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Examining the Factors Influencing Organizational Creativity in Professional Sport Organizations

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Examining the Factors Influencing Organizational Creativity in Professional Sport Organizations

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2017 Sport Marketing Association Conference (SMA XV)

Examining the Factors Influencing Organizational Creativity in Professional Sport Organizations

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Friday, November 3, 2017

10:30-10:55 AM, Library Room

25-minute oral presentation

(including questions)

Success in marketing requires creativity, and sport marketing is no different (Schwarz & Hunter, 2008). Increasingly, globalization and the adoption of a market economy have made innovation fundamental for the success of organizations, including marketing and service industry sectors. The first step of innovation is creativity (Amabile et al., 1996). Expert creative imagination, housed often in the marketing department, has been argued to be used for shaping strategies for the whole organization. However, for this marketing imagination to be utilized, an organization needs to be supportive across the functional areas (Levitt, 1986).

Sport organizations do not do enough to support a creative culture within the front office. Many innovations in professional sport relate to on the field activities, where competitive advantage is paramount. Beyond their oligarchical economic structure as a lack of impetus for innovation, evidence suggests these organizations tend to be isomorphic (O'Brien & Slack, 2004), hyper-traditional (Wolfe, Wright, & Smart, 2006), or bound by a strict hierarchical structure (Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011). However, developments such as dynamic pricing and fan loyalty programs provide evidence that professional sport organizations can be innovative off the field as well (Yoshida et al., 2013). Little is known in professional sport about these innovation processes, including the important first step of that process, organizational creativity.

Thus, to understand organizational creativity in the professional sport industry, three elements must be considered: (1) individual employees' creativity, (2) the degree to which the organizational environment values and supports creativity, and (3) the interactions of employees within the environment. Two main theories drive this research; Amabile et al.'s (1996) theory of employee creativity provides a framework for understanding individual creativity in the workplace. West's (1990) four factor theory of team climate for innovation was used to examine the work environment. Additionally, social network theory provides the framework for understanding how the relationships among individuals within a work environment influence individuals. As a result, the follow research questions were developed:

RQ1: What influences do domain relevant skills, intrinsic motivation, and creativity-related processes engagement have on perceptions of employee creativity?

RQ2: What influence does employee creativity have on perceptions of organizational creativity?

RQ3: What influence does the work environment have on perceptions of organizational creativity?

RQ4: How do the relationships among individuals within the work environment influence perceptions of organizational creativity?

Methodology

The front office employees of three professional sport teams (N = 65) were surveyed using Team Climate Inventory (West, 1990), Creativity-Processes Engagement scale (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), intrinsic motivation, domain-relevant skills, employee creativity, organizational creativity, and network ties related to advice giving between employees. After conducting a Kruskal-Wallis test ($p > .05$), the data were aggregated across organizations. A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to test the relationship between creativity processes engagement, intrinsic motivation, and domain-relevant skills, and employee creativity. Interaction relationships regarding creative process engagement of a node's alters was tested. Finally, to address potential endogeneity, as well as a small sample size,

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limited information maximum likelihood (LIML) was used. The relationship of employee creativity and work environment to perceptions of organizational creativity was tested in this main model.

Results

The results indicated higher engagement in information searching and encoding processes was associated with higher levels of employee creativity. The model was statistically significant ($F(5, 59) = 4.37, p < 0.002$). The model explained 27% of the variance in perceptions of organizational creativity. Perception of a work environment with a clear vision, support for innovation, task orientation, and participative safety, was associated with a greater perception of organizational creativity. For every point increase in work environment processes, there was a 26% increase in the probability of a greater perception of organizational creativity. For every point increase in work environment vision, there was a 28.56% increase in the probability of greater perception of organizational creativity. The interaction variables of an individual's social network were not found to be statistically significant, nor was the relationship between individual creativity and perceptions of organizational creativity.

Discussion

The results were surprising based on previous literature, although that literature was not sport organization-focused. The lack of relationships among many of the factors theorized influencing employee creativity, as well as employee creativity and an individual's social network, could indicate the sport industry is unique in creativity research. There are many sport-specific potential explanations including oligarchical structures, in-season/out-of-season timing, and inter-team vs. intra-team advice-seeking. The results tell leaders in sport organizations they cannot assume by hiring a creative marketing professional that their organization will be creative. Employees need a clear vision and better processes, including support for innovation, in their work environment to build what they perceive to be a more creative organization.

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