Conceptualizing the Creation of Shared Value in the Sport Ecosystem: The Role of Sponsors and Event Hosts

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As the challenges facing contemporary businesses and the complexities of society intensify, the concept of creating shared value (CSV) has become increasingly prominent for its potential to conceptualize a corporate activity that exemplifies both economic and social values (Wójcik, 2016). A number of leading global companies have begun to operationalise CSV as a key principle for sustainable growth, enabling business leaders to more closely align core strategy with the societal issues it can potentially impact on, whilst maintaining a focus on profit maximization.

The notion of ‘value’ continues to attract debate within the scholarly community, with Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) determining that value is co-created by numerous social and economic actors. In the context of Major Sport Events (MSEs), these can be considered as co-creation platforms (Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014) because they can help enhance resource exchange and integration between various actors, such as sponsors and MSE properties. Nevertheless, it has been argued that sponsorship-related research is siloed across disciplines and is as a result, disconnected, with a particular shortage of research that examines marketing management of the sponsorship process (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019).

Therefore, a holistic approach to address this gap is needed. This study aims to conceptualize the creation of shared value in the sport ecosystem by sponsors and MSEs. In-depth, semi-structured interview data were collected from senior industry executives representing either MSE properties or MSE sponsors, with a clear remit for sponsorship within their roles. An NVivo-facilitated template analysis (Brooks & King, 2014) was employed due its flexibility, allowing the researchers to add inductive codes to a template created using a deductive approach, whereby initial codes were formed from concepts within current literature. Particular attention was paid to conformability, specifically inter-coder agreement, to assess the extent to which the data were analysed in the same way by two researchers.

The findings indicate that sponsors and MSEs can utilise capabilities, consistency and cultivation, which corroborates Maltz and Schein’s (2012) view that these variables are key drivers of CSV. Results from the interviews also indicate that this process can be enhanced by the presence of a symbiotic relationship between an MSE property and its associated sponsor(s), with duration of this relationship emerging as a particularly influential factor for CSV. Furthermore, CSV can impact and be impacted by a range of actors within the sport ecosystem including the MSE, sponsors, the host location, educational institutions, athletes and consumers.

This study has several theoretical and managerial implications. It builds on our current knowledge by delineating the CSV concept and proposing an integrative model that can be applied within the sport ecosystem. The findings also contribute to the further development of productive relationships between sponsors and MSEs aiming at creating an enduring footprint with a range of actors within an MSE ecosystem. Overall, the study represents the first attempt to conceptualize CSV in the sport management field and provides practitioners with nuanced insights about its role in the sports industry.