Interorganizational Citizenship Behavior in Sport Clusters

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Introduction

In this research we investigate interorganizational citizenship behavior (ICB) within sport clusters. A sport cluster is the market that brings together all sellers and buyers relevant to a sport (Shilbury, 2000). Sport clusters concentrate a group of competing and complementary organizations in close geographic proximity (Porter, 2008) that are interlinked through the interest in a specific sport (Shilbury, 2000). These organizations may be stakeholders of a particular sport or several related sports. Interdependencies are created through commonalities and complementarities (Porter, 2008). Cluster organizations are linked through formal and informal interorganizational relationships (IOR) (i.e. bilateral relationships) and networks (ION) (i.e. multilateral relationships). ICB (Autry, Skinner, & Lamb, 2008) is derived from organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000) and defined as discretionary behavior between organizations that is not explicit part of a contract but that promotes the effective functioning of the group of organizations (e.g. cluster).

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this research are 1) to examine the role of different types of organizations within sport clusters; 2) identify the prevalent ICB dimensions within sport clusters.

Review of relevant literature

The way in which two organizations of the same environment regard and behave towards each other can be described as interorganizational relationships (Warren, 1967). Networks are a group of more than two organizations connected through the pursuit of a common goal (Provan, Fish, & Sydow, 2007). While others have studied IOR determinants (Babiak, 2007) we investigate the different dimensions of ICB. Advancement is any behavior aimed at improving relationships, knowledge bases, and integrated processes. Altruism is behavior that helps cluster members in solving problems or acquiring needed skills or knowledge. Conscientiousness means to perform interorganizational tasks with especially high levels of forethought and effort. Constructiveness is showing interest and activity in interorganizational affairs affecting the cluster and looking out for the cluster's best interest. Compliance means orientation towards the cluster members' rules, policies, and processes. Loyalty is allegiance to cluster members and sometimes sacrificing the own interests for those of the cluster. Tolerance means to accept inevitable inconveniences associated with interorganizational exchange without retribution (Autry, et al., 2008).

Methodology

We conducted a multiple case study investigating four sport clusters. We compare two sailing clusters, one located in Southern Brittany (France) and one in Auckland region (New Zealand). We also investigate two surfing clusters, one located in Southern Aquitaine (France) and one in Torquay, in regional Victoria (Australia). Primary data was provided by 103 formal semi-structured interviews (FSI), 13 explorative interviews (EXI) and observations. Secondary data such as organizational information and archival data complemented our data collection. We developed deductively a conceptual framework for thematic data analysis using Nvivo.

Results

Results show that participants more often referred to the core equipment manufacturers, professional sport teams, sport and public governing bodies, and system suppliers/outfitters compared to sport-related research and education bodies, sport service providers, accessory suppliers, equipment designers, sport media, and amateur sport organizations. The strongest links were between professional sport teams and accessory suppliers due to physical proximity and informal but regular, on-site meetings and technical exchanges.
The most prevalent ICB dimensions within the sport clusters were advancement, loyalty and altruism. Advancement is the most prevalent ICB. Cluster governance organizations are witnessing advancement. This can be at cluster networking events in order to improve informal interorganizational relationships. This can be in bilateral or multilateral projects of a few select cluster members to collaborate on the development of a joint product or the interface of different products. This can be at industry seminars where cluster members formally share their knowledge with other cluster members, and hence improve collective knowledge bases. Loyalty is the second most prevalent ICB in the data. Due to the tight production schedules for sport equipment needed for professional competitions delays and errors are unacceptable. In spite of this, there is almost no punishment for such failures observable in the cluster. This can be explained by prevalence of long-standing, often personal interrelationships between cluster organization’s directors or employees and the resulting level of trust. There is a confidence that each party does its best to achieve the common goal of producing high performing equipment. This comes along with a high degree of altruism amongst cluster members involved in bilateral relationships or multilateral networks. The cluster governance organization is key because it does not only help particular cluster organizations but facilitates involvement of other cluster organizations. This can happen within a formal setting such as the creation of a joint bid to obtain funding for a joint research project or within an informal setting such as product feedback or advice about the use of new materials, designs or technologies.

We conclude that sport clusters differ from generic clusters in two aspects: 1) the existence of sport-specific stakeholders and 2) a level of interorganizational citizenship behavior which is beyond behaviors that are normally associated with other clusters. We conclude that sport clusters provide a favorable environment for interorganizational advancement, loyalty, and altruism and that those behaviors can positively influence the functioning of a sport cluster and its outcomes.

References


