

The Reputation Of Cross-Country Skiing And The Ski Federation In Norway In The Light Of Two Doping Cases

Skirstad, Berit

Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Norway

E-mail: berit.skirstad@nih.no

Introduction

Two doping cases in Norwegian cross-country skiing created immediate consternation in the media when they were released in July and October 2016 (Sundby and the Johaug cases). They represented a serious threat to both the image of cross-country skiing in the Norwegian population who are passionate about the sport, and the Norwegian Ski Federation (NSF). The reputation of the sport as well as the federation was at stake, and the reputation is all about the outside world's perception of both over time. A good reputation is difficult to achieve, but easy to lose. Reputation is widely recognized as a valuable, intangible asset. The societal expectations and values placed on sport and sporting organizations is higher than in mainstream business (Sherry, Shilbury & Wood, 2007). In this case, it was the president of the NSF, which is the highest person in the organization who had to take the criticism. The NSF is the second largest sport federation in the Norwegian Olympic, Paralympic and Confederation of Sports (NIF) and consists of 16 district ski associations, 1150 clubs and 185,000 members divided into six branches. Cross-country alone has 140,000 members.

Aim of the project

How did two doping cases affect the reputation of cross-country skiing and the Norwegian Ski Federation among the Norwegian population.

Theoretical background/literature review

Conflicts of interest theory (Carson, 1994), crisis communication (Coombs, 2007) and apologetic ethics (Hearit, 1994) are used as theory to understand how the reputation of cross-country skiing and the ski federation were affected by the two doping cases. Apologies are often used strategically in the crisis communication of an organization (Frandsen & Johansen, 2007).

Methods: Research from Sponsor Insight weekly, representative survey of the Norwegian population above 18 years of age; 4,000 interviews yearly and their statistics will be used. Retriever archive, which collect all national newspaper articles, radio reports and tv programs from Norway on reputation and the NSF will be analyzed. Content analysis of communication by media and sponsors about the federation is suitable because most of the information the stakeholders get about the organization is through the media.

Results

In their Ski Political Document (2016), the NSF states that the organization shall be characterized by voluntarism, democracy, loyalty, transparency and equality and all the activities should build on joy, community, health and honesty. As national governing body of the sport, NSF has a special responsibility to care of its rights and reputation in the tension field between the main elements in sport for all and the commercial values that elite sport creates (NSF, 2016). The Norwegian adult population has placed cross-country skiing as the most popular sport the last seven years. One would have expected that the two mentioned doping cases would have reduced the popularity of cross-country skiing, but findings show that was not the case. The popularity dropped just one percent to 51 after the Sundby case. NSF's reputation has been fairly balanced since 2012, but after the Sundby case it dropped quickly and after the next doping case the reputation even at a time was negative (Sætha, 2017) The question is if this two doping cases were something that NSF could control or if it was a result of situational factors. A possible reason for the drop in reputation can be that both the medical doctor and the support medical team were viewed upon as part of the federation. It did not help NSF's reputation that the federation tried to trivialize the case.

Reputation is very fragile and requires transparency, which were not present in the Sundby case. The federation kept the case secret for a year before the public. They hoped that WADA would accept the explanation of using the apparatus for asthma the way the Norwegians did. The frames of analysis that were used in the media news will be further analyzed.

References

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