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Do Fans Care? Assessing the Influence of Corporate Social Responsibility on Consumer Attitudes in the Sport Industry

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Organizations within the sport industry are facing increasing pressure to both maintain profitability and behave in socially acceptable ways, yet researchers have provided little information on how consumers perceive and react to corporate social responsibility (CSR). This mixed-design study examined the relationship between CSR activities and fans' assessments of reputation and patronage intentions. In addition, the study sought to determine the role of team identification in the aforementioned relationship. Fans of two NFL teams were sampled ($N = 297$), with quantitative results suggesting that CSR is an important predictor of reputation, and that two types of patronage could be significantly impacted as well. The moderating effect of team identification was significant yet influenced the outcomes in different ways. Qualitative findings reinforced the quantitative discussion by providing support for the general conclusions that CSR was viewed favorably by most fans, and is an important aspect of the overall business strategy of a sport organization.

The early part of the 21st century has ushered in a new era of corporate scrutiny, and the heightened accountability that goes along with it. Consumer distrust of many corporate entities is high, with the misdeeds of a few tainting the marketplace for the rest. Headline-making companies such as Enron, Arthur Anderson, Merrill Lynch, and Tyco have triggered a rapid shift in how companies are viewed both legally and by the public at large. Harris Interactive and the Reputation Institute found that the public's sentiments are very critical toward many companies, with three-quarters of their survey respondents grading the image of big corporations as either "not good" or "terrible" (Alsop, 2004, p. B1). These findings come nearly four years after a *BusinessWeek* cover story described Americans as ". . . uneasy about big business" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 145). A recent Harris Poll found that 72% of Americans believe that business has too much power over American life and more than two-thirds agreed that companies care more about making

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large profits than about selling safe, reliable, quality products (Mohr & Webb, 2005).

While not widely publicized until recently, most organizations have responded to the mounting scrutiny and consumer demands by integrating elements of social responsibility into their business operations. Corporate giving is nothing new of course, but it has certainly increased in both priority and profile in the past decade, as evidenced by corporations in the U.S. giving away $9 billion in cash and products in 2001; an estimated $11 billion in 2003; and roughly $13.7 billion in 2005 (American Association of Fund Raising Council, 2006). Correspondingly, a Cone/Roper (1999) study reported that nearly 50% of large corporations have programs associated with a social issue.

Social responsibility has also become increasingly prevalent in the sport industry. For example, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has made significant investments regarding social responsibility, ". . . more than 40 percent of FIFA's income goes directly towards supporting the grassroots of the game, development work, and partnerships with relief organizations" (FIFA, 2004, p. 66). In an attempt to improve the transparency of their operations, the adidas Group has launched two new corporate responsibility publications which cover working conditions, the environment, community affairs, and employee programs (adidas Group, 2008). The Philadelphia Eagles "Go Green" environmental campaign aims to provide a cleaner community for Philadelphia's citizens. Nike's Fair Labor Standards Act promotes sound worldwide labor practices. Nike executives Mark Parker and Charlie Denson suggest that CSR challenges their organization to take a good, hard look at their business model, and understand the company's impact on the world around it (Nike, 2006). The NFL and NBA's partnerships with the United Way and Read to Achieve, respectively, are just two of the many humanitarian and educational initiatives that sport leagues are involved with. "We have just two missions at the NBA," says Commissioner David Stern, ". . . the most immediate is to be a successful league. But the other is to use our strength for social responsibility" (Genzale, 2006, p. 34).

From a research perspective though, two primary issues remain largely uninvestigated—the motives behind CSR activities and the benefits that might accrue for the organization. The current study was focused on the potential return of CSR investments. The reason most often cited is that CSR is good financially for the organization and can lead to greater profits or greater public support which may in turn bolster profits (cf. Burt, 1983; Margolis & Walsh, 2001; Pava & Krausz, 1996; Roman, Hayibor, & Agle, 1999; Stanwick & Stanwick, 1998; Ullman, 1985). However, it can be argued that in the sport industry, where cultivation of an affective connection to the organization is critical, CSR may provide "secondary value" for the organization over and above those which have been seen in other industries. Therefore, the purpose of this mixed-design investigation was to explore this idea further and analyze consumer reactions (i.e., reputational assessments and patronage intentions) to various CSR activities within the National Football League (NFL). In addition, the study sought to determine the extent to which the level of sport team identification influenced this relationship.

Corporate Social Responsibility

In the business community, CSR has emerged as a significant theme underpinning moral, financial, and ethical judgments of corporate activity (cf. Lockett, Moon, & Visser, 2006; Windsor, 2006). The growing emphasis on social responsibility has affected the relationship between companies and their various stakeholders (e.g., investors, customers, employees, and governments), and there is little agreement among scholars on either the causes or effects of socially advocated programs (see McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006) or what societal impacts may be seen as a result of CSR initiatives (see Porter & Kramer, 2006). CSR is generally defined as ". . . a company's commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society" (Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001, p. 47). Socially responsible behavior then may include various activities ranging from supporting nonprofits, employee well-being, to environment and human right issues (Mohr & Webb, 2005). This engagement is a result of CSR having the potential to offer strategic direction to managers who want to enhance their organization's performance and competitiveness (Brietbarth & Harris, 2008). As such, researchers are moving beyond just defining and identifying CSR activities, to examine the role of CSR in a broader organizational and strategic management context (cf. Husted & Salazar, 2006; Ogden & Watson, 1999).

A review of the existing CSR literature reveals three distinct categories of writing: (1) conceptual/theoretical work, (2) motives-oriented work, and (3) outcomes-oriented work. Overwhelmingly, the articles related to the conceptual (i.e., definitional) understanding of the construct dominated the review (see Carroll, 1999), perhaps due to the relative infancy of CSR scholarship and the general ambiguity of the term. Articles focusing on the motives (e.g., managerial and corporate) have generally sought to reveal the motivations and characteristics of corporate giving managers engaging in CSR activities (cf. Bucholtz, Amason, & Rutherford, 1999; Fitzpatrick, 2000; Quazi, 2003; Thomas & Simerly, 1994).

The third category has focused on the outcomes of CSR. The majority of work in this area (e.g., corporate conduct) has suggested a positive link between social initiatives and increased financial performance (cf. Margolis & Walsh, 2001; McGuire, Sundgren, & Schneeweis, 1998; Pava & Krausz, 1996; Stanwick & Stanwick, 1998). Within this same outcomes category, the study of CSR from the consumer perspective produced the least number of articles; thereby prompting our interest in this area of inquiry. It has been suggested that CSR actions can influence purchase intentions (cf. Murray & Vogel, 1997; Sen & Bhattachary, 2001), and that these may be related to whether the company's ethical record exceeded consumer expectations (Creyer & Ross, 1997). Brown and Dacin (1997) found that corporate associations, which included corporate ability (CA) and CSR, affected consumers product and overall corporate evaluations. Mohr et al. (2001) maintained that consumers desired moderate to high levels of CSR from companies. Klein and Dawar (2004) demonstrated that CSR associations had a strong and direct impact on consumers' attributions, which in turn influenced brand evaluations and purchase intentions. Mohr and Webb (2005) maintained that within the domains of philanthropy and the environment, CSR had a positive impact on company evaluation and purchase intentions. Furthermore, several

authors have demonstrated a link between social initiatives and affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses by consumers such as perceived quality, price, and consumer attributions about company motives (e.g., Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Creyer & Ross, 1997; Ellen, Mohr, & Webb, 2000; Folkes & Kamins, 1999; Murray & Vogel, 1997).

CSR in the Sport Industry

While the study of CSR has become increasingly prevalent in the management and organizational behavior literature, the concept has only recently entered the sport management discourse (cf. Babiak & Wolfe, 2006; Bradish, 2006; Brietbarth & Harriss, 2008; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007; Walker, Kent, & Rudd, 2007; Walker & Kent, in press). It has been suggested that studying organizational phenomena within sport provides organizational scholars with certain advantages infrequently found in other domains (Slack & Parent, 2005). Conversely, Smith and Westerbeek (2007) opined that nothing really distinguishes sport organizations from corporations when it comes to social responsibility. However, we argue that sport industry CSR differs from other contexts as this industry possesses many attributes distinct from those found in other business segments. For example, the "star power" of the athletes, the connections sport teams have to the local communities, and the level of affect displayed by its many consumers distinguish the sport industry from most others, and may provide interesting and new perspectives for the study of CSR.

A variety of factors have led to the growing importance of CSR for sport organizations (Lau, Makhanya, & Trengrouse, 2004). First, the omnipresence of sport has led to the elevation of sport organizations as influential members of the global community, especially as they have become big businesses themselves. Second, sport organizations are facing a consuming public that is increasingly aware of the social aspects of corporate policy, due to the notoriety given to recent corporate misdeeds. While CSR emphasis initially was concerned with issues like transparency, accountability, and employee well being, attention has now shifted toward the sport organizations' role in society (Lau et al., 2004). The sport industry has been characterized as a lens through which to see the larger social perspectives of symbolism, identification, community, and sociability (cf. Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999; Melnick, 1994; Sutton, et al., 1997), due in part to the strong affective connections of sport fans. As such, the affective component of consumers' interests in sport provides a significant opportunity for the study of CSR and affords sport management scholars an opportunity to examine socially responsible initiatives that may be unique to the sport industry.

A Typology of CSR in Sport

CSR has not been examined extensively within the context of sport. To capture the appropriate domains of the independent variable (CSR) for use in the current study, it was deemed necessary to conduct a preliminary analysis of the social activities most prevalent in the industry. As the current study sampled from a population of NFL fans, this initial analysis drew from the four major team-sport leagues in North America. Utilizing a qualitative approach of content analysis (cf.

Berger, 2000; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Wolfe, 1991) which is a systematic, nonobtrusive, and replicable method for examining communication, it was revealed that sport teams are engaged in a variety of socially responsible activities. The results suggested that teams implement different CSR activities based on the core mission of their giving programs, which overwhelmingly are directed locally, in keeping with best practice suggestions (Marquis, Glynn, & Davis, 2007).

Team CSR activities include, but are not limited to: athlete volunteerism, educational initiatives, philanthropic/charitable donations, community development, community initiatives, fan appreciation, health-related initiatives, and community-based environmental programs. For the most part, teams give back in a number of nonmonetary ways; however philanthropy and charitable initiatives pervade all of the organizations as well. Every organization examined in this analysis promoted the philanthropic dimension of CSR through some type of charity or team-based foundation aimed at providing assistance to disadvantaged citizens. While the missions of these foundations vary, there remains one constant—to assist those within their respective local communities. On the basis of this analysis, we assume a relatively high degree of interdependence among local community actors and the sport organizations' presence in the locale. Based on thematic emergence and the aforementioned conclusions, the following categories of team CSR initiatives are proposed to encapsulate CSR activities for professional sport teams, and were included in the framework for this study—(1) philanthropy, (2) community involvement, (3) youth educational initiatives, and (4) youth health initiatives.

Conceptual Framework

Based on our content analysis results and previous literature suggesting that additional consumer-oriented CSR work needed to be done (Mohr et al., 2001), the conceptual model is presented in Figure 1. The propositions in the figure suggest that the independent variable CSR with four domains (i.e., philanthropy, community involvement, and youth programs in both education and health) will impact the five dependent variables of corporate reputation and the four dimensions of patronage intentions (i.e., repeat purchase, merchandise consumption, media consumption, and word of mouth). Since the study is focused on team-level analyses, the dependent variables are suggested to be moderated by a psychological connection variable (i.e., team identification). To support testing of the model, several hypotheses were developed, which are elucidated below.

Corporate Reputation. Corporate executives understand that a company's reputation is a critical factor for success and it can be one of the most valuable intangible assets available to the company (Hall, 1992). Subsequently, cultivating relationships with consumers (e.g., reputation-building activities) are important objectives for many companies seeking to bolster their reputations (Rindova & Fombrun, 1998). Various scholars (e.g., Black, Carnes, & Richardson, 2000; Lewis, 2001; Riahi-Belkaoui, 2001; Williams & Barrett, 2000), have purported the importance and benefits of investing in a strong and positive reputation program. Most presume that social responsibility generates goodwill from employees, consumer, and other constituents, which then enhances

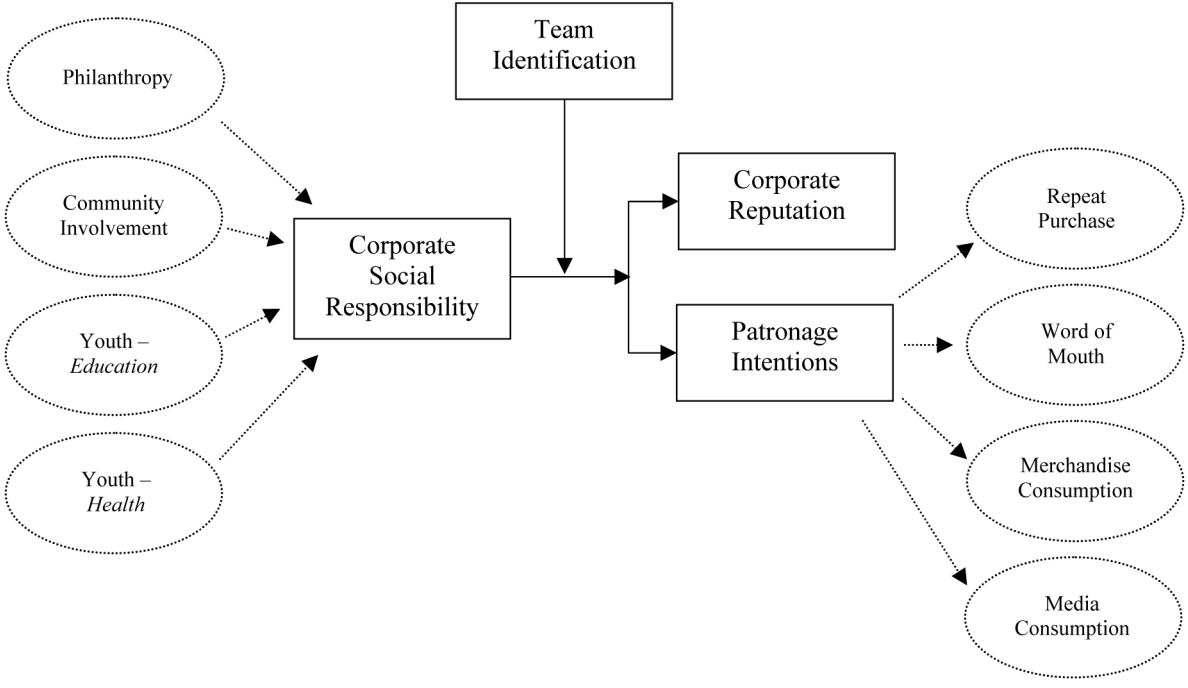

Figure 1 — Conceptual model.

the long-run profitability and viability of the firm (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Increasingly, corporate reputation is being viewed as a source of competitive advantage for companies (cf. Oliver, 1997; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999). Differentiation based on reputation requires firms to manage this intangible resource in ways that give them a rare and hard to imitate asset (cf. Amis, 2003; Barney, 1991, 2001). Consequently, corporate reputation represents an important lens through which top management can assess the efficacy of their CSR activities.

Early CSR work focused on firms' alleged wrongdoing, how firms affect specific social groups, and how firms' actions might be controlled through regulation, public pressure, and judicial actions (Sethi, 1995). Unfortunately, all too frequently the motives underlying most CSR activities have centered on negating the deleterious effects their product and service offerings may have on society (and their reputations) and as such, have traditionally been viewed as a "cost-item" to be encumbered by the company. Contrary to this tradition, good corporate ethics is now understood to reduce the cost of business through establishing trust among stakeholders, improved team efficiency, and preservation of social capital (cf. Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004; Porter & Kramer, 2002). A shift in the conventional wisdom to reflect the empirical evidence is occurring which has suggested that CSR activities can have a positive impact by enhancing brand image, strengthening corporate reputation, recruiting and retaining employees, increasing sales, and solidifying customer loyalty (cf. Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004; Lewis, 2001; Schiebel, & Pöchtrager, 2003).

Due to the strong link between the organization, the consumer, and the community, socially responsible activity is increasingly important for reputation management among sport teams. The sport marketing literature is replete with examples of community attachment (Anderson & Stone, 1981), team fan attraction (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989), team identification (cf. Branscombe & Wann, 1991, 1992; Wann & Branscombe, 1993, 1995), team loyalty (cf. James, 2001; Kolbe & James, 2000; Trail & James, 2001), and team commitment (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000). Intuitively, we may argue that the concept of reputation is correlated highly with the ideas of loyalty and commitment, but no work to date has determined how these concepts might interrelate with CSR. Evidence from the reputation literature has generally suggested that the greater a firm's contribution to social welfare, the better its overall reputation (e.g., Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Lewis, 2001; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999). These studies also suggested consumers have an overall positive attitude toward companies associating themselves with causes that benefit society; hence, companies using their resources to benefit society are clearly related to the concept of CSR. In line with these assertions, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: The degree to which consumers value CSR will positively influence their assessments of organizational reputation.

Patronage Intentions. Several studies have investigated patronage regarding consumer perceptions of socially conscious businesses (e.g., Brown & Dacin, 1997; Mohr & Webb, 2005; Porter & Kramer, 2002; Ricks, 2005), and have found that corporate associations influenced overall consumer attitudes about the

organization. More specifically, Ross, Stutts, and Patterson (1990–91) found that a firm's support of a cause had been a primary reason for them to purchase a product. Hoeffler and Keller (2002) argued that corporate social marketing (i.e., marketing with at least one social objective) can be an effective way to build brand equity and increase sales. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) made a similar argument for how nonproduct aspects of the company (such as CSR) can lead to customer loyalty and positive purchase-related outcomes.

Drawing conclusions about the potential for a company's support of social causes to affect consumer choice is difficult however, as existing evidence is equivocal regarding the effectiveness of social campaigns (Barone, Miyazaki, & Taylor, 2000). In some instances, socially responsible activities have been found to engender favorable attitudes (cf. Brown & Dacin, 1997; Ross, Patterson, & Stutts, 1992) and purchase intentions (cf. Ross et al., 1992; Sen & Morwitz, 1996). However, cause marketing has been shown in some instances to foster negative perceptions toward a company when they engaged in cause or societal supporting activities. For example, Polansky and Wood (2001) maintained that the "overcommercialization" of some activities designed to benefit society may in fact harm the attitudes of consumers targeted by these activities. Uusitalo and Oksanen (2004) showed that while the majority of consumers regard business ethics as important, this attitude does not always translate into their intentions.

While some research has shown negative consequences of doing "good" can exist, it is likely that within sport, affective consumer associations will produce high organizational evaluations, similar to the ones predominantly found among consumers in mainstream business. Therefore, the prevailing sentiments regarding patronage and social responsibility have shown that a positive CSR campaign will lead to overall positive consumer associations. Perhaps the most visible and far-reaching example of sport as a marketable product to consumers is the professional sport team (cf. Mason, 1999; Metcalfe, 1987). It is this phenomenon that has helped make sport a vehicle for the promotion of corporate social interests and resulting positive patronage intentions.

H2: The degree to which consumers value CSR will positively influence their intentions to patronize the organization.

Team Identification. Team identification has been described as a psychological attachment that provides fans with a sense of belonging to a larger social structure (Wann & Branscombe, 1991), or as the personal commitment and emotional involvement consumers have with a sport organization (Sutton et al., 1997). When a consumer identifies closely with an organization, a sense of connectedness ensues and he/she begins to define him or herself with the organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Team identification considers the importance of the relationship between the fan and the team as, ". . . fanship represents an association from which the individual derives considerable emotional and value significance" (Madrigal, 1995, p. 209).

Investment in the identification levels of fans have been shown to help teams strengthen and maintain their relationship with fans (e.g., history and tradition; Kolbe & James, 2000). However, one such area that has not previously been addressed in the sport literature is whether investments in CSR can promote similar team fan reactions. The attitudes fans have toward CSR may assist in cultivat-

ing a deeper sense of pride in their communities and in turn generate lasting and emotionally rewarding associations between the organization and the community (Funk & James, 2001). Especially when CSR is preemptive (Hart, 1995) and a team's environment is dynamic, CSR in-turn may help cultivate positive externalities because these efforts necessitate significant team involvement, organization-wide coordination, and a forward-thinking managerial style (Shrivastava, 1995).

Researchers have found that identification is an important predictor of numerous affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions in sport contexts (cf. Branscombe & Wann, 1993, 1994; Heere & James, 2007a; Wann & Branscombe, 1993, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994; Wann, Tucker, & Schrader, 1996). In addition, research also has substantiated the proposition that team identification directly impacts consumers' patronage intentions. Previous literature has suggested that a great deal of variance (approximately 10–28%) has been found to explain this relationship (e.g., Kwon & Armstrong, 2002; Kwon & Trail, 2003). One lesson that may be learned is that different levels of psychological connection are influenced by different factors (Funk & James, 2001), and that these factors may lead to different affective outcomes. A challenge for the current research was to incorporate the identification of fans as a factor for interpreting the results of the CSR-outcome analysis. As such, consistent with suggestions in the identification literature (cf. Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Heere & James, 2007b; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), the two outcome variables are assessed in conjunction with the moderating role of team identification on CSR among team consumers. The findings pertaining to those levels of identification may be consistent with the conclusions of James, Kolbe, and Trail (2002) that the stronger one's psychological connection, the greater the number of variables influencing the connection.

H3: Team identification will moderate both the CSR-reputation relationship and the CSR-patronage relationship.

Methods

Sample and Procedures

A proposal was drafted and sent out to officers of two NFL teams, which agreed to provide access to their facilities. Trips were made to two different cities on game-day separated by two weeks. The data were collected via intercept technique from game attendees, before the start of the games. In total, 297 (N = 148: location 1; N = 156: location 2) useable surveys were collected [male: 201 (67%); female: 96 (33%)]. The average number of games attended by the respondents in the last 12 months was 7.41 and their mean income was between $70,000 and $85,000. In terms of ethnicity, 65% identified themselves as White/Caucasian, 27% as African American, 2% as Hispanic, 1% as Native American, 2% as Asian, with 3% self-identifying themselves as "Other". Respondent ages ranged from 18 to 67 [18–28 = 33%, 29–38 = 25%, 39–48 = 24%, 49–67 = 18%]. To expand and enrich the quantitative findings, eleven on-site, semistructured interviews were conducted at location 2—following administration of the questionnaires. The interview protocol was developed from previous CSR literature and purposeful

open sampling was employed to achieve a sample representative of the overall respondent pool (Mohr et al., 2001). The interviews generated discussion about the activities with which the team was involved, how respondents learned about what the team was doing, whether a team's socially responsible behavior affected their overall attitude, how respondents viewed socially responsible companies (in general), and gauged the respondents' overall level of support for socially responsible companies.

Questionnaire Development

CSR. Items were adapted from an experimental study conducted by Mohr and Webb (2005) where the authors assessed respondents' attitude pertaining to two domains of CSR (e.g., philanthropy and environment). The items used were adapted from the philanthropy dimension and were used to capture the three additional types of sport team CSR explained previously. As in earlier administrations, this instrument demonstrated adequate internal consistency (Cronbach's α ranging from .75 to .84) according to the assertions provided by Lance, Butts, and Michels (2006) who stated that .70 provides an adequate cut-off for social research. The items in the original survey referred to "Companies," but were modified to use the term "Organization," a term more appropriate for use in the sport industry.

Corporate Reputation. Corporate reputation was measured using items from a scale initially developed by Caruana (1997) and later validated by Caruana and Chircop (2000). Due to the nature of sport teams, in contrast to general business firms (as studied by Caruana), five items in the scale were removed (e.g., items asking respondents whether the company offered tours of the factory, etc.). The remaining seven items were modified to capture the parameters of team-level corporate reputation. For example, the original item, "the company has strong management" was rephrased as, "the organization has strong management." The previously validated scale (see Caruana & Chircop, 2000) demonstrated adequate reliability scores (Cronbach's α =. 85 for the current study).

Patronage Intentions. Intentions were measured using four subscales (i.e., repeat purchase, word of mouth, merchandise consumption, and media consumption). All items for each of the subscales were adopted from James (2006), who used guidance from previous work (e.g., Cronin, Brady, & Holt, 2000; Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sobol, 2002; Zeithaml, Barry, & Parasuraman, 1996) to apply the distinct behavioral manifestations of patronage intentions in the sport industry. These subscales were found to possess adequate reliability scores (Cronbach's α scores ranging from .83 to .93 for the current study).

Team Identification. Team identification (team ID) for the current study was measured with three items extracted from Wann and Branscombe's (1993) seven item *Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS)*. These items were used previously by Kwon and Armstrong (2002) and demonstrated adequate reliability scores (Cronbach's α = .90 for the current study).

Results

Univariate normality of the data were examined with skewness and kurtosis values. All of these values were in the appropriate range of –1 and +1, revealing a mesokurtic distribution of the data thereby indicating a normal distribution. The Durbin-Watson statistics ranged from 1.738 to 2.046 informing us that the assumption of independent errors for the regression models were met (Glass & Hopkins, 1996).

Validity and Dimensionality Measures

To assess the dimensionality of the CSR scale, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed. Since previous efforts to develop a social responsibility scale have been somewhat limited, it was only possible to hypothesize the dimensionality of the scale through the initial content analysis of sport industry initiatives. The CSR items were highly correlated (scores ranging from .69 to .84), indicating that principal axis factoring with a direct oblimin rotation method was appropriate. While conceptually distinct, the four CSR factors did not disaggregate into distinct dimensions, indicating that the current sample of NFL supporters failed to distinguish among them. Therefore for subsequent analyses, the CSR items (N = 12) were collapsed to form a global CSR measure (α =.93).

We next analyzed individual item reliability and discriminant validity to examine the acceptability of our measurement model. Factor loadings of the measures onto their corresponding constructs were all greater than .70, indicating an adequate degree of individual item reliability (Hair et al., 2005). Using the measure suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), we found that all composite reliability values exceeded .70 (Hair et al., 2005). We conducted two tests to ensure that our constructs were acting independently. The first discriminant validity test required that the construct share more variance with its items than it shared with other constructs (Hulland, 1999). Discriminant validity was established because this statistic was greater than the correlations in the corresponding columns and rows in the matrix (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). We also employed Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) discriminant validity test on all pairs of constructs whose correlation was greater than .30. We found that each pair of constructs was not perfectly correlated, providing further evidence that discriminant validity for the model was achieved (Bagozzi & Phillips, 1982).

Lastly, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess the dimensionality of the overall measurement model. The measurement model for the latent variables was supported. The model fit reasonably well to the data establishing a unidimensional structure and all dimensions possessed the requisite discriminate validity ($\alpha^2(df)$=491.246 (194), α^2/df = 2.532), resulting in a conclusion to accept the model. The fit of the data to the model was assessed using several acceptable indices (see Hu & Bentler, 1999) including the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The RMSEA was slightly inflated (.072) however the CFI (.93) and NFI (.91) indicated acceptable levels of model fit while the RMSEA value was less supportive of a good model fit. However, the RMSEA index penalizes models for lack of parsimony. Therefore, these findings are not unexpected.

All average variance extracted (AVE) values far exceeded the recommended 0.50 cutoff as described by Fornell and Larker (1981), thereby supporting the discriminate validity of the model.

Descriptive Statistics

A general summary of means, standard deviations, and correlations are provided in Table 1. Regarding the independent variable CSR, all of the subscales returned scores well above the midpoint (M = 4.14–4.39; *SD*=.45 to .98), as well as the aggregated CSR score (M = 4.27; *SD*=.68) which was used for the remainder of the analyses. The dependent variables (i.e., reputation and the four categories of patronage intentions) also all returned scores above the scale midpoints (M = 3.88–4.41; *SD*=.83–1.21). Team ID returned the lowest mean score of all the variables (M = 3.06; *SD* = 1.31). Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the correlations between factors had little variance—only 3 potential relationships were not statistically significant. Looking for signs of multicollinearity among the variables, we found all the correlations to be well below .80, suggesting no multicollinearity in the data (cf. Grewal, Cote, & Baumgartner, 2004; Kaplan, 1994). Looking at the issue further, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was well below the problematic value (i.e., 10), indicating no multicolinearity between predictors (Myers, 1990); the R^2 values (i.e., values at or above .80) also confirmed that multicollinearity was not an issue (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999).

Moderated Multivariate Multiple Regression. For hypothesis testing, moderated multivariate multiple regression analysis (MMMR) was employed.[1] MMMR was used first to test the relationship of the predictor of interest (CSR) on the criterion variables (reputation and patronage), and secondly to test the relationship of the interaction term that carries information about both predictors (team ID). A positive and significant coefficient (α =.576, $p < .001$) among the outcomes was found for the overall multivariate model thereby indicating its robustness. The multivariate regression results are presented in Table 2. The results show that there were significant main effects of CSR on reputation (α =.404, $p < .001$), word of mouth intentions (α=.240, $p < .001$), and merchandise consumption (α =.202, $p < .05$). However, repeat purchase and media consumption were found to be not significantly affected by CSR.

A second multivariate analysis was conducted to determine whether the team ID variable influenced the relationship between CSR and the five outcomes. Team ID was conceptualized as a moderator of the CSR-outcome relationship, which means specifically that it must significantly interact with CSR in a way to influence how CSR relates to the outcomes. A significant overall effect (α =.678, $p <$ .001) was found for the global moderator of team ID and significant relationships between CSR and all of the outcome variables in the analysis were found as well (see Table 3).

Subsequent median-split analyses showed that the moderating effect of team ID was different for reputation versus patronage intentions. For more highly identified respondents, CSR's influence on reputation was strong but less influential (R^2 = .145) compared with lower identified respondents (R^2 = .168; see Figure 2). CSR's influence on the patronage dimensions was moderated differently, as repeat

Table 1 Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Coefficients

Construct[a]	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Matrix 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. CSR	4.27	.680	1.00						
2. Repeat Purchase	4.41	.863	.090	1.00					
3. Word of Mouth	4.32	.837	.195**	.627**	1.00				
4. Merchandise Consumption	4.10	1.21	.122*	.557**	.612**	1.00			
5. Media Consumption	4.12	1.04	.098	.459**	.552**	.605**	1.00		
6. Team Identification	3.06	1.31	.089	.434**	.514**	.560**	.542**	1.00	
7. Reputation	3.88	.692	.397**	.257**	.418**	.395**	.307**	.405**	1.00

Note. [a]1 = Not Important, Strongly Disagree; 5 = Very Important, Strongly Agree; *p<.05; **p<.001

Table 2 MMMR Coefficients

Independent Variable(s)[b]	Dependent Variables[a] Repeat Purchase	Word of Mouth	Merchandise Consumption	Media Consumption	Reputation
CSR	.114	.240**	.202*	.137	.404**
R^2	.008	.038	.015	.008	.158
Adjusted R^2	.005	.035	.011	.005	.155
F-statistic$_{(\text{degrees of freedom})}$	$2.390_{(59)}$	$11.630_{(59)}$	$4.440_{(59)}$	$2.369_{(59)}$	$55.321_{(59)}$
p-value	.123	.001	.036	.125	.000

Note. *p<.05; **p<.001
[a]1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree
[b]1 = Not Important, 5 = Very Important

Table 3 Test of Moderation Coefficients

	Dependent Variables[a]				Reputation
Moderating Variable	**Repeat Purchase**	**Word of Mouth**	**Merchandise Consumption**	**Media Consumption**	
CSR x Team ID[b]	.290**	.358**	.248**	.153**	.321**
Team ID[c]	.217**	.035	.276*	.104	.078
R^2	.136	.206	.109	.112	.210
High / Low Group[d]	*.021 / .004*	*.098 / .019*	*.055 / .031*	*.039 / .014*	*.145 / .168*
Adjusted R^2	.124	.198	.096	.098	.199
High / Low Group[d]	*.019 / .003*	*.095 / .016*	*.051 / .029*	*.035 / .011*	*.142 / .161*
p-Value	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001
High / Low Group[d]	*.05 / .05*	*.001 / .05*	*.01 / .05*	*.001 / .009*	*.01 / .001*

Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .001$

[a]1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree

[b]Coefficients from the regression when the dichotomized team ID variable (i.e., the moderator) was included in the model

[c]Coefficients from the regression when team ID was included as a predictor

[d]Coefficients from the median split analysis

purchase ($R^2 = .021_{\text{high group}}$ vs. $R^2 = .004_{\text{low group}}$), word of mouth ($R^2 = .098_{\text{high group}}$ vs. $R^2 = .019_{\text{low group}}$), merchandise consumption ($R^2 = .055_{\text{high group}}$ vs. $R^2 = .03_{\text{low group}}$), and media consumption ($R^2 = .039_{\text{high group}}$ vs. $R^2 = .01_{\text{low group}}$) all increased as the respondents level of identification increased (see Figure 3). In one final analysis, we tested the effects of the team ID variable as a single model for each dependent measure that included both CSR and team ID along with the multiplicative interaction of these two measures as predictors (see Table 3). Two significant main effects were found (i.e., team ID ® repeat purchase and team ID ® merchandise consumption), thus lending confidence to the results of the dichotomized analysis as reported above.

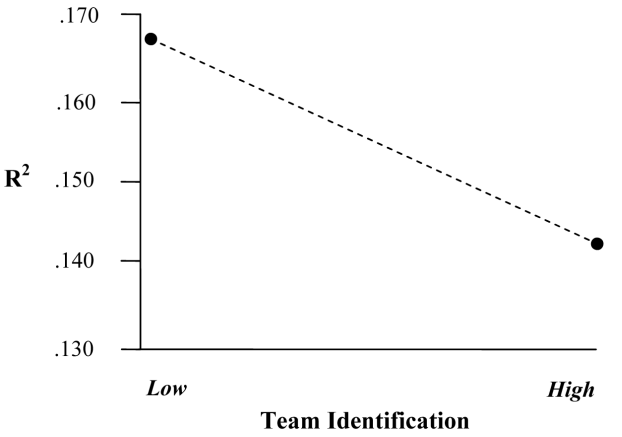

Figure 2 — Moderating effect of team ID on reputation.

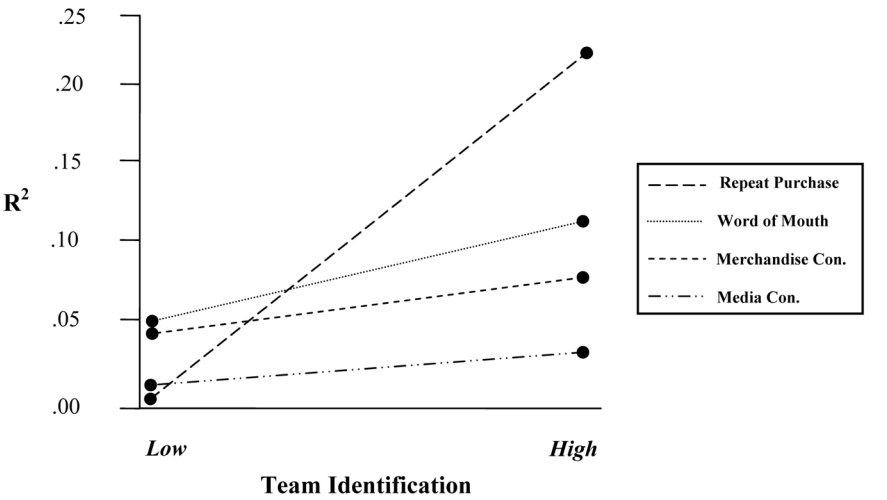

Figure 3 — Moderating effect of team ID on patronage intentions.

Discussion

Overall, the examination of a consumer-level framework linking CSR to organizational evaluations and patronage intentions revealed a general positivity in sport consumers' responses. This finding is consistent with previous literature which underscored the extent to which attitudes about organizational CSR initiatives impacted consumers' positive brand/product evaluations and subsequent intentions (cf. Brown & Dacin, 1997; Creyer & Ross, 1997; Ellen et al., 2000; Folkes & Kamins, 1999; Murray & Vogel, 1997). Interview excerpts reinforced the assertion that the respondents generally valued the socially responsible efforts of the teams. Many noted that while they may not have been particularly aware of the variety of social initiatives the team was involved with, the activities that they could name seemingly strengthened their positive view of the organization. The first question of the interview protocol asked whether the respondent knew of the team's CSR activities. While the majority were largely unaware of *all* of the team's activities, when presented with a list detailing the team's social agenda they had the following comments: ". . . I was not aware of all the things they did, I knew about the larger items like the foundation, the team is synonymous with many different things in the community. The owners themselves seem to carry a lot of charitable and philanthropic things," and ". . . I think it is good that they do those sorts of things for the community."

While several conceptual articles have detailed the relevancy of corporate reputation to CSR (cf. Black et al., 2000; Lewis, 2001; Riahi-Belkaoui, 2001; Rindova & Fombrun, 1998; Williams & Barrett, 2000), previous CSR research has largely ignored the use of corporate reputation as an outcome. However, from the company's perspective, reputation is one of the most valuable intangible assets available to the company (Hall, 1992) and cultivating relationships with consumers is an important objective of reputation-building activities for many companies (Rindova & Fombrun, 1998). The current results showed that CSR activities on the part of sport teams had a strong and positive impact on the organization's perceived reputation.

In line with those of Sen and Bhattacharya (2001), the current results suggest that CSR is useful to view as an essential "non-product" dimension of the organization. Consumers of team sports often evaluate the team and/or organization based on the core brand and/or product (i.e., the game; Kolbe & James, 2000). It seems important now to note that the respondents' knowledge of the organization extends beyond wins and losses, and is an important factor in formulating an overall reputational assessment of the organization. These nonproduct dimensions become particularly important for those fans possessing lower levels of team identification, and for those times when the team is having a losing or subpar season. The current results strongly support this contention regarding the importance of nonproduct attributes, as nearly 16% of organizational reputation was explained by CSR. Previous research has shown attendees of professional sporting events generally have strong connections to local teams and the communities that support those teams, with commensurate increased levels of community attachment and team commitment (e.g., Anderson & Stone, 1981; James, 2001; Kolbe &

James, 2000; Mahony et al., 2000; Trail & James, 2001). The findings of the current study may buttress this contention in that reputational assessments can play a role in these attachments.

It should be noted that sport fans (like most individuals) will tend seek out positive information about elements that they endorse and may be dismissive of information that is contradictory to existing positive feelings. For example, highly identified game attendees may look for the socially responsible activities of teams to reinforce their fanship, however those activities which contradict those positive feelings (e.g., socially irresponsible actions) will be quickly dismissed. This psychological phenomenon referring to the discomfort felt at a discrepancy between what you already know or believe, and new information or interpretation is referred to as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Further research should be more incisive regarding the possibility that highly identified fans use nonproduct attributes as a way of rationalizing their entrenched behaviors. Various reputation building strategies for the organization may include establishing a positive reputation through the implementation of a sound model for CSR and other socially desirable activities.

Regarding patronage intentions, several arguments can be made for the construct as an appropriate outcome of CSR activities. Many researchers have used this idea to elicit positive responses which detail the consumer's likelihood of purchasing the products of the target organization (cf. Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Ross et al., 1992; Sen & Morwitz, 1996). In this study, CSR was a significant predictor of word of mouth and merchandise consumption behaviors, while media consumption and repeat purchasing were not significantly influenced. As previously noted, this study suggests that various nonproduct dimensions are particularly important to consumers with respect to their CSR attributions (see Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). As such, it was not surprising to find that media consumption and repeat purchasing were not influenced by CSR due to their high product relatedness. Merchandise consumption and word of mouth are elements less related to the core product and are logical outcomes of positive reactions to CSR in that fans of team sports tend to display their affiliations by purchasing team-related products and discussing the team frequently. In previous literature, highly identified fans were more likely to purchase licensed team merchandise (cf. Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Kwon & Armstrong, 2002, 2006; Wann & Branscombe, 1993) and attend games (cf. Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Schurr, Wittig, Ruble, & Ellen, 1988) than are those who possessed lower levels of team identification. These findings are particularly important because when consumers perceive an organization as having a "good" reputation they will tend to speak favorably of them and as a result purchase their products to display their affiliation, an idea proposed by Fombrun and Shanley (1990). One of the interviewees said, ". . . I think this is good that they are involved with the community . . . it makes me feel stronger of the organization that they care about their community and that the team wants to continue to be a part of the community in the future." While another stated, ". . . I think it is important [CSR] and any organization that is in the limelight and in the community should do those sorts of things." Mohr et al. (2001) found similar results in their analysis of consumer attitudes toward CSR. The authors concluded a substantial, viable, and identifiable market segment exists that considers a com-

pany's level of social responsibility when making purchasing decisions. "The relationship between beliefs and behaviors will be stronger (a) the more knowledge consumers have about CSR issues, and (b) the more important they judge these issues to be" (Mohr et al., 2001, p. 69).

It is important to note that the effect sizes in the current study for even the significant outcomes were relatively small (<4% variance explained), thereby tempering any conclusions to be drawn regarding the CSR-patronage relationship until future investigations are conducted. It is unlikely however, that an emotional connection to a preferred property is the only factor influencing intentions to purchase products. It is also important to consider consumers' beliefs in CSR activities and their attitudes toward supporting such initiatives. Perhaps the most widely used conceptualization of choice processes suggested that behaviors are best understood as an ordered delineation of beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This approach posits that an attitude to engage in some behavior is a function of an individual's beliefs and the perceived importance of those beliefs. Behavioral intentions are then influenced by that attitude and behavior, in turn, predicted by intentions. This discussion provides additional support for Sen and Bhattacharya's (2001) suggestion that identification with an organization is enhanced when consumers believe in that organization's social agenda. However, Mohr et al. (2001) maintained that consumers' beliefs about CSR (i.e., that companies should be socially responsible) are often inconsistent with their behaviors (i.e., not purchasing based on CSR). They concluded that at the general level, most of their respondents expected a fairly high level of CSR indicating that companies who disregard these expectations may risk the price of consumer boycotts. Perhaps awareness is again the issue; if the team arms the consumer with information regarding CSR, these actions may facilitate positive word of mouth, thereby leading to increased levels of support for the initiatives.

The analysis of the moderating role of team ID yielded interesting findings. While the CSR-reputation relationship remained strong and meaningful (i.e., 14.5% variance explained for the higher group and 16.8% for the lower group), a statistically significant decrease in perceived reputation as identification increased is still notable. In other words, the more highly identified a fan is, the less they rely upon CSR information in making their reputational assessments. This may indicate that highly identified fans are more stable in their opinions about the organization, are more invested in the on-field product, and are thereby less influenced by nonproduct activities such as CSR than those who are less identified. However, while the moderation test for this relationship was statistically significant across the outcomes, it seems prudent to reserve further assertions until it can be determined whether a 2% change is truly meaningful. As it stands, this is the first attempt to analyze this relationship. Given the variance explained though it seems safe to say that the CSR-reputation relationship is strong and meaningful regardless of the level of team ID. CSR's influence increased all four patronage dimensions significantly as the respondents' level of team ID increased. At the low end of team ID, the range of variance explained by CSR for the patronage dimensions was low to the point of practical nonexistence (i.e., explaining a range of 0.1–1.9% of variance). At the higher end of team ID, the range of variance explained demonstrated that CSR could have a meaningful influence on these behaviors (i.e., explaining a range of 2.1–9.8% of variance). Individuals at the higher levels

of the team ID continuum seem more willing to offer their support of the target organization and are less influenced by the team's reputation than those at the lower levels. Madrigal (2000) referred to this process as reciprocation, where those individuals with the highest levels of identification with a focal organization will reward it with their patronage. As noted earlier, this may be where the propensity for people to seek out information that reinforces their strongly held beliefs is worthy of further investigation, since attributing patronage behaviors to CSR activities may, at least in part, help fans to justify their actions.

Implications and Conclusions

From the results of the current investigation, several notable implications for practitioners emerge. First, managers should emphasize the importance of consumers' abilities to accurately evaluate CSR programs and promote those activities as a potentially powerful source of organizational reputation building. Responses to CSR are dependent on consumers having information about the programs to engender favorable support (Mohr & Webb, 2005). While many companies communicate the "good" things they are doing, consumer skepticism of corporate communication is high, making these communications of suspect value. Sport teams, on the other hand, are often viewed in high regard within their local community, and through CSR programs and social sponsorship they can further enhance their stature in the community. Based on this, team managers should develop marketing communication strategies that provide details about how their organizations have helped address specific social issues which have benefited the community (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Several authors (e.g., Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Mohr & Webb, 2005; Mohr et al., 2001) have maintained that having a prosocial agenda means having a powerful marketing tool that can build and shape a company's status, differentiate them in the market (cf. Amis, 2003; Barney, 1991), and lead to a company's competitive edge (Rindova & Fombrun, 1999). Given the present findings regarding word of mouth patronage especially, this could be an opportunity to have a positive nonproduct message spread among fans. Second, as McWilliams et al. (2006) noted, CSR should be considered a form of strategic investment for management. Even if not directly tied to a product feature or production process, CSR can be viewed as a form of reputation building or maintenance (cf. Lewis, 2001; Riahi-Belkaoui, 2001; Rindova & Fombrun, 1998; Williams & Barrett, 2000).

When evaluating an organization, many consumers may not be completely aware of the breadth of activities with which the organization may be involved (e.g., employee treatment, environmental initiatives, and/or human rights activities). The level of information regarding these operations is often forwarded by the firm, the media, or activists seeking to discredit the organization (McWilliams et al., 2006) and therefore may be substantially biased. Companies in the sport industry such as Reebok and Nike publish annual reports (sent to the stockholder or published on their websites) on CSR and corporate sustainability, which may be viewed as a form of advertising, especially for more general types of CSR. Again, while such reports may be useful, some consumers may perceive this information as biased, since it is filtered through senior management (McWil-

liams et al., 2006). In this vein, some cause-related activities have been criticized for running the risk of "consumer backlash" if individuals question the validity, relevance, or appropriateness of a firm's actions (cf. Drumwright, 1996; Osterhus, 1997). Therefore, providing consumers with accurate information from fan groups or team-related chat rooms may be the most appropriate and trusted way for the information to be disseminated and may avoid such "diminishing returns" for the organization.

Finally, recommendations from the team identification literature have suggested for professional teams to undertake a number of activities to maintain the bond between themselves and the larger fan base (cf. James et al., 2002; Kolbe & James, 2000; Sutton et al., 1997; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). For example, Sutton et al. (1997) suggested specific strategies for identification building, which included: increasing player and team accessibility; and emphasizing the tradition of a team and the team as a source of community identity. As such, increased community involvement activities as part of a broader CSR initiative could be also be used in conjunction with the aforementioned areas to increase and maintain the bonds between the team and the local community. For example, teams could incorporate information on CSR initiatives in fan club mailings, daily/weekly e-mail correspondences, or team newsletters to help "spread the word" about these initiatives. Branded apparel has been shown as a major way for team fans to demonstrate their level of affiliation (cf. Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Perhaps the placement of foundation names and logos (e.g., "Eagles Youth Partnership," "Cowboys in the Community Foundation", etc.) on team merchandise would give fans more to discuss with others about the team. With all of these recommendations, it is important to note that communications should not merely focus on information sharing regarding team initiatives, but should also focus on the community impacts that result—a critical element that Porter and Kramer (2002) noted is all too often ignored.

For sport management, this research contributes toward understanding the underlying dynamics of the role CSR plays in consumer evaluations of reputation and patronage toward sport organizations. As noted, CSR research has just begun to find its way into the sport management literature and this study is notable for several reasons. The results from the conceptual model test suggest that CSR for sport teams may be a unidimensional construct, although our initial qualitative inquiry indicated that four conceptually distinct types of CSR were being engaged in by the teams analyzed herein. Future research should examine the CSR construct in sport to further assess its dimensionality and to establish validity of our instrumentation. In the current study, the CSR measure proved internally consistent and showed initial indications of content and face validity through the qualitative interviews of the four conceptualized dimensions, however further validation work is clearly required. Secondly, by uncovering a prominent moderator of the CSR-outcome relationships, this study showed that the possibility exists to cross-pollinate research designs with existing sport management concepts to reflect the complexity of the industry. Future research may also seek to more fully understand the moderating role of team ID, given that the current results are really only

a first indication of a potentially complex phenomenon at play. It may also be interesting to examine other moderating variables to see if CSR's relationship with critical outcomes changes when intervened by certain personality or source variables. For example, in the dissonance paradigm, an individual may be enticed to act in a way that is inconsistent with his or her attitude, which results in a chain of events that proceeds from an aversive state of tension to bolstering thoughts to ultimately a change in attitude that is consistent with the behavior (Cooper & Fazio, 1984). A variable such as source credibility may be used to ascertain whether the sources of CSR information influence consumer attitudes to a greater or lesser degree.

Finally, by showing a strong predictive relationship with organizational reputation and patronage intentions, the results of this study strongly support the need to develop a comprehensive research agenda surrounding the CSR construct. Future research might include the use of other outcome variables to be analyzed with CSR and should certainly investigate these within not only consumer groups but with other stakeholder groups as well. Future research might also focus on other sports to understand if the strategic orientation of CSR can be translated to other contexts. In this vein, athletes from individual sports could be examined using a strategic orientation. Over 400 public charities and private foundations connected to professional athletes and teams currently exist, distributing more than $100 million dollars annually to not-for-profit groups and other initiatives (Babiak et al., 2007). Future research could examine the link between the individual athletes' charity and their connection to the larger organization/team. For example, a team may wish to support the athletes' cause due of the strategic benefits that may accrue from the publicity given to such a high profile community figure and the obvious link to the organization. In sum, by incorporating CSR, and other nonproduct attributes, into our agendas, scholars may uncover previously overlooked insights into the understanding of sport consumer attitudes.

To conclude, the current results indicate that the fans in this sample clearly value the socially responsible efforts of their teams and use this information especially when considering product selection and/or favorably speaking of the organization. The findings indicate that CSR, while an enviable organizational activity in its own right, also has an important strategic role to play for sport organizations. Increasing the reputation of the organization through CSR activity should be viewed as a way for managers to meet the seemingly competing concerns of social responsibility and bottom-line performance. To properly manage consumer relationships and the reputation of the organization, they should not only adopt CSR as in integral part of their mission, but must also communicate this mission widely.

Notes

1. Two additional MMMR analyses were performed to test for main effect differences among the split respondent pool (there were two different sets of team supporters used in the analysis). The results of both analyses confirmed that no differences between groups existed.

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