Is Shared Team Experience Really Team-Specific? Some Evidence from International Soccer Teams

Bill Gerrard, University of Leeds
Maurizio Massaro, Ca’ Foscari, University of Venice
Francesca Dal Mas, University of Lincoln
Nick Bontis, McMaster University

Finance/Economics - Economics (Professional Sport) virtual asynchronous
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Abstract 2020-046 Session: Economics I

Introduction
Recent research emphasises the role of shared team experience as an important determinant of team performance. In the sports context this research has focused on semi-permanent domestic club teams (DCTs) in professional or college team sports in which there are much greater opportunities for coaches and players to accumulate experience of working together. In this study, we extend this research to the impact of shared team experience in temporary teams using national representative teams (NRTs) in professional soccer. We question the conventional assumption that shared team experience is team-specific and, hence, non-transferable. Instead we investigate the extent to which shared team experience acquired in DCTs is transferable to NRTs.

Previous Research
The resource-based view (Barney, 1991) argues that sustainable competitive advantage derives from unique, imperfectly imitable resources. Dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2007) provides a complementary approach emphasising the need to “continuously create, extend, upgrade, protect and keep relevant the enterprise’s unique asset base” (p. 1319). Both approaches identify human resources as a key asset/capability. Within dynamic capabilities theory, there has been increasing focus on the role of asset orchestration, particularly human resource orchestration. Asset orchestration represents “the capability to identify resource gaps and fill them in response to new opportunities, repeatedly” (Chatterji & Patro, 2014, p. 396). Several studies have investigated human resources as a source of sustainable competitive advantage in pro team sports, treating shared team experience as the unique team-specific asset/capability (Berman et al., 2002; Gerrard & Lockett, 2018). Both of these studies used semi-permanent teams i.e. teams in which players and coaches work together on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis over one or more playing seasons.

Hypotheses
Hypothesis 1: NRT shared team experience of both players and coaches have a significant positive effect on NRT performance.

Hypothesis 2: DCT shared team experience of both players and coaches have a significant positive effect on NRT performance.

Data and Methods
We apply regression analysis to a panel dataset comprising annual data for 64 NRTs in professional soccer, 2010 - 2017. NRT performance is measured by end-of-year FIFA World Rankings. We develop a series of fixed-effects models with shared team experience of players and coaches at both DCTs and NRTs as explanatory variables. We control for general experience (age) and dynamic effects (lagged NRT performance). We also include interaction terms to allow for moderation effects.

Results and Discussion
We find that (i) NRT shared team experience of both players and coaches have a significant impact on NRT performance (Hypothesis 1); and (ii) DCT shared team experience of players has a significant impact on NRT performance (Hypothesis 2). There are two key implications of this study. First, shared team experience has an impact on the performance of temporary teams, not just semi-permanent teams. Second, when individuals are
simultaneously involved in more than one team, the performance effects of shared team experience no longer constitute a purely team-specific asset/capability but are transferable between teams. Overall our study reinforces the importance of human resource orchestration as a source of competitive advantage.