

Corporate social responsibility in Italian sport organization: A multiple case study

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Aim of paper and research questions

This study seeks to understand Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Italian sport organizations by analysing the CSR perception, programs and related activities. Specifically the research project aims to review social responsibility in four main Italian sports organizations, that already have CSR projects in place: two profit clubs (Football Padova and Basket Rome) and two no profit organizations (Italian Motorcycle Federation and Treviso Marathon Organizing Committee).

The concept of CSR has a long and varied history. We consider Epstein's (1987, p. 104) definition « *Corporate social responsibility* relates primarily to achieving outcomes from organizational decisions concerning specific issues or problems which (by some normative standard) have beneficial rather than adverse effects on pertinent corporate stakeholders. The normative correctness of the products of corporate action have been the main focus of corporate social responsibility ». Smith, and Westerbeek (2007) stressed the diversity of the discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, scientific statements, philosophical and moral propositions related to CSR conception and implementation.

This research considers two questions. How is seen CSR perception by Italian sport managers? Is there a gap between perception and implementation of CSR programs? If there is, which are the main reasons?

Methods

The search strategy focused on multiple case study (Yin 2003). Theoretical proposition to guide the collection and analysis of data was built after an analysis of existing literature (Anagnostopoulos 2011, Babiak, Trendafilova 2011).

The investigation model (descriptive approach) is composed by seven main dimensions (purposes, stakeholders, resources, tools, actions, methods of assessment, influencing factors).

Analytic technique used has been pattern-matching (Campbell 1975) comparing if the initially predicated results have been found and alternative patterns were absent.

Data collection has made using multiple sources of evidence (triangulation) searching (for each dimension) converging findings from documents, archival records from one side and interviews to the main sport manager from another side. Vertical analysis was provided in relation to investigate the coherence between the seven dimensions in each organization while horizontal analysis compared the individual dimensions of the four organizations under the subject of the case study.

Main results

Research has highlighted (question 1) the recent evolution of social responsibility in sport organizations examined and common modes of representation. It was an overall agreement on the purposes on social function of sport, transparent and ethical behaviour of sport organizations, stakeholder engagement, environmental protection, attention to the performance assessment (effectiveness and efficiency). Moreover results indicated that, in each organization examined, some of the seven categories are not very interrelated.

Research has also highlighted (question 2) that there is a clear gap between perception and implementation of social responsibility. The main influencing factors are a lack of available resources and dedicated structure for social responsibility; there's a requirement of a new managerial culture too.

Conclusions

There is growing attention to social responsibility and this study represents an initial exploration of CSR in Italian sport organizations. The pattern used must be implemented in order to highlight some differences in the CSR perception and related activities even better. The strategic dimension of social responsibility must be further investigated by promoting the link between university research and the world of sport organizations.

References

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