business processes and who provides them with the resources, knowledge, utilities, or assets to do so.

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