

Article

Environmental Factors and Stakeholders Influence on Professional Sport Organisations Engagement in Sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility: A South African Perspective

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Abstract: As the sporting industry has become more professionalised, there have been an increased number of studies focused on corporate social responsibility (CSR) engagement within this sector. However, with unique aspects of professional sport organisations and limited studies on this in developing market contexts, this paper reports on a study that aimed to investigate the impact of environmental factors and stakeholders that have an impact on sustainable CSR engagement in the South African professional sport industry. Following an interpretivist philosophy, this study adopted a qualitative research approach to collect the primary data. Key stakeholders were strategically selected from six South African professional sport organisations and ten in-depth interviews were conducted. This inquiry revealed that several internal and external environmental factors influence sustainable CSR engagement by professional sport organisations, namely, (1) internal objectives, funds, people and resources and (2) external uncontrollable factors, economy, and community awareness. The study also found that corporate partnerships, non-corporate partnerships and targeted communities were the main stakeholder types involved in CSR activities. The study, therefore, expands the understanding of CSR engagement within the professional sport industry in South Africa, also contributing to CSR practice and policy within this sector by proposing the engagement in more sustainable CSR initiatives.

Keywords: sustainable corporate social responsibility (CSR); professional sport organisations; CSR environmental factors; CSR stakeholders; developing country; South Africa

1. Introduction

People traditionally engaged in sport for social reasons [1–3]. However, over more recent years, sport has become increasingly professionalised, with a sporting organisation today regarded as more of a business than a social institution. Although some aspects of professionalization of sport can be traced back as far as the 1800s, only horse racing was considered more of a business. While this social aspect was apparent in early professional sport business, the sport industry has since become a significant part of the global economy [4]. For example, it was estimated that sport contributed 37.3 billion GBP to the UK economy in 2018, which is a contribution of 2.1% to the GDP. Meanwhile, the value of sport globally was reported to be over 1.3 trillion US dollars in 2017 [5]. The professionalization of sport in many developing economies has also emerged. In South Africa, sport-related spending was reported as approximately ZAR45 billion in 2018 [6]. The South African sport industry has increasingly engaged in a profit maximising approach as it has become more professionalised over recent years.

The sport industry has, therefore, become an important part of both the economy and society. As a result, there is an expectation for sports to engage in socially responsible and sustainable business practice as all other profit-making businesses are expected to do [7]. However, unlike regular businesses, there is an historic expectation of sport organisations as social institutions and not primarily ones that exist for economic benefit. This study thus aimed to explore the practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR) among professional sport organisations in South Africa and specifically, to uncover the environmental factors and stakeholders that influence this practice. Recent international studies conducted on CSR in sport have shown that CSR engagement produced positive outcomes for professional sport organisations [8–13], with these positive outcomes linked more to reputation enhancement and marketing benefits in particular [14,15].

The CSR discourse in professional sport has largely been concerned with measuring CSR performance, which has resulted in a number of models and tools designed to assess this. Models such as the “virtue matrix” [16], the “rating index system” [17], the “CSR performance scorecard” [18], the “corporate social performance model” [19], and the “three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate social performance” [20], were all designed to measure CSR performance for professional sport organisations. However, these models do not highlight or account for the factors and stakeholders that influence the engagement of professional sport organisations in sustainable CSR initiatives [21].

Scarce literature identified that environmental factors influence CSR engagement by professional sport organisations [22–24] and these factors could arguably influence the sustainability of the CSR initiatives. However, the aforementioned studies, and several others [10,25–35], were mostly conducted from a European context (i.e., developed countries) and, consequently, there is a gap in sport CSR research from a developing country viewpoint. The South African environment can be argued to be unique due to its inimitable history and, therefore, the outcomes of this study present original insights of CSR engagement by professional sport organisations from the context of a developing country. There is also especially a gap in research regarding the factors and stakeholders that influence sustainable CSR in professional sport organisations in developing economy context such as South Africa [22,33,36–46]. Therefore the main objective of this study was to identify the factors and stakeholders that influence the engagement of South African professional sport organisations in CSR initiatives, as well as how these factors and agents influenced the sustainability of such initiatives.

This paper now looks in more detail at the literature relating to these themes in order to define the purpose and objectives of the study. The methodology section explains how empirical evidence was collected, coded, and themed. The findings are then presented and discussed in relation to the literature, highlighting the contribution of this study, drawing conclusions and recommendations that are useful for extending the knowledge of CSR practice in the South African professional sport industry context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The South African Professional Sport Environment

South Africa was subjected to a ban from international sports from 1968 due to its apartheid laws at the time and was only re-admitted into international sports in 1992 [47,48]. Since then, the rapid growth of sport organisations as a result of increased internationalisation [7] has led many of these organisations to become increasingly professionalised. This has primarily been the case with the top three sport codes in the country, namely rugby, cricket and soccer. South Africa stands out within the African continent in terms of sport achievement and as a host of sport mega-events. South Africa has won the Rugby World Cup on three occasions, won soccer’s Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), and has achieved at the highest levels at the Olympic Games in cricket, hockey and netball [49]. In 2010, South Africa was the first African country to host the FIFA World Cup [50], one of the world’s biggest sport spectacles. However, research in professional sport in South Africa appears to be focused on

development, the history of sport in South Africa, and most recently mega-events [51–61]. There has remained a lack of professional business-related studies within the sector.

Few studies have specifically looked at CSR within this context. However, two studies that have done so, one investigated the benefits that a professional soccer organisation derived benefits from CSR activities [11], while the other study considered a community's perceptions of a professional sport organisation's CSR initiatives [12].

The South African sport industry is significantly influenced by its unique local environment, most notably linked to its history. The apartheid laws caused significant disparities in terms of wealth, education and access to resources along with racial divisions within all spheres of the South African society, including sport [47]. While the government has set up measures and systems to address these social differences and attempt to provide equal opportunities for all, this is an ongoing discourse in South Africa [47,48]. The White Paper on Sport and Recreation for South Africa [62] identified that sport is recognised as one of the fundamental rights by the United Nations. Furthermore, Knott et al. [63] identify sport as a driver for social cohesion and unity which supports the proclamation made by the United Nations [64] that identified sport as a vehicle to promote education, health, development and peace. Whereas on an international level, the social aspect of sports can be seen to be less focussed on the development and more on promoting unity and a sense of society and belonging [65,66].

This section, therefore, highlights the need for further investigation of CSR in the professional sport context of South Africa, especially in terms of how these organisations engage in CSR activities that assist with delivering the social development aims of the society in addition to their professional business development.

2.2. Defining CSR

There are a number of CSR definitions that have been proposed, with those most congruent with this study now discussed. Firstly, Dahlsrud's [67] factor analysis on CSR approaches conclude that CSR includes voluntarily addressing specific functions, ethics and regulatory frameworks, which are pertinent to the development of business sustainability and behaviour that society expects the business to exhibit. Secondly, in order for businesses to rationalise CSR, it must include a capacity to reduce cost and risk, act in a socially responsible manner, create a competitive advantage, build a reputation in the market, and build synergy across stakeholder groups through the creation of social capital [68,69]. Wood [70] propose that not only can companies improve the economic performance by doing business in a manner that considers their impact on the broader community, but there is a possibility of reducing the threat of increased external regulation via self-regulation. However, Smith and Westerbeek [71] emphasise that CSR is an organisation's response to its economic, political, and social factors as prescribed by public policy and legislation. There is, nevertheless, general agreement that social and environmental responsibility is a core business issue, regardless of how CSR is defined.

Carroll [20] proposes that there are four factors that need to be addressed by an organisation in order for it to be considered socially responsible: ethical, economic, legal, and discretionary categories. Arguments made prior to the abovementioned definitions only considered one or two of these factors and neglected the rest. For example, Friedman [72] only focused on the economic factor and neglected the legal, ethical and discretionary factors. Therefore, while the other explanations raised valid points, they failed to consider the full picture and only defined CSR on the basis of one or the other of its characteristics. Later, studies and definitions tended to be based on the holistic view of CSR as postulated by Carroll [19]. Burke and Logson [7] indicate that CSR development has reached a point where it has become strategic. They propose that an organisation should plan their CSR strategically based on their organisational goals in order to improve the organisation's performance. Contemporary organisations have become increasingly concerned with a socially focused approach, which has led to an increase in businesses incorporating CSR initiatives in their strategies [39]. Martín-Gaitero and Escrig-Tena [40] indicate that if organisations incorporated CSR in their management strategies, they can develop their CSR activities more effectively.

Kim et al. [23], Djaballah et al. [73], Servaes and Tamayo [74], and Lins et al. [75] suggest that engaging in CSR activities facilitate positive perceptions towards an organisation. This suggestion is underpinned by the conclusions presented by Branco and Rodriguez [76], they further add to this by positing that positive perceptions can lead to long-term benefits like attracting and retaining excellent employees. They propose that resource-based participation (RBP) along with stakeholder theory can be applied to CSR analysis, which is argued to have an impact on the financial performance of the organisation. The impact can be positive if the consumers are aware of the company's activities. Additionally, Liu et al. [77] propose that sport organisations can successfully use their CSR initiatives to leverage their marketing expenses. The current study concurs with the application of resource-based application as arguments presented later in the paper will highlight the importance of resources in both implementation and sustainability of CSR initiatives.

Orlitzky [78] propose that the arguments put forth by Friedman [44] have been forgotten as businesses increasingly embrace a socially aware approach to their business practices. Other studies reveal that some benefits of CSR appear to have marketing related outcomes [8,14,79]. While the benefits of CSR have been clearly theorised and documented, there is still a lack of information and research on how CSR engagement can be made more sustainable.

CSR and Corporate Social Investment (CSI) have sometimes been used as synonyms in both research and practice. Ndhlovu [80] proposed that CSI emerged as a construct of CSR and was initially indistinguishable from CSR since activities of both concepts were identical. However, CSI activities have become more focused on addressing issues such as corporate development [81,82]. From a developing country context, CSI has been viewed by businesses as an opportunity to engage in addressing some of society's pressing issues such as poverty, workplace diversity, economic empowerment and so on [83]. Ndhlovu [80] concludes that CSI is a company's investment in society through initiatives that are geared to address prevalent social issues with no expectation of financial returns for the company. The final outcome is to bring benefits to the community. Although the two concepts are similar, they are not synonymous, with the key difference being that the approach used to engage in CSR is more strategic, and the organisation benefits from engaging in such activities. Conversely, the approach taken in CSI appears to be less strategic and more altruistic.

In light of the above discussion, it would appear that CSR activities, while still perceived as humanitarian in nature, have become more business-focused and are increasingly used to elevate the business situation of organisations, as well as giving them leverage in the market and among stakeholders. While it is apparent that businesses tend to engage in responsive CSR, this study agrees with the ideology proposed by Lantos [25] and Engert et al. [26] that strategic engagement in CSR is essential in creating sustainable CSR for professional sport organisations. Although sport organisations are believed to have an inherent social orientation, as a result of the increasing professionalization of the sector, the following section examines how these organisations are making use of CSR activities to enhance or (re-)develop their socially responsible orientation.

2.3. CSR in Professional Sport Organisations

Kolyperas et al. [21] acknowledged that there is a lack of insight into CSR within the business of sport. While there is some research on the frameworks and measurement of CSR in sport as previously mentioned [17,27,30–32], there is little research on the factors, influencers and motivators of CSR in sport business, especially in developing countries.

In order for the sport industry to keep up in the business world, it is argued that professional sport organisations improve their understanding and engagement of CSR activities. Babiak and Wolfe [84], Spaaij and Westerbeek [85], and Inoue et al. [86] suggest that professional sport organisations cannot disregard CSR since it is increasingly becoming mandatory in all business operations. Robertson et al. [38] agree and suggest that it is not only professional sport organisations that have an obligation to engage in CSR activities, but local community clubs are also mandated by their stakeholders to adopt a more social approach in their management.

Breitbarth and Harris [27] propose a model that is used to illustrate the role of CSR in the football business. They suggest that if these approaches are engaged, they can generate significant benefits for the sport organisation and the organisations that govern it. Bradish and Cronin [29] and Fifka and Jaeger [87] indicate that CSR engagement can be regarded as an important constituent of contemporary sport management practice and theory. These researchers propose that the nature of CSR makes it an efficient tool to manage internal and external concerns and that no other management tool can match its effectiveness in this regard. Furthermore, they explain CSR to be a business practice that stimulates community goodwill while addressing social issues, but at the same time maintaining sound business strategies.

The engagement in CSR initiatives has seen a shift from an altruistic to a more strategic approach with the main objective of seeking to do “good in the community” [8,88]. The primary reasons for professional sport organisations engagement in CSR are more external in nature, as a result of strategic responses to organisational obligations in terms of legislation, customers, league transformation pressure, unification factors, internal resources (e.g., facilities, players and coaches) [22]. Furthermore, CSR is entrenched in professional sport, and commitments to corporate partners and other stakeholders, employees and customers have augmented the engagement in CSR initiatives by professional sport organisations [22–24]. Additionally, it is proposed that CSR factors and determinants are similar for both sport and other industries. Blair [89] maintains that professional sport organisations are the same as other organisations in their endeavour for maximum profitability and to have a positive impact on their countries’ economies. Furthermore, professional sport organisations are not exempt from legal obligations, which they must adhere to in order to balance their profit-making obligations.

2.4. CSR Drivers: Environmental Factors and Stakeholders

Lantos [24], in his discussion of the three approaches of CSR, namely ethical, altruistic and strategic CSR, mandates that ethical CSR practice is compulsory for all businesses. Furthermore, all businesses should consider a strategic CSR approach in order to successfully implement their social responsibility obligations, as well as achieve their organisational objectives. Engert et al. [25] identified with the ideology proposed by Lantos [24] and suggest that a strategic CSR engagement approach is required for more sustainable CSR. However, these authors recognise that there is a need for further empirical research regarding the drivers of CSR.

A small number of studies identified that environmental factors influence CSR engagement by professional sport organisations [22–24] and these factors could arguably influence the sustainability of the CSR initiatives. Factors that have been identified in previous studies include customers [33], activist groups [36], legislation [90], and internal factors such as the influence of employees in creating a CSR culture in the organisation [23]. Porter and Kramer [91] reveal that it is also important to link CSR activities with the organisation’s objectives due to external factors, which include economic and innovation influences.

Lindgreen et al. [41] found that internal and external environment factors influence CSR, especially regarding the expectations of the community, society and other stakeholders, which is supported by Martin’s [16] model of CSR objectives. Martin’s [16] proposed that organisations engaged in CSR in response to societal pressures, while Francois et al. [42] suggested that CSR engagement can be explicit or implicit. Meanwhile, Kolyperas et al. [21], Jones et al. [43], Maon et al. [44], Fortis et al. [45], and Niesten and Stefan [46] identified the following factors that are evident in the organisations’ community as having an influence on their CSR engagement: stakeholders’ pressure and obligations, financial position, business strategy, social issues, and economic and political environment.

Djaballah et al. [73] added sponsors of professional sport organisations to the set of stakeholders strategically involved in organisations’ CSR activities.

Interestingly, on an international level, the social aspect of sports can be seen to be less focussed on the development and more on promoting unity and a sense of society and belonging [65]. One good example can be the social aspect of sport shown by Carr et al. [66]. They explored the unique

governance system of Celtic FC. Celtic FC has a governing system that allowed their fans to have a say in the running of the organisation. These fans are small shareholders in the organisation and are represented by the Celtic Trust. Carr et al. [66] state that Celtic FC has one of the most developed community involvement programmes in the United Kingdom. Another example is FC Barcelona, whose popularity is not only due to their on-field performance but also due to their extensive CSR activities inside and outside of Europe [10]. From these two examples, it can be assumed that the involvement of professional sport in society is dependent on the social environment in which the professional sport organisations are established, and as such, this study will present unique findings from the context of a developing country.

This discussion led to the formation of the primary objective of this paper, namely, to ascertain the environmental factors and stakeholders that influenced the implementation of sustainable CSR activities by professional sport organisations in South Africa.

3. Materials and Methods

The nature of the constructs under investigation (CSR environmental factors and stakeholders) was identified to be largely influenced by human perceptions and their founding elements are constructed in the minds of humans. Hence, based on the arguments presented by Henning et al. [92], this study embraced the interpretivism research philosophy. A qualitative research approach was selected to obtain empirical findings as it explains data collected rather than disproves a hypothesis [93]. Veal [94] and Gratton and Jones [95] identify some characteristics of qualitative research: the approach corresponds with the nature of the phenomenon being studied, “a qualitative experience”.

The data collection method used in this study was similar to that followed by Kolyperas [21] who reviewed the websites of selected sport organisations. The qualitative study aimed to identify the factors and stakeholders that influence sustainable CSR engagement of professional sport organisations in an African developing country.

The population of this study was identified as all professional sport organisations in South Africa. The population was narrowed to focus on the three most professional sport codes in South Africa, namely soccer, cricket, and rugby [62]. A set of criteria was developed to identify the professional sport organisations that would be selected for the study. The criteria prescribed that the professional sport organisations should be: an organisation where sports is the primary product, must be a registered professional company, must engage in some form of CSR initiatives, and must participate in at least one major tournament in the sports code. Using these criteria, a sample of six professional sport organisations were selected in order to reflect the three codes across the country, namely: the Sharks, the DHL Stormers, the Cape Cobras, the Highveld Lions, Ajax Cape Town FC and SuperSport United FC. This study followed the key informant technique, whereby the participants were chosen on the basis of specific knowledge that they possess [95]. Ten key individuals from within these organisations (that were directly involved in the CSR initiatives) were purposively selected and interviewed (in some instances, the marketing department was responsible for CSR, so one representative was interviewed, whereas there was marketing and CSR departments in other professional sport organisations, so more than one representative was interviewed).

Prior to the interviews, a review of the websites of the selected professional sport organisations was conducted to identify the CSR initiatives that the professional sport organisations were actively involved in. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were then conducted with the professional sport organisational representatives identified. These interviews were conducted until a point of saturation was reached, which occurs when further interviews yield no new knowledge [96,97]. A total of ten face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted and each interview was recorded with the permission of the participant. The data collected were transcribed and followed the ethical requirement to preserve the anonymity of the respondents. Arguments presented by Gratton and Jones [95] and Creswell [98] provided justification for the number of interviews conducted in this study. These authors argued that a sample size of five to twenty-five participants is suitable for a qualitative study, in addition to

the achievement of saturation. The data collected were transcribed verbatim and followed the ethical requirement to preserve the anonymity of the respondents. Hence, each respondent was assigned pseudonyms and for the remainder of this paper and will be referred to as respondent 1 to 10 (R1-R10). The data were manually coded with the assistance of the ATLAS.ti software programme. The codes were derived inductively, initially relating to the semi-structured interview guide, which were based on the objectives of this study. Table 1 provides a summary of these codes, which form the structure of the discussion in the following section.

Table 1. Inductive code development.

Code Family	Codes	Research Objectives
Organisational Objectives	Organisational objectives Community involvement Respondent involvement in CSR	Screening
Engagement in CSR	General definition of CSR CSR initiatives Difference between CSR and CSI Social responsibility of sport Selection of targeted communities Selection of identified causes	To establish that professional sport organisations in South Africa engaged in CSR.
Factors that influence sustainability	Internal environmental factors that affect the implementation of CSR External environmental factors that affect the implementation of CSR Stakeholders involved in CSR CSR performance Link between CSR objectives and organisational objectives	To determine environmental factors and stakeholders influence on implementation and sustainability of CSR initiatives.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings from the in-depth interviews are discussed in relation to literature under the three main themes that emerged from the analysis, namely: professional sport organisations engagement in sustainable CSR initiatives, and factors that influence professional sport organisations sustainable CSR activities.

4.1. Organisational Objectives

The respondents were asked to identify the objectives of their organisation, which was to confirm that the organisations selected met the sample selection criteria for the study, as well as to triangulate the evidence obtained through the analysis of their activities on the organisation's website. The responses reflected a multifaceted management approach for professional sport organisations. Two clear themes emerged, which were a strong social theme and a profit-focused theme. The presence of a social aspect in the organisations' objectives highlighted the social nature of sport organisations. This was apparent when one of the respondents noted that the objectives of their organisation included nurturing, developing and promoting all sport communities and to enable transformation, thus alluding to the purpose of sport being socially inclined [65,66,78,99].

One of the respondents implied that the fundamental aim of their organisation was to produce players that are good enough to play professionally and that can be incorporated into the European market. This showed a utility maximising approach that is linked to maximising profit for the organisation. On the other hand, another respondent argued that their organisation's objectives included becoming one of the biggest brands nationally and internationally, thereby alluding to a profit maximising model. This response emphasises the argument presented by Prinz [100] that

professional sport organisations can embrace both profit maximisation and utility maximisation in their management structure and incorporate socially inclined objectives in their management approach.

4.2. Professional Sport Organisations Engagement in Sustainable CSR Initiatives

4.2.1. CSR Initiatives

In response to the question of the CSR initiatives, which the professional sport organisations engaged in, the respondents identified initiatives that were implemented by their organisations. The CSR initiatives respective are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. A summary of sustainable corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities identified.

Professional Sport Organisation	CSR Initiative	Objective of the CSR Initiative
Ajax Cape Town FC	Schools community scheme programme	This initiative aims to spread HIV and AIDS awareness, as well as highlight the negative impact of drug use in schools.
	Ajax CT FC kick and learn Soccer Samba	This programme provides coaching clinics for primary school children, as well as provides skills training at the community schools.
	The Street sweep programme	This undertaking re-integrates street children with their families. The South African Police are partners in this initiative.
	Holiday soccer coaching clinics	This venture fosters young talent and provides continued training opportunities during the holidays.
	Initiatives to reduce crime	This enterprise is run in partnership with the Metropolitan police and the South African Police, which is designed to help build community cohesion via sport.
Supersport United FC	Leamogetswe Safety Home	Leamogetswe is a child and youth care centre, which takes care of orphans. Supersport United FC has adopted this home and supports them financially.
	Soccer schools tournaments in Atteridge	This programme encourages participation in soccer and stimulates relationships between the community and the organisation.
	Cancer pink drive	This scheme seeks to raise awareness of breast cancer.
	Atteridge Youth Legotla (AYOLE)	This enterprise provides skills training to youth in the Atteridge community.
	HIV Awareness programmes	This undertaking endeavours to raise HIV and AIDS awareness.
Highveld Lions Cricket Franchise	Rebuilding old age homes	The employees of Supersport United FC volunteer in programmes to rebuild old age homes, which strives to build relationships with the community.
	Hubs and regional performance centre (RPC) system.	This initiative provides opportunities for the community to participate in cricket.
	Bursaries for the youth	This venture provides opportunities to the disadvantaged in the community.
	Mini Cricket programme	This programme provides an opportunity for children to play cricket.
	Highveld Lions sleep-out	This undertaking provides coaching clinics, and workshops to inspire young aspiring cricketers.
Momentum eKasi challenge	This local community cricket challenge aims to introduce cricket to a wider demographic.	

Table 2. Cont.

Professional Sport Organisation	CSR Initiative	Objective of the CSR Initiative
The Sharks Rugby Franchise	Feeding the homeless	This scheme strives to give back to the community.
	Volunteering at homeless shelters	This initiative purposes to give back to the community and humanise the organisation.
	Save the rhinos movement	This venture supports and raises awareness for rhinos, which have become an endangered animal in South Africa.
	Coaching clinics	This programme provides coaching clinics and opportunities for people in the community to play rugby.
	Development programmes	This undertaking provides skill training for the community.
The Cape Cobras Cricket Franchise	Mini cricket programme	This venture is similar to the mini cricket programme from the Highveld Lions Cricket Franchise, which provides opportunities for children in the Western Cape to participate in cricket.
	Spirited cricket	This initiative provides role models for children in the community.
	Small donations to hospitals	This programme aims to give back to the community.
	Team volunteer programme to the clinics.	This scheme endeavours to give back to the community.
The Stormers Rugby Franchise	Hubs Programme	This undertaking provides opportunities and facilities for the members of the community to participate in rugby.
	Coaching in schools	This venture provides opportunities for children to play rugby.
	Craven week	This programme provides opportunities for high school children to compete in a provincial rugby tournament.
	Bursaries for talented underprivileged youth	This initiative provides opportunities for underprivileged youth to pursue rugby.
	Community amateur clubs	This scheme provides support for amateur clubs in the communities to make them more sustainable.

These findings provide evidence that CSR engagement is widely practised by professional sport organisations in South Africa [38,49]. Additionally, CSR engagement was identified as an essential contemporary sport management factor [29,87], since it was shown that professional sport organisations in South Africa are aware of their social responsibility and actively engage in CSR activities. The respondents proposed that while their organisation was making a difference in the community, enhancing and ensuring exposure for the brand were also objectives of sustainable CSR. This empirical evidence supports Bradish and Cronin [29] and Fifka and Jaeger [87] notion that CSR engagement is important for organisations to stimulate and create goodwill in society while maintaining good business savvy.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that strategic CSR can also be identified as a management function because corporations engage in CSR to comply with the pressures of the society around them. They are also obligated to engage in CSR to adhere to legislation [16,20,43,90]. This could be deduced from the findings, which showed that professional sport organisations identified sustainable CSR as a commitment by businesses, to behave ethically, and to contribute to the community. Two factors were identified as representative of sustainable CSR in management, namely: the quality of management and the quantity of the impact on society. The findings also imply that CSR is more than just an obligation for professional sport organisations, but also forms part of the purpose of the organisation, which is most likely due to the social nature of sport and the expectation for sport to be socially inclined. Notwithstanding, sport was historically a social entity despite its continued commercialisation, especially in a developing country.

However, as CSR engagement has become increasingly relevant in the business world [87], engaging in sustainable CSR has become more of a strategy rather than an obligation for professional organisations, thus alluding to the purpose of the organisation [25,26]. This study found that professional sport organisations in South Africa identified CSR as an ongoing process, which supports the notion presented by Engert et al. [26] that CSR needs to be sustainable. Strategic CSR is further identified from the findings as part of the organisation's duty to contribute to the economic development of the country, which is especially important in a developing country context.

4.2.2. Approach to CSR Engagement

The respondents were also asked to discuss the objectives of their CSR initiatives. Three types of approaches to CSR engagement were identified and classified as: ethical, altruistic, or strategic [25]. The findings are summarised in Figure 1 below:

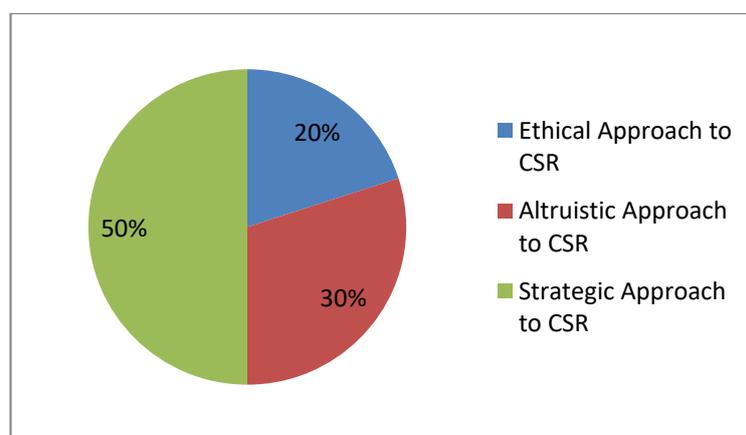


Figure 1. Approach to CSR.

While the literature debate presented earlier in this study [25,26] posit that a strategic approach to CSR is instrumental to sustainable CSR, it was found that the majority of the responses alluded to an altruistic approach to CSR objectives. It, therefore, appears then that there is a need for a shift to a more strategic approach to make CSR engagement more sustainable for professional sport organisations.

4.3. Factors That Influence Sustainable CSR

While the review of the literature showed that there is a need for further investigation on the factors that influence CSR, the findings of this study identified internal and external environment factors and various stakeholder involvement elements, which were found to influence sustainable CSR activities among professional sport organisations: These factors are graphically summarized in Figure 2.

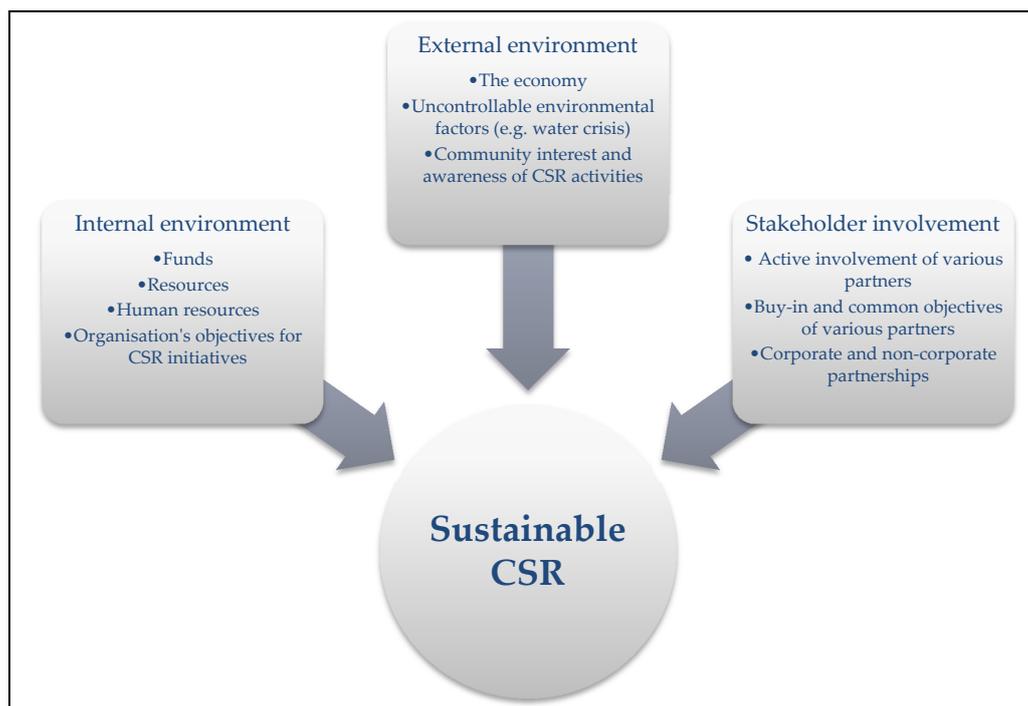


Figure 2. Factors that influence sustainable CSR.

4.3.1. Internal Environment

It was found that professional sport organisations required resources to successfully engage in CSR activities and these resources ranged from financial support to human resources, as well as time.

When asked what internal factors influenced the sustainability of CSR initiatives, one of the respondents stated:

“Definitely resources or a company’s access to resources and funds, I do think the right fit of individuals that are directly involved in CSR initiatives needs to be a good fit. Somebody that understands the objectives, deliverables and external will give access to the communities.” [R2]

Another respondent added that to the aforementioned sentiments by identifying the importance of alignment between the organisation’s objectives and the CSR initiatives, which supports the arguments presented by Duffy [101]. This respondent is quoted saying:

“One of the key challenges is funding and support to get these programmes up and running. For us to get these programmes, we need to make sure that there is funding and support. The brand is very strong and one of the problems we have is alignment because when people see WP Rugby they think Stormers, they see money.” [R8]

The evidence of the investments required to sustain CSR initiatives gives emphasis to the fact that sustainable CSR can be seen as an investment and it is logical to approach it strategically in order to attain a return on the investment [23–26]. The respondents identified funds and resources, as well as human resources as a challenge to the sustainability of their CSR activities. The economy also dictates the financial capability of the business to sustain its CSR initiatives. The findings showed that respondents identified financial support and the economy as the greatest internal and external factors respectively, which had an impact on their CSR engagement. Therefore, this empirical evidence supports the concepts presented by Lindgreen et al. [41] on factors that drive CSR, but might also be relevant to factors that impact sustainable CSR initiatives since CSR drivers can also be classified as internal or external factors. The findings are also supported by recent literature, which postulates that sustainable CSR is influenced by a number of factors such as the financial situation of the organisation, the economic environment, and the organisation’s obligation to its stakeholders [43–46].

4.3.2. External Environment

Respondents identified a number of uncontrollable factors that influence their CSR activities, some of which could potentially be unique to the South African context. For example, one respondent identified a water crisis in Cape Town at the time of the interview as an example of an uncontrollable environmental factor. The respondent mentioned that because of this crisis, in particular, the sport grounds in the communities could not be used as there was no grass, which made implementing their CSR programmes very difficult.

The economy also dictates the financial capability of the business to sustain its CSR initiatives. The findings showed that respondents identified the economy as one of the greatest external factors, which had an impact on their CSR engagement. One respondent stated:

“Recession is hitting everyone, businesses don’t have money now to support all these programmes, the government will say that we have water shortages and all that, and they will tell you that money has to be put into that, but there is still a need to uplift the community.” [R4]

Therefore, this empirical evidence supports the concepts presented by Lindgreen et al. [41] on factors that drive CSR, but might also be relevant to factors that impact sustainable CSR initiatives since CSR drivers can also be classified as internal or external factors.

Another important factor identified by the respondents was the importance of communities being made aware of the professional sport organisations CSR activities. Awareness stimulated community member participation and ensured the success of such CSR activities. A respondent divulged the following:

“I think it’s important that the community knows what the organisation is doing because once the community is aware of what you are doing, then the impact of the project will be better and more people will benefit from the project.” [R3]

In summary, the internal and external environmental factors identified in the findings align with the factors that influence CSR engagement identified by Niesten and Stefan [46].

4.3.3. Stakeholders Involved in CSR Activities

The respondents alluded to the importance of various partners’ involvement in the CSR activities to ensure the sustainability of their CSR initiatives. Thus implying that for CSR initiatives to be sustainable there needs to be interest not only from the community but also from stakeholders, which is vital from a developing country milieu. The respondents emphasised that the stakeholders must have an objective or objectives that are similar or aligned to the objectives of the CSR initiatives in order to make these more sustainable

Excluding the professional sport organisation, three types of stakeholders can be identified from the findings, namely corporate partners, non-corporate partners and the targeted communities where the CSR activities are implemented. Table 3 provides a summary of the types of stakeholders and their influence on sustainable CSR activities. The findings imply that the engagement of CSR activities not only impacts the professional sport organisation and the targeted community, but also a myriad of other corporate and non-corporate stakeholders intricately involved in the CSR initiative. This finding reveals a gap in the literature, since while stakeholders are identified as influencers of CSR initiatives [43–46], whereas only the Breitbarth [27] maintains that sport organisations can create value for their stakeholders through their CSR initiatives. Table 3 also provides an outline of the perceived reasons for stakeholders’ involvement, the type of involvement identified by the respondents, and the perceived stakeholder benefits. It is interesting to note that the majority of the stakeholder benefits relate to marketing performance.

Table 3. Stakeholders' involvement in sustainable CSR activities.

Type of Stakeholder	Relationship with Sport Organisation	Reason for Involvement in CSR Activities	Compatibility with CSR Activities	Type of Involvement in CSR Activities	Involvement Benefits of CSR Activities
Corporate Partnerships	Official team sponsorships Shirt sponsorships Apparel sponsorships Official partners	Part of company operating policy. Corporate partners' interest in CSR activities Increase exposure of the corporation to communities. Leverage relationship with sport organisation	CSR activities fit into the corporate partners' CSR portfolios. Provide support for sport organisation. Compatible target market between the sport organisation and the corporation.	Financial support of the CSR activities. Providing branded equipment, apparel, gifts and giveaways. Supporting the coaching staff. Providing transport.	Increased exposure to the community. Potential new markets for the corporation. Improved image for the corporation. Increased brand identification for the corporation.
Non-corporate partnerships	Government structures Non-governmental organisations (NGO) Charities Orphanages	Address some social issues. Raise awareness of some issues (for example, Pink Drive). Drive the sustainable development goals (SDG) agenda.	CSR activities fit into the corporate partners' CSR portfolios. Objectives of the organisation include making a difference in the communities.	Provide support to the sport organisation (for example, South African Police). Assist with coaching and providing information.	Building relationships with the community. Spreading information about causes and issues in society.
Targeted Communities	Community where the sport organisation and amateur clubs are based Underprivileged communities Communities that are part of hubs and RPC system Townships	To build capacity in sport participation. To provide opportunities for everyone to play sport. To address some community issues. To facilitate behavioural change in the communities.	Fits criteria of targeted communities	Welcome organisations to the communities. Participate in CSR activities.	Opportunities to play sport. Assistance to address some community issues. Exposure to the organisations actively involved in CSR in the communities.

5. Conclusions and Contributions to Knowledge and Practice

The main objective of this study was to identify the factors and stakeholders that influence the engagement of South African professional sport organisations in CSR initiatives, as well as how these influenced the sustainability of such initiatives. The study revealed that professional sport organisations in South Africa identified the importance of CSR and incorporated CSR as a part of their good business practice. A number of CSR initiatives, which professional sport organisations were engaged in were identified, and it appeared that the majority of the professional sport organisations took an altruistic approach to CSR rather than a more sustainable strategic approach.

Despite the paucity of literature on the sustainability of CSR for professional sport organisations in developing countries, the current study identified several major internal and external environmental factors that influence the sustainability of CSR initiatives, for example: funds, people, resources and organisational objectives (internal environment factors), and economy (uncontrollable factors and community/stakeholder interest and awareness). The study revealed that financial support and skilled employees were essential for CSR engagement to be sustainable in a developing country. Moreover, the economic environment also determines the sustainability, as well as the type of CSR initiatives that the professional sport organisations engage in. Environmental factors can sometimes have an influence on the sustainable delivery of CSR initiatives, for example as previously discussed, the water shortage in the Western Cape in South Africa thus implying that some environmental factors can be specific to the location of the professional sport organisation.

The study revealed that stakeholder engagement is essential for the sustainability of CSR initiatives. The inquiry identified the following factors as having an influence on stakeholder involvement among South African professional sport organisations: active involvement of various partners, buy-in and common objectives of various partners and corporate and non-corporate partnerships. Three types of stakeholders could be deduced from the findings, namely: corporate, non-corporate partners, and the targeted community.

The findings of this study are important especially in the context of a developing country, because the sport codes that are not included in this study are in the process of professionalization and are likely to go through the same or similar process. Other developing countries may also have the same or similar environments to South Africa, particularly countries in Africa, which share a lot of the same history as South Africa. The findings of this study can serve as a starting point in mapping out the CSR strategies for their professional sport organisations, thus creating sustainable CSR initiatives that will bring the most benefits to the organisations and the communities.

Contributions to Knowledge and Practice

A review of the literature revealed two gaps that this study attempted to address. The study identified a gap in knowledge of how professional sport organisations can engage in sustainable CSR practices, especially within a developing country context. This study, therefore, makes contributions to CSR and sport management literature by providing insights on CSR and professional sport organisations in a developing country. Based on the findings, the current study suggests that in addition to the factors that influence CSR, which were identified by Lantos (2001), societal issues and stakeholder involvement should be identified as factors that influence sustainable CSR.

It is additionally speculated that there is an opportunity for stakeholders to increase their engagement in CSR activities initiated by professional sport organisations. The aforementioned literature identified that sport has the potential to be a vehicle that can be used to drive the SDG agenda. However, based on the findings, it was apparent that governmental involvement in CSR initiatives implemented by the professional sport organisations was minimal. This study, therefore, suggests that there is potential for increased involvement between the government and professional sport organisations. Additionally, the government could potentially use the CSR initiatives implemented by the organisations strategically to further their SDG agenda.

The study also proposes that there is potential for the stakeholders to benefit from such engagements. However, for the stakeholders' investments to be justified, there must be a link between their objectives and those of the professional sport organisation's objectives in terms of the strategic CSR activities. Based on this discussion, it is recommended that professional sport organisations need to approach CSR in a more strategic manner by considering the financial, economic and non-controllable environmental factors that can influence the sustainability of their CSR initiatives. Sustainability of professional sport organisations CSR initiatives can be enhanced by further engagement with their sponsors and other relevant partners.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This study focused on professional sport organisations in a single developing country (South Africa) and was not extended to a wider scope, for example, professional sport organisations in Africa. Therefore, the findings may require adaptation to be applicable in different environments. Hence, further research should be conducted in other developing and/or developed countries [102,103] in order to compare and contrast these findings. There is still a dearth of research in developing countries regarding the engagement of professional sport organisations CSR activities and the added value for their sponsors and other stakeholders [27], which is an avenue for future research. Other studies identified stakeholders as factors that influence CSR engagement but did not investigate how they were impacted by the CSR initiatives [42–46]. This study focused on the three major sporting codes in South Africa, namely soccer, rugby and cricket. Other smaller sporting codes such as netball and hockey were not included, because they are not as professionalised as the three major sport codes, and can be described as semi-professional, which is an avenue for future research.

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