

Article

Images of Stakeholder Groups Based on Their Environmental Sustainability Linked CSR Projects: A Meta-Analytic Review of Korean Sport Literature

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Abstract: Achieving sustainability in sports events requires effective management, political leadership, and ensuring that all stakeholders adhere to a sustainable philosophy. In order to stage a mega-event, tremendous infrastructure and construction are required with significant consumption of private and public resources. Multiple stakeholder groups are recognized as key entities responsible for an efficient trigger of a mega-event. The aim of this study is to conduct a systematic review of Korean sport literature with regard to CSR practices (ES-linked) of different stakeholder groups and examine through a meta-analytic methodology their impact on the “images” of these groups. The CMA program was utilized as the main analysis tool to calculate the effect sizes from the selected empirical studies. The results indicated that CSR performance of governmental organizations had the highest effect size level on their own image (brand identity) as perceived by visitors and participants. Among the stakeholder groups, effect size levels of their CSR performances were followed by those of corporate sponsors and professional teams. It was found that stakeholder groups are pressured to maintain a balance between financial performance, consumer well-being, and brand identity to bring in external investment.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; environmental sustainability; mega-sports event; meta-analytic review; brand identification; image; stakeholder groups

1. Introduction

Sustainability is an important issue for all sporting events in the global sport industry [1,2]. Similar to establishing sustainable sport organizations, achieving sustainability in sports events requires effective management, political leadership, and ensuring that all stakeholders adhere to a sustainable philosophy [2,3]. In fact, hosting sports events, especially from a macro-perspective (e.g., the IOC's Summer/Winter Olympics, the UEFA European Football Championship, and the FIFA World Cup), has direct and indirect effects on the society, economy, and environment of the hosting regions and associated stakeholders. More sustainable sport events can be hosted when both the direct and indirect impacts on hosting region are thoroughly verified and forecasted [2,3]. However, it is not an easy task to precisely estimate the direct economic return for potential stakeholders of sport related events.

Historically, hosting such sport events has led to a significant amount of investment in the hosting nation's/region's essential infrastructure and provided global media visibility for potential commercial partners (corporate sponsors). Sustainability has emerged as an integral part of efforts and as a meaningful mission for relevant organizations, researchers, and practitioners in the global sports industry [4]. In pursuit of a more sustainable event, the International Olympic Committee (the IOC, hereafter) has reinforced the Olympic Solidarity Program in cooperation with other global partners since the constituent assembly of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) was established in Puerto Rico in 1979 [5]. Moreover, since the IOC officially initiated “The

Olympic Partners” (TOP) Olympic marketing program in 1985, multinationals, sponsoring partners, and national media have been trying to maintain commercial relations with the IOC in cooperation or competition. This TOP program has helped the IOC to secure financial stability and to build cooperative relationship with stakeholder groups for the stability of the Olympic movement. Thus, relevant stakeholders in the global sports industry have utilized such sports events to build their brand identity to achieve competitive market advantage [5–7]. That is, such mega-sports events as the IOC’s Olympics are the most widely accepted sources of media exposure via global media channels. In order to stage a mega-event, tremendous infrastructure and construction are required with a significant consumption of private and public resources. From a local cycling competition to the IOC’s summer/winter Olympics, sport events are composed of a remarkably diverse stakeholder groups. In general, multiple stakeholder groups are recognized as key entities responsible for triggering off the mega-event efficiently [8]. These key entities (stakeholder groups) include (1) related governmental organizations (e.g., National Olympic Committees, National Sports Federation and other relevant ministry and public agency of each hosting country and region), (2) corporate sponsors (e.g., profit organizations sponsoring sport events), (3) sports brands (e.g., sport fashion/equipment companies), and (4) professional teams (e.g., professional teams in any given sport league) [9]. To stage any type of sport event, those stakeholders need to establish a cohesively supporting environment during the life cycle of the staged sports event [8]. Since the core value of a sports event is intangible and experiential in nature, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities of the stakeholder groups have been a significant communication tool that helps them to establish a close link in comparison with direct advertising activities through media. The concepts of CSR and sustainable development are similar in many areas in connection with social commitments and responsibilities [10,11]. In general, the concept of CSR covers the broader aspects of non-monetary social benefits and well-being of potential stakeholders. Consequently, stakeholders have been actively participating in CSR activities associated with the theme of eco-friendliness and sustainability. In recent years, CSR activities based on the concept of environmental sustainability have played an integral role in the marketing programs of associated stakeholders of the 2012 London Summer Olympics. These groups in the global sport industry are committed to conceptualizing and implementing CSR projects for establishing people-nature linkages with “positive environmental and social sustainability” [6,12]. In other words, being committed to CSR has been a way of increasing public recognition for the multiple facets of sustainability. Hence, CSR projects of the stakeholders in a sponsored global sporting event could possibly bring positive social impacts including for the hosting region’s image/reputation, brand images of commercial partners, and other relevant stakeholder groups [1,13]. Sport events have been recognized as communication outlets for stakeholder groups due to the enormous media attention and social facilitation they promote. Therefore, to preserve and enhance the image of interested stakeholder groups, CSR sets up and restricts promotional and public relation activities of the groups at different stages from event production to consumption [5,13]. With the outcomes of recent research on sport events in the global sport industry, CSR projects of interested stakeholder groups have mainly been linked to their ‘image’ as reflected in the media and the public. Consequently, an increasing volume of relevant literature is being published about the potential relationship among the impact of CSR projects, a city’s/brand’s image, and environmental sustainability issues. Thus, since the IOC’s adaptation of the UN Agenda 21 (sustainable development knowledge platform) in 1999, scholars in the field of sport industry have been paying greater attention toward CSR projects linked to environmental sustainability (ES) issues, and their impacts on potential outcome indicators of sport events beyond the economic objectives of the interested stakeholder groups [14]. After successfully hosting the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) has subsidized public assets for staging mega-sport events. The 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics contributed much to this nation’s self-image, national security, and even economic diplomacy with such nations as China and United States of America. For instance, trade between South Korea and China was almost non-existent in the early 1980s and reached more than \$8 billion only after 10 years [15].

In the past two decades, South Korea has hosted many mega-sports events such as the 2002 FIFA World Cup and the 2003 Daegu/2015 Kwangju Universiade, and is set to host the 2018 Pyungchang Winter Olympics. Since 1989, the Korean Sport Promotion Foundation, which is the governmental sport agency, has raised national sports promotional funds and contributed these funds toward enhancement of life standards and public welfare of Korean citizen by planning and supporting a variety of sport, leisure, and recreational activities. The magnitude of national sports promotional funds and the Korean Government's support has seen a dramatic increase due to the expanding sport-related business, professional leagues, and commercial partners (see Table 1). Despite an increase in management/marketing-related studies in the field of sport science, there is limited understanding of how CSR projects (ES linked) of various stakeholder groups influence the image of the stakeholders. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to conduct a systematic review on published literature in Korean sport industry with regard to CSR practices (ES-linked) of different stakeholder groups and examine their impact through a meta-analytic process on the "image (brand identity)" of these stakeholders.

Table 1. Annual government budget allocation for the national sport promotion projects.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
MCST	1814 (43.4)	2343 (47.6)	2135 (35.6)	1529 (22.4)	1559 (19.2)	1514 (17.3)	1715 (16.3)	1486 (14.2)	1342 (10.4)	1355 (9.4)	1337 (9.2)
KSPO	2367 (56.6)	2578 (52.4)	3860 (64.4)	5295 (77.6)	6568 (80.8)	7251 (82.7)	8799 (83.7)	8951 (85.8)	11,605 (89.6)	13,000 (90.6)	13,190 (90.8)
Total	4181	4921	5995	6824	8127	8765	10,514	10,437	12,947	14,598	14,527

MCS = Ministry of Culture, Sport, and Tourism; KSPO = Korea Sport Promotion Organization; Unit = one hundred million won.

2. Methods

2.1. Literature Selection and Coding of the Samples

This study aims to verify the relative effectiveness of CSR practices of various stakeholder groups on their images based on the research findings presented in scholarly journals of Korean sport science studies through a meta-analysis method. Meta-analysis is unique in terms of its technique and is inherently less biased in investigating the effect of one variable on another within a series of relevant empirical studies. That is, the main statistical index of meta-analysis is "effect size metrics", which represents a standardized measure of the size of an effect within the underlying empirical studies [16]. The zero-order Pearson correlation metrics are known as the most commonly utilized effect size metrics in the domain of social science research.

For the literature selection and coding samples, a comprehensive literature review of relevant studies with related study variables was conducted. Initial literature searches were completed through the following databases: (1) nanet.go.kr (Nationals Assembly Library of the Republic of Korea), (2) riss.kr, (3) nl.go.kr (National Library of Korea), and (4) Google Scholar. The following keywords were used as part of this initial search process: sports events, sustainability, corporate social responsibility, stakeholders, image, brand, recognition, image of hosting city/region, and environment. The initial search resulted in 72 relevant studies using the selected keywords. After the initial screening process, qualitative studies were excluded since they do not include acceptable statistical information for further meta-analytic review.

Second, the author thoroughly reviewed and grouped selected studies based on the type of stakeholder group and outcome variables in terms of relevancy.

Third, when computing effect size with a given correlation matrix, the correlation metrics between two continuous variables was converted into a Fisher's z-scale to yield a summary effect. Computation is possible only if the following components of inferential statistics are included: (1) sample number, (2) correlation coefficient statistics between underlying variables, and (3) alpha level.

Last, the author reviewed the final list of relevant studies in terms of validation procedure and reliability evidence. In this study, random effect size metrics across the coded data was calculated on the basis of Pearson's r and the sample size of each study.

The present meta-analysis was based on 42 single-coded effect sizes drawn from 12 empirical studies and incorporated 3938 observations (i.e., visitors, spectators, and participants) (see Figure 1). In other words, the samples comprise potential consumers or customers at different sports event sites mainly served (or encountered) by each stakeholder group. As discussed in the previous section, the stakeholder groups presented in the literature are categorized into: (1) associated governmental organizations, (2) corporate sponsors, (3) sports brands (i.e., sport fashion/equipment companies), and (4) professional teams. Coding of relevant statistical information is one of the focal issues for obtaining reliability and validity evidence of the overall meta-analysis procedures. Thus, the information coded from each of the selected sample studies included (a) the sub-units (factors) of the measurement tool considering the independent variable, (b) the type of outcome measures used, and (c) the statistical results from computing the effect size based on correlation coefficients and sample characteristics. The selected studies are presented in Appendix A.

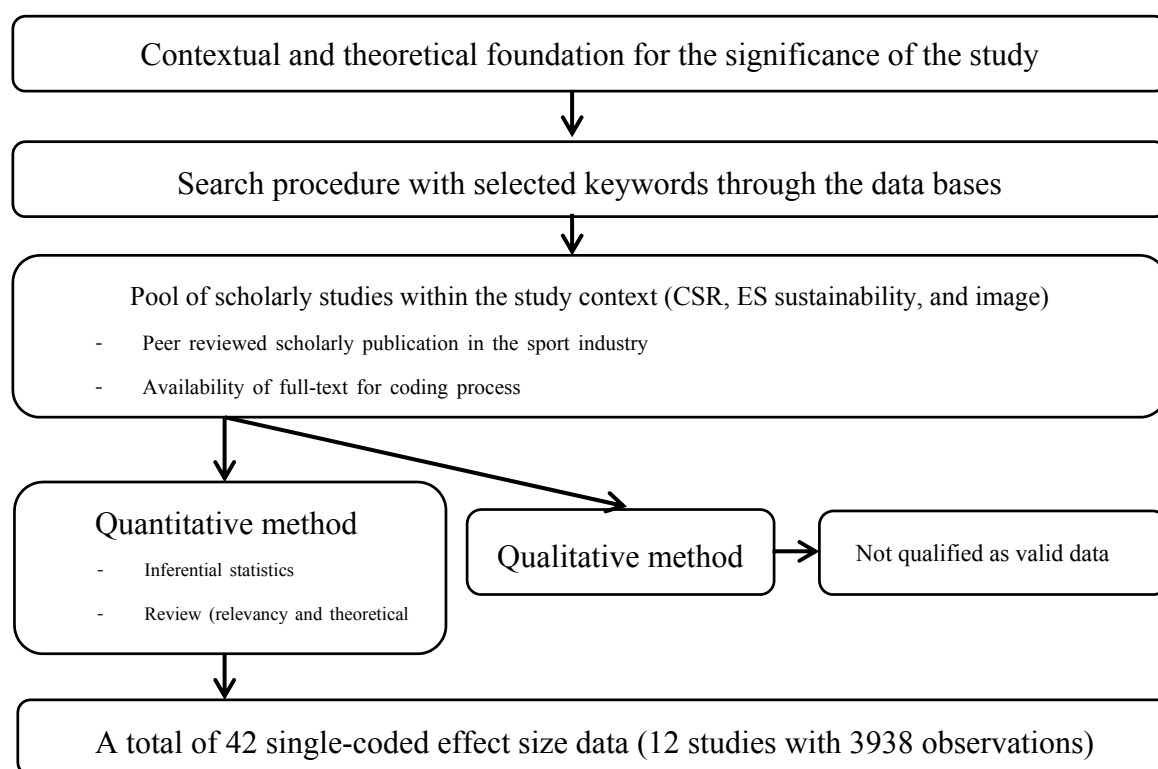


Figure 1. Selection of articles for meta-analytic review.

2.2. Meta-Analysis Tool

The Comprehensive Meta-Analysis (CMA) program was adopted as the main analysis tool to calculate effect sizes from the selected empirical studies. The CMA is able to provide a comprehensive effect size analysis across a large collection of outcomes from the selected individual studies and combine contradictory of studies in terms of effect sizes [17,18]. When computing effect size on the result of a correlation matrix, the correlation coefficient scores between two continuous variables presented in a selected sample study need to be initially converted into the Fisher's z-scale (transformed value) to yield a summary effect [19,20]. That is, Fisher's z metric is estimated on the basis of such indexes as sample size and the correlation coefficient of a given study. The estimated variability for each of the CMA's meta results can be observed through the confidence interval (i.e., CI) estimates [19].

The effect size judgment criterion [19] indicated that 0.10, 0.25, and 0.40 effect sizes were interpreted as small, medium, and large, respectively. Since all the selected individual studies are unique in terms of sample size, interventions, and between-studies variance, it should be clear that the random-effect model is a more valid method. Therefore, the random-effect model was adopted to reduce standard error rates due to the relatively small number of studies selected [18,19].

3. Results

In order to confirm the homogeneity of the coded data, Q -statistics were estimated for all construct effects prior to carrying out further meta-analyses. The results from the Q -statistics indicated significant heterogeneity levels acceptable for 42 effect sizes obtained from the 12 selected sample studies. As described in the Table 2, study participants comprise various stakeholder groups such as (1) spectators or visitors at sporting events sponsored by commercial partners, (2) workers or employees of professional teams, and (3) participants of sporting events, mainly supported by governmental organizations. The effect of heterogeneity for the coded data was confirmed by the I^2 value, a measure of the degree of inconsistency in the study's results in meta-analysis. Interpretation of I^2 value is more intuitive in nature in comparison with that of Q -heterogeneity statistic [18,19]. I^2 values for each of the effect sizes range from 83% to 91%, confirming that variability across studies is due to heterogeneity rather than chance.

Table 2. Effect sizes of the relationship between stakeholder groups' images and their ES-related CSR performances.

Type	K	Q	p-Value	−95% CI	ES	+95% CI	I^2	SE
OE	42	474.604	<0.05	0.409	0.454	0.498	91.361	0.008
CS	12	134.132	<0.05	0.331	0.428	0.516	91.799	0.017
SB	5	24.544	<0.05	0.294	0.407	0.510	83.703	0.015
GO	13	86.277	<0.05	0.509	0.567	0.619	86.277	0.009
PT	12	76.441	<0.05	0.300	0.365	0.427	85.610	0.007

Note: K = number of correlations; Q = the homogeneity statistics; CI = confidence intervals; ES = weighted random effect size; SE = standard error; OE = Overall Effect; Type = type of stakeholder group; CS = corporate sponsors; SB = sport brand; GO = governmental organization; PT = professional team.

According to the findings of the overall effects of CSR performance (environmental sustainability oriented) on the images of the stakeholder groups, CSR performance indicated a positive effect on the images of the groups (95% CIs = 0.40, 0.49, ES = 0.454, $p = 0.05$). Therefore, the effectiveness of CSR performance on images' stakeholder groups is interpreted as a moderate and positive effect size. Additional analyses were carried out to determine the influential levels of CSR performance on the image of each stakeholder group. The results indicated that CSR performance of governmental organizations had the highest effect size level on their own image as perceived by visitors and participants to the sport-related events (95% CIs = 0.50, 0.61, ES = 0.567, $p = 0.05$). This effect size level of governmental organizations indicated moderate to strong effects in accordance with the judgment criterion [19], and this is followed by that of corporate sponsors (95% CIs = 0.33, 0.51, ES = 0.428, $p = 0.05$), and professional teams (95% CIs = 0.30, 0.42, ES = 0.365, $p = 0.05$). Among four different stakeholder groups, the effect size of sport brands (95% CIs = 0.29, 0.51, ES = 0.40, $p = 0.05$) was still positively associated but lower than that of other groups (see Table 2). This is an interesting finding for researchers and practitioners in the global sports event industry. Importantly, the effectiveness of CSR performance for all stakeholder groups ranged from moderate to strong levels suggesting that the relationship between CSR performance and the image of these groups is significant. The potential theory about their relationship is now strongly supported by much literature in the sport industry.

4. Discussion

Corporate social responsibility and environmental sustainability have played an integral and significant role in terms of promotional and public relation activities for stakeholder groups in the global sport industry during the last decades [7,13,20]. This means the global sport business environment has experienced rapid changes and is now more concerned with social responsibilities and environmental issues due to the movement of the stakeholder groups, scholars, and practitioners in the industry [21]. The principle of CSR projects in the global sport industry is generally concerned with environmental sustainability issues [22]. Ideally, sports events, regardless of their magnitude, are meant to pursue sportsmanship, which requires fairness, ethics, respect, and amateurism. Outside the stadium, venues and media around sports events have become a 'marketing battleground' and commercial partners have been fiercely competing for market advantages [13,20,23]. Although CSR projects and environmental sustainability issues have been discussed and can be found in general marketing and management literature, scholars, and practitioners in the global sport industry have a limited understanding of how CSR projects, environmental sustainability, and images of stakeholder groups influence one another in the marketing mechanism and enhance sustainability of such sports events [22,23]. Through a meta-analytic review, this study revealed that the images of various stakeholder groups are decidedly influenced by their CSR performances. Besides governmental organizations (sport related), all other stakeholder groups are pressured to maintain a balance between financial performance, consumer well-being, and brand identity to bring in external investment. The stakeholder groups including commercial firms and professional teams express their brand identity through internal and external marketing efforts. Most of CSR projects are planned and enacted as part of internal marketing efforts, which are designed to motivate employees and workers to adopt a heightened customer orientation [1,23,24]. As seen from recent examples, most mega-sports events are criticized for their negative impact on environmental sustainability and on sustainable use of their venues [4]. Therefore, stakeholder groups are now faced with the ongoing challenge of managing brand identity and image development. In the past decade, sport sponsorship has received a great deal of scholarly attention as an important marketing communication tool in developing organizational identity [18]. However, environmental sustainability should be a detached issue from general marketing and promotional efforts of the stakeholder groups. The estimation of the financial (direct/indirect) impact of sport sponsorship on society had been an ongoing issue to solve for these stakeholder groups. However, this kind of estimation could not provide precise or reliable guesses for their future return-on investment [10,21]. This might be one of the primary reasons for scholars and practitioners to pay greater attention and respond to the global movements for environmental sustainability. Image and brand identity are established by how an organization behaves and interacts with its potential market. Thus, image and brand identity are influenced by social responsibility [10,21]. The most interesting finding from this present study is that CSR projects conducted by governmental organizations indicated the highest level of effect size on its image and brand identification. Therefore, we remain convinced that people evaluate a governmental organization from higher ethical and moral standards and the image of this type of organization is established by what it does instead of what it advertises to the public. For instance, this type of organization should run active and practical programs, which facilitate social networking and communication with citizens in terms of sustainable development, emerged from the environmental protection. In Korea, governmental organizations associated with sports, such as the KSPO and Korean Olympic Committee (KOC), have been publishing an annual sustainability report as part of their CSR projects. The findings of this study revealed that CSR performance is directly connected to image building and brand identify. In order to achieve successful marketing and management of sports events, it would be more efficient and effective in terms of internal marketing if the stakeholders outline the strategic framework of CSR project in a more cohesive manner. It will help them to establish co-productive relationship and positive organizational culture for more sustainable sports events with higher levels of social, cultural, and financial stability. Empirical findings of this study give rise to practical implications

for scholars and practitioners in the global sport industry. Perhaps, CSR projects of governmental organization should be carefully planned out from a macro-perspective to achieve positive social effect and brand identity rather than practice short-term marketing communication programs with the public [21,23]. More sustainable sports events and a strong organizational image (brand identity) can be achieved when more people pay greater attention and a more cohesive culture toward this greater goal is established. For example, when organizing a cycling competition, the interlinking of environmental sustainability programs with the active participation of concerned stakeholders should be taken into consideration. This may include driving eco-friendly cars for the tournament organizers and support teams, using recycled water bottles for the participating cyclists, and organizing events or activities that promote cycling as an environment-friendly sport for spectators watching the race. This study was able to provide new insights into the contemporary responsibilities of stakeholder groups in terms of CSR performance and environmental sustainability issues. Due to the features of the meta-analysis method, it was possible to systematically review relevant studies with regard to particular variables. However, the limited number of relevant studies in the Korean sport literature might be a limitation of this present study. In comparison with other qualitative methods such as content analysis, narrative review, triangulation method, and systematic review, a meta-analysis is able to estimate effect size among underlying variables through a pre-determined systematic procedure [24]. The number of cases that can be included should retain eligible statistical information and share comparable measurement methodology. The author made a great effort maintaining a balance between subjectivity and objectivity during the entire coding and study selection procedures. That is, a pool of samples (cases) included in any study does not necessarily represent the myriad of possible studies with regard to the hypothesized effect and relationship [24,25]. For future research, potential relationships between images of various stakeholders and their CSR performances in different sport contexts should be investigated in order to gain a clearer understanding of sustainability issues and sports.

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Conflicts of Interest: The sole author of this study declares no potential conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Selected Studies for Systematic Meta-Analysis in this Study:

- Hwang, A.K.; Kim, T.J.; Won, D.Y. The structural relationships among corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, authenticity of CSR and corporate image of Korea sports promotion foundation (KSPO). *Korea J. Sport Leis Stud.* **2015**, *62*, 77–94.
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