

# **Better Health And Better Business: The Shared Value Of Hockey Fans In Training (Hockey FIT)**

**Riggin, Brendan; Danylchuk, Karen**

University of Western Ontario, Canada

E-mail: riggin01@gmail.com

## **Aim of the research**

The various organizational benefits of corporate social responsibility (CSR) have been well documented (e.g., developing brand loyalty, brand differentiation, and reputation protection). While much of the research has focused on the business-related outcomes, there is a dearth of research on the social benefits of these initiatives. Porter and Kramer (2011) believe that the two do not have to be exclusive. They argue that organizations should move past the tradition of merely stating that they are engaging in CSR and should measure their *shared value*, defined as “enhancing the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates” (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 6). The aim of the current study is to examine the shared value associated with stakeholders involved in a CSR health initiative designed to combat obesity and chronic disease.

## **Literature review**

In Canada, 62% of men are overweight or obese, which can lead to various chronic diseases (Statistics Canada, 2014). Consequently, over half of Canadian healthcare spending is for the treatment of chronic disease (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011). Specifically, male sports fans are at a greater health risk as they tend to weigh more, eat higher fat foods, and have worse general health habits than non-sports fans (Sweeney & Quimby, 2012). This represents many Canadians as two-thirds identify as hockey fans (Environics, 2012). Thus, Hockey Fans in Training (Hockey FIT) was created as a CSR health initiative aimed at improving the health of overweight and obese male hockey fans. Two major junior hockey teams agreed to collaborate with local researchers, a fitness facility, and community sponsors to combat the trend of increasing obesity rates and chronic disease. Hockey FIT provided the opportunity for participating organizations to demonstrate their CSR, and to potentially reap the associated business-related benefits, while creating shared value by helping to address an important social need.

## **Methodology, research design, and data analysis**

This study explored the shared value associated with Hockey FIT utilizing a mixed methods approach. Twenty fans from two hockey clubs (n = 40) participated in 12 weekly Hockey FIT sessions hosted in the local hockey club facilities. To determine the social benefits of Hockey FIT, objective health measurements (i.e., weight-loss, change in waist circumference, and physical activity levels) were measured at baseline, and follow-up assessments at 12 weeks and 12 months. To establish the business-related benefits of the program, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders involved in Hockey FIT including fans (n = 28), executives from both Major Junior hockey organizations (n = 3), the fitness facility coordinator (n = 1), the research team responsible for program delivery (n = 5), and a representative from the program’s sponsor (n = 1). The data will be analyzed using the Peterson, Pfitzer, Mazzuri, Wendel, and Hooson (2014) Social and Business Value Creation Pathway to establish how two levels of shared value (business and social) can be provided in different, but complementary ways. Specifically, themes that will be explored include the organization’s perception of community involvement, motivation for engaging with the community, and expected/realized inputs and business returns.

## **Results, discussion, and implications/conclusions**

The social benefits were evident from the positive improvements in health measurements. Following the completion of Hockey FIT (12 weeks), fans had, on average, reduced their weight by 4.4 kg, their waist circumference by 3.96 cm, and increased their physical activity by 3600 steps/day. At 12 months, the fans had maintained a partial weight-loss and reduction in waist circumference. The business-related benefits were determined from the qualitative findings. Overall, the program was received positively by the fans. For example, they acknowledged Hockey FIT as a means of protecting one team’s image during high organizational staff turnover. The community sponsor believed Hockey FIT was an opportunity to promote their brand in conjunction with their local hockey organization. Furthermore, the hockey organizations were motivated to give back to their fans by engaging in CSR; however, their initial perception was that they lacked the available resources to do so. Interviews with the remaining stakeholders are presently being conducted and thematic analysis is in progress.

Shared value is inherent in many health technology companies; however, there has been limited research conducted within the sport industry. Understanding each stakeholder's perspective is essential to determine the initiative's success, organizational benefits, and resulting health outcomes. This research demonstrates the ability for organizations to create shared value by improving the health of their community while simultaneously receiving a competitive advantage.

## References

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