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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE SPORT INDUSTRY

Sylvia Trendafilova and Sheila Nguyen

Overview

This chapter covers the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and how it is perceived in the realm of sport. More specifically, the reader will learn about the three components of CSR, emphasizing the environmental component as it is an area that has recently received growing attention in the sport industry. Further, the chapter presents some examples of environmental programs in various sport settings around the world. Additionally, the strategic decisions behind the adoption of environmental initiatives are discussed as well as some of the regulating bodies involved in these decisions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the current state of CSR in sport and suggestions of what the future might look like.

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility is defined as the “economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2003: 36). In other words, organizations have moral, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities in addition to their responsibilities to earn a fair return for investors and comply with the law. Being socially responsible means that a corporation identifies with its stakeholder groups and incorporates their needs within the day-to-day decision-making process. CSR-related actions are usually not required by law and the overarching goal is to contribute to some social good that benefits society (Carroll, 2000; McWilliams and Siegel, 2000).

The origin of Corporate Social Responsibility dates back to the 1930s, but its nature and scope has changed over time. The academic foundation of this concept is based on the book *Social responsibilities of the businessman* by Bowen (1953), in which it is assumed that businesses are moral agents and should operate within

guidelines set by society. Throughout the twentieth century, the study of CSR continued with the work of Davis (1960), Preston and Post (1975), and Jones (1980), suggesting that CSR should be viewed as a process and not a static concept. This new view not only expanded the knowledge of CSR, but also led to the development of Carroll's (1991) hierarchical model, categorizing CSR along four layers of responsibilities, economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary, and suggesting that these components of the model are not mutually exclusive. Although Carroll's model provided a comprehensive description of CSR, more recently Niskala and Tarna (2003) developed a model that offers a multidimensional view of CSR by incorporating three broad areas: economic, environmental, and social. Their model emphasizes the importance of conducting business in a balanced way by addressing relevant issues in all three areas.

The importance of social responsibility in business settings is illustrated by world-wide efforts to develop and implement CSR programs and initiatives. For example, the European Commission is one of the major leaders in CSR efforts in Europe, initiating new strategies and organizing a forum to discuss the progress of these efforts (European Commission, 2009). Efforts to incorporate CSR initiatives into daily business practices have reached Australia as well. In fact, despite internal resistance to CSR, Australian companies have not cut CSR budgets and continue to expand those activities (Welford, 2009). Research has examined the corporate social and environmental responsibility of businesses in Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and has concluded that political, social, and economic factors influence those activities (Baughn et al., 2007). For example, French and Dutch businesses are highly committed to environmental management, while firms in the United States are focusing more on philanthropic programs and volunteerism. In addition, mandatory regulations in Europe require businesses to annually report their environmental performance and to disclose the implementation of their environmental policies. A similar regulatory system exists in Australia where companies are required to report corporate governance practices.

Corporate Social Responsibility: sport and strategy

Since CSR activities are usually not required by law, for the most part they are philanthropic in nature. However, in recent years CSR has been viewed not only as a philanthropic engagement, but as a strategic approach as well, where business decisions are made to achieve social and strategic distinction (Porter and Kramer, 2006). Moreover, a strategic approach has the potential for a business to gain stability when changes are anticipated and to avoid financial and reputation risks (Bonini et al., 2006). Pohle and Hittner (2008) studied business leaders around the world and discovered that CSR practices are utilized as a strategic platform for growth and differentiation. While traditional business corporations have been placing an emphasis on CSR activities and, further, environmental accountability, sport has emerged as a unique platform for CSR (Coady et al., 2007).

The natural environment has become an important CSR consideration and, as evidenced in CSR research, environmental sustainability in both management and marketing literature is converging because of shared environmental, economic, and social concerns among managers and experts in marketing (Montiel, 2008). Recent research supports this and indicates a growing number of programs being adopted in major league professional sports in the United States (Babiak, 2010; Robinson, 2005; Sheth and Babiak, 2010). Consider the recent partnerships formed by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) with North American professional and collegiate sports, and similarly those relationships like the one developed between the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the Indian Premier League (IPL) in 2010 (UNEP and IPL, 2010). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has also played an active role in the growth of adopted programs, particularly in advising the sport industry on issues related to resource use (e.g., water and energy) and on more sustainable field and turf management (EPA, 2013). The NRDC professional and collegiate sport partnerships are well documented through highlighted cases via the respective systems (NRDC, 2012, 2013). For example, the key achievements documented by the NRDC among professional sports include such outcomes as having all league commissioners publicly committing to environmental stewardship, all major concessionaires developing environmentally preferable menus, and all leagues actively involved in educating their fans. Similarly, with the influence of the NRDC, the top three adopted sustainability considerations include 119 collegiate recreation departments and 97 collegiate athletics departments who have recycling bins in public spaces; there are 99 and 78 collegiate recreation and athletic departments, respectively, who boast office recycling programs, and 94 and 69 collegiate recreation and athletic departments who have bike racks and other infrastructure to promote bicycle commuting (see NRDC, 2013 for a full report on outcomes).

Sport entities are incorporating strategic corporate partnerships into their CSR programs, hoping to generate favorable brand imaging, fan loyalty, ticket sales, and sport development (Sports Philanthropy Project, 2007), with these efforts becoming increasingly institutionalized and formalized (Babiak and Trendafilova, 2011; Babiak and Wolfe, 2009). Sports organization personnel are making efforts to integrate CSR practices into their daily operations (Babiak and Wolfe, 2006; Brietbarth and Harris, 2008; Walters and Chadwick, 2009). CSR strategic programs usually achieve two objectives: 1) create a positive social impact, and 2) enhance the organization's brand, reputation, and in some cases its bottom line. In addition, a good CSR strategy helps employee engagement, innovation, and stakeholders' collaboration. Therefore, sport organizations have begun to view CSR efforts as the better option than traditional marketing relations as a means to increase consumer patronage and develop a positive brand image (Walker et al., 2011).

The natural environment: a CSR concern within the sport industry

Specific to the environment, professional sport teams and leagues are trying to understand the negative impact they have on the natural environment and are developing strategies to address relevant issues in order to mitigate this impact (Babiak and Wolfe, 2006). This new CSR environmental focus in sport is driven by changing societal values and increased engagement with and expectations by a variety of stakeholders (Babiak and Trendafilova, 2011; Horne, 2006). For example, Babiak and Trendafilova (2011) interviewed senior sport executives and discovered that seeking legitimacy by conforming to institutional pressures and expectations was one of the main motives that affected the decision to adopt environmental initiatives. Furthermore, these types of CSR practices could have economic and legitimacy benefits for a sport organization (Babiak and Trendafilova, 2011; Pfahl, 2010).

Trendafilova and Babiak (2013) specifically studied environmentally related CSR practices among professional sport teams in North America, and found that teams and leagues recognized their environmental initiatives as being central to strategic planning and related to their other CSR programs, resulting in internal benefits to the organization (e.g., employee engagement, image enhancement) as well as external benefits (e.g., new sponsors, customers, the environment). Environmentally focused CSR programs could benefit both the sport organization and society as a whole. Sport organizations often operate teams, venues, and events that are resource intensive (Babiak and Trendafilova, 2011). Thus, strategies to reduce the social, environmental, and financial costs glean a number of attractive outcomes for the sport organization and simultaneously their communities and stakeholders. These benefits could be successfully achieved by leveraging key stakeholders such as the media, to communicate a focus on the environment and educate fans.

The rise of environmental CSR in the sport industry is evident not only in the United States, but around the world as well. For example, FIFA has established a Green Goal Program, with the aim of organizing a climate-neutral World Cup (FIFA, 2009). Further, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) made the decision to incorporate the environment as the third *pillar* of Olympism alongside sport and culture (Cantelon and Letters, 2000). In collaboration with the IOC, the United Nations is actively involved in promoting sustainable sport, by organizing global forums on sport and the environment, focusing in particular on corporate environmental responsibility (UNEP, 2008).

While professional sports have been the main high-profile drivers behind the inclusion of environmental sustainability on the CSR agenda, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) schools' athletic departments are also integrating the environment into their planning process in order to most efficiently utilize scarce resources and to address the negative impact sport events and facilities have on the environment (Pfahl, 2010, 2011). With strategic emphasis on environmental actions, athletic departments can generate additional revenue and connect

more closely with the local community. This close relationship could lead to the development of strategic partnerships and to attracting new and unconventional sponsors (e.g., supply chain, packaging, etc.). The key outcomes for most of these examples demonstrate that CSR is viewed as a strategic investment, and the scope of activities associated with CSR should continue expanding by including the protection of the natural environment. This strategic approach to managing the natural environment has the potential to bring both short-term and long-term benefits to the sport organization.

Table 7.1 provides examples of those who have integrated their efforts at a strategic level. This is not the case for many other examples where environmental sustainability efforts are in their infancy or are still managed ad hoc. As clearly articulated by Porter and Kramer (2006), “if, instead, corporations were to analyze their prospects for social responsibility using the same frameworks that guide their core business choices, they would discover that CSR can be much more than a cost, a constraint, or a charitable deed – it can be a source of opportunity, innovation, and competitive advantage” (p. 2).

Environmental CSR in various sport settings

The daily operations of sport entities and the conduct of the athletics contests require the consumption of energy and water consumption and production of a variety of wastes, often in significant amounts. To address these issues and to minimize the adverse effect their operations have on the natural environment, sport professionals at all levels turned their attention to environmental CSR initiatives (Babiak and Trendafilova, 2011; Babiak and Wolfe, 2006, 2009; Brietbarth and Harris, 2008; Sheth and Babiak, 2010; Smith and Westerbeek, 2007).

For example, the major professional leagues in North America have each initiated environmental programs and some have partnered with the NRDC. Programs such as the Greening Advisors program are used to implement systems, structures, and processes by which to engage in greening activities. A team at the leading edge of these efforts is the Philadelphia Eagles of the National Football League (NFL), with their owner being at the forefront of the adoption and implementation of environmental programs. Their stadium is the first in the United States capable of generating 100 percent of its energy from renewable sources: solar panels, biodiesel/natural gas generator, and 14 wind turbines (NRDC, 2012). In addition, the team has a comprehensive recycling program and recycles plastic, aluminum, and paper products. Interestingly, the Eagles have even adopted a forest in Pennsylvania.

Following the example of the Philadelphia Eagles, other teams and leagues have adopted green initiatives. San Antonio Spurs of the National Basketball Association (NBA) incorporated environmental programs as their main CSR platform and purchased wind energy to power stadium and practice facilities. Every year around the Super Bowl, the NFL organizes tree planting in the local community hosting the event. In Major League Baseball (MLB), the Houston Astros are making efforts to compost their food waste and to recycle plastic and cardboard at their stadium.

TABLE 7.1 Examples of key actions and outcomes of environmental efforts

<i>Organization/ venue</i>	<i>Driving force</i>	<i>Key action(s)</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Los Angeles Staples Center	“When you realize that this is truly a priority to our organization, you have to look for ways to do that. Beginning with the planning and design of STAPLES Center in 1998, this has always been our way of life,” says Bill Pottorff, Vice President of Engineering for STAPLES Center and Nokia Theatre L.A. Live.	Adoption of innovative clean technology ISO 14001 certification process Strategic partnerships with high-profile tenants	Save an average of \$55,000 a year in energy costs Reduce direct water costs by \$28,200 a year 90% of cleaning products have green certifications
The Philadelphia Eagles (NFL)	“This commitment makes good business sense, but more importantly, it helps our Eagles organization to fulfill our role as a community champion by inspiring others to take a step forward and ‘Go Green!’ to help save our wonderful planet,” say Jeffrey and Christina Lurie, owners of the Philadelphia Eagles.	Construction design considerations Environmentally minded procurement policies Organization-wide commitment to their environmental sustainability journey	Reduced electricity consumption by more than 33% Cut water waste by 21% All requests for proposals (RFPs) mandate that vendors propose green-certified materials as standard
University of Colorado Boulder	“Key to our sports greening collaboration is the clear desire of students to move in this direction,” says Dave Newport, director of CU-Boulder’s Environmental Center.	Employment of recycling and composting efforts Design focus on energy efficiency, green building design, and turf management Net-zero energy and zero-waste strategies	Innovation: first of its kind tea-compost irrigation system 78.5% waste diversion rate Implementation of a successful Green Stampede tailgating materials recovery program

Source: National Resources Defense Council Report (2012).

Other examples of environmental practices by sport teams include water-conserving fixtures, bicycle parking, convenient access for public transit users and pedestrians, and recycled building materials (Green Sports Alliance, 2012). Due to the essence

of the game and the requirements for their facilities, the National Hockey League (NHL) focuses specifically on reducing water consumption. The NHL developed and implemented an online measurement tool, complete with specific metrics, for all NHL venue personnel to track and to analyze data related to waste, energy usage, and water consumption. This initiative has encouraged sport venues across North America to decrease the environmental impact and to bring awareness of the resources used and the financial costs incurred (NHL Green, 2012).

In addition to professional sports, intercollegiate athletics personnel in the United States have also started paying attention to the environment, and athletics departments among the NCAA schools are strategically planning green initiatives. Athletics department personnel are beginning to understand and to examine their role in campus environmental activities, the illustration of which is the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) (Swearingen White, 2009). This area of sport combines internal initiatives within athletics departments with the need to work with broader university requirements such as those of the ACUPCC.

For example, many NCAA schools are following in the footsteps of the University of Colorado, the first Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) school to launch a zero-waste program for waste reduction at football games. The program also addresses the energy used in powering the stadium, team travel, and other football-related activities. Similarly, the University of Tennessee has established the recycling program Good Sports Always Recycle in an effort to promote recycling at all sporting events. The program operates with the assistance of corporate sponsors Eastman Kodak, Coca-Cola, Waste Connections, and Food City. North Carolina State University formed the Sustainability in Athletics Committee, which includes key university and athletics department personnel, campus sustainability office personnel, and faculty members. The committee incorporated environmental sustainability as part of the university-wide strategic plan. Florida State University and Penn State have also implemented a recycling program at their football games, targeting the concourses inside the stadium, along with the tailgate areas and parking lots. Through the efforts of this program, Florida State University collected over 32 tons of recyclable material during the 2010 football season alone (Florida State University, 2011).

Outside of the United States, there are a number of initiatives being led by the sport industry. With the IOC officially committing efforts to address the natural environment as a social responsibility, the 2010 Winter Olympics Vancouver Organizing Committee and the 2012 London Olympic Games Organising Committee adopted holistic approaches (social, economic, and environmental) in managing the Games. Both organizing committees developed a sustainability policy, which included a reporting system in Vancouver (Coady et al., 2007) and a sustainability legacy in London (London 2012's sustainability legacy lives on, 2012). The IPL partnered with the UNEP in 2010 to send a "clear and powerful signal to millions upon millions of spectators and fans: namely that if we all bat together, we can score fours and sixes for a more sustainable future," Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP (UNEP and the IPL, 2010).

In Australia, the natural environment conditions (e.g., drought, floods, etc.) have impacted the sport industry and have forced the industry to respond. Their efforts have been motivated by environmental necessity, government mandate, and more recently as a recognized social responsibility. For example, Simonds Stadium, a multi-purpose sporting venue and home to teams and leagues such as the Geelong Football Club (Australian Football League), A-League, Super Rugby, Rugby League, Super-X, Domestic First Class Cricket, and Nitro Circus, has been an active participant in considering opportunities for environmentally responsible built environment developments. It was originally built in 1941 on Crown-owned land, and since 2005 has been managed by the City of Greater Geelong. Recent developments saw venue personnel introduce a number of physical changes to the facility in order to minimize its environmental footprint. Two key areas of interest during the changes were water and energy savings. To accomplish these goals, systems were introduced to harvest storm water, to implement a drought-tolerant turf playing surface, and to install dual flush cisterns and flow-restricted showerheads. For lighting, LED lighting in netball courts, sensor lighting within the stadium, and CBUS lighting control systems have been implemented. In implementing these changes, Simonds has been able to save at least 20 megaliters of water per year and plan to increase the stadium's capacity by installing more LED lighting and managing the lighting towers and overall energy consumption. Through these efforts, the City of Greater Geelong hopes to review their waste management practices along with improving their community awareness and education efforts to position themselves as leaders in this space. As Natalie Valentine, the manager of Simonds Stadium and coordinator of Sport Venues (City of Greater Geelong, Victoria, Australia), sums it up:

Simonds Stadium Management and the City of Greater Geelong are committed to ongoing developments and improvements, assisting in identifying the Stadium as environmentally friendly, sustainable and a leader in the industry. With a captive audience of over 34,000 at any given event, we are aware that the changes and improvements we make within our stadium and the education we provide our clients and spectators results in a direct benefit to the wider community.

(Personal interview, November 11, 2013)

Examples such as these from around the world demonstrate the tactical implementation of CSR initiatives related to the environment. However, strategic management leadership of the efforts remains critical for the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

Protecting the environment: regulation and leadership

The sport industry has experienced a diffusion of environmental initiatives over the past ten years, and the motives behind the strategic decisions to include the

environment as a core component of the overall CSR efforts are multifaceted. Growing social expectations, increasing affluence, and globalization play a role in determining the future of CSR. The current trend is for organization personnel to increasingly implement more and expand current environmental initiatives into their CSR efforts as a strategic necessity to preserve organizational legitimacy in the face of changing social values (Vidaver-Cohen and Simcic Brønn, 2008). This focus on the environment and greening programs will continue to be on the agenda of many sport organizations not only because of the ongoing shift in social values related to environmental issues, but also because of new expectations (e.g., financial performance, adherence to governmental regulations) from a variety of stakeholders.

Interest groups, government agencies, and corporate partners are developing their own CSR agendas and, in their partnerships, sport organizations are responding to maintain mutually beneficial relationships (Nguyen et al., 2014). Improving the financial performance of an organization, for instance, is determined to a large degree by the satisfaction of the stakeholders' interests. Therefore, addressing these new expectations is critical to an organization's planning processes over time. The adoption of environmental CSR activities is often associated with some initial cost (rather large in some instances, such as solar panels), which could affect management decisions about which specific programs to adopt first and how to strategically distribute limited resources.

Although most environmental CSR activities in the sport industry are voluntarily driven, recent government regulations require that new facilities meet specific environmental standards, thus forcing sport organizations to carefully plan and comply. In some markets, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, established by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC), is understood as the standard of design and development. Several professional teams have obtained LEED certification for the facilities in which they play. For example, the Orlando Magic (NBA) was the first new arena in the NBA to be LEED certified. Similarly, the Washington Nationals (MLB) play in a new green stadium (LEED Silver certified). LEED, while a USGBC certification, is not only limited to North American facilities, but has made its way to other parts of the world, as evidenced at Melbourne and Olympic Parks, more well known as the home of the Tennis Grand Slam Circuit's Australian Open. In its AUS\$700 million major 15-year redevelopment project, the Eastern Plaza Project (where the National Tennis Centre is located) has recently achieved LEED Gold Certification; the new Margaret Court Arena will also be pursuing LEED certification in this development plan (Melbourne and Olympic Parks, 2014).

Other regulating bodies that have supported built environmental sustainability decisions include the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), which creates and shares sustainability reporting guidelines for voluntary use in reporting their environmental impact (www.globalreporting.org), and also the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which houses the ISO 14000 family that "addresses various aspects of environmental management...[and] provides

practical tools for companies and organizations looking to identify...and improve their environmental performance” (iso.org, 2009). Further, there are several industry partners that assist the sport industry in making better environmental decisions across their business in areas such as procurement and waste management (e.g., Forestry Stewardship Council, Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Protection Agency, etc.).

Along with the growing opportunities for certification and regulation, the sport industry has positioned itself as a leader in the movement and has made it their responsibility to address environmental sustainability. Environmentally focused CSR programs appear to be perceived not only as strategic but as a value driver as well, with many benefits that are not reflected in traditional financial terms (Babiak and Trendafilova, 2011). Considering the shifting social consciousness around environmental issues and the social bonds or contracts sport organizations have with local communities, sport organizations have positioned themselves to strategically take advantage of these opportunities in taking the lead in making environmental sustainability a CSR priority.

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