
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO ANALYZE SPORT FEDERATIONS' REACTIONS FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURES TO ADOPT CSR PRACTICES

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Synopsis:

The purpose of this research is to adopt an organizational level unit of analysis to understand how sport federations implement CSR following institutional pressures. Our research-in-progress intends to establish a conceptual framework to analyze and categorize the reactions of sport federations to institutional pressures in adopting CSR.

Abstract:

AIM OF PAPER & RESEARCH QUESTION

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has unquestionably become an area of study in sport management. The importance of social responsibility has risen to the forefront of concern for sport organizations considering the commercialization and globalization of sport. Negative practices (corruption, match fixing, poor governance) rose awareness of the need to address social concerns. Most sport organizations seem to be entering into socially responsible initiatives at a rapid pace. Teams, leagues, professional sport organizations, and sport industries currently participate in societal and community outreach efforts whether in the form of community development, philanthropy, environmental, health or educational initiatives (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007).

In the sports management research field, studies have indicated the motives of CSR, the types of CSR and communication of CSR, but not the process of integrating CSR in sport organization and their management. Moreover, while CSR in professional sport, in the sport industry and in major events have been subject of extensive analysis, CSR has not received sufficient attention within the specific context of sport federations.

The purpose of this research is to adopt an organizational level unit of analysis to understand how sport federations implement CSR following institutional pressures. Our research-in-progress notably intends to establish a conceptual framework to analyze and categorize the reactions of sport federations to institutional pressures in adopting CSR.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As Walker & Parent (2010) noted, social involvement of sport varies considerably due to geographical reach and stakeholder influences. General management literature provides few studies on stakeholders' capacity to influence the adoption of strategic CSR practices. According to Albareda et al. (2008), governments are key stakeholders in encouraging a greater sense of CSR. However, no research has yet provided insight into organisations' reactions following those institutional pressures.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to provide a better understanding of this relatively unexplored area in the context of sport federations. Institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) is used to analyze sport organizations' responses following institutional pressures, among which coercive isomorphism is important in the context of CSR. This model actually offers an interesting insight to study external institutional pressures from powerful entities, such as government, who have resources on which sport organizations depend. Hoye, Nicholson, & Houlihan (2010) depict that sport has become a focus for a growing volume of state regulatory activity. In this perspective, we specifically assume that public authorities (likewise other stakeholders) exert an influence over sport organizations to submit to pressure in adopting CSR.

METHODOLOGY

During primary field observations, we analyzed a number of national sport organizations with regard to the activities they self-reported on their websites as socially responsible involvement.

In order to better understand CSR within the national sport organizations, a quantitative survey will be conducted in the following weeks. Data will be collected using a questionnaire addressed to all the official Belgian sport federations (88 Flemish and 63 Walloon). A member of the board and a member of the staff will complete an online questionnaire about the type and amount of socially responsible activities the federation is engaged in, their specific CSR practices and strategies, the reasons why they position on CSR and which factors (including external institutions) influence their involvement.

RESULTS

Our data analysis will allow us to establish a framework to categorize the reactions of sport federations to institutional pressures. Organizations may adopt several main strategies: they could passively conform to pressures; proactively engage in management CSR strategies; or remain inflexible or even resist to the socially responsible issues. Clusters combining specific categories of reactions and federations will result from the analysis. Data collection of this

study is still ongoing. However preliminary field information indicate that sport federations are engaged in a variety of socially responsible activities. Our preliminary findings also reveal that organizations position themselves differently on the wider social issue based on the level of adoption to the CSR philosophy. Coding strategies will be used to identify the types of CSR activities and the degree of responses. Detailed analysis will be conducted in the following weeks and the definitive results will be available for presentation at the 2015 EASM conference in September.

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