

Corporate Social Responsibility and Sports Clubs: A Case from Turkey

Dilşad Çoknaz¹, Uğur Sönmezoğlu¹, Yeşer Eskicioğlu¹ & Mensur Pehlivan²

1. Sport Management Department, Abant İzzet Baysal University, Bolu, Turkey
2. Sport Management Department, Düzce University, Düzce, Turkey

Correspondence with:

Dilşad Çoknaz

coknaz_d@ibu.edu.tr

Abant İzzet Baysal University

Department of Sport Management

142080 Golkoy/Bolu, Turkey

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Abstract

The primary purpose of the study was to analyze the sense of social responsibility of sports clubs in the case of the “First Step with Anadolu Efes Basketball Schools” social responsibility project of Anadolu Efes Sports Club. The secondary purpose was to analyze the process of the project and to determine its contributions/effects. The method used in this study was qualitative in nature and was patterned as a case. Research sample was composed of a manager responsible for CSR activities in Anadolu Efes Sports Club. Data was collected by interview and documents analysis methods. Inductive data analysis was used for data analysis and data was transferred into NVIVO 10 software. When this research is taken into consideration with the scope of the activities of Anadolu Efes Sports Club, it indicates that volunteering and feeling responsible are the starting points for conducting corporate social responsibility projects in sport. The study was designed as a case study therefore data was obtained from a single sample and the documents of this sample. Although the variations of data provided the limitation of the study in this sense must be eliminated by examining other examples in further studies. It is hoped that when CSR studies conducted by sport clubs increase, the relevant limitation would disappear.

Keywords: social responsibility, sports club, Turkey, case study

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Introduction

The proliferation of activities, competition and organizations in the field of sports makes sport institutions and organizations important in their community by means of economic, social and cultural sense. In addition to being sports organizations, sport clubs as non-governmental organizations have a human-centred structure and provide a significant contribution through their social role to social development as well as to sportive development. Meanwhile, sport clubs direct attention to the concept of corporate social responsibility within the sports industry, as one of the prominent issues in recent years due to the relationships affecting social developments (Babiak and Wolfe 2009; Breitbarth and Harris, 2008; Ratten, 2010) . In addition to many sports clubs, sport federations and league representations also started to carry out social responsibility projects with different content for different groups. Babiak and Wolfe (2009) expressed that sports clubs nowadays have a close interest in corporate social responsibility (CSR) which appears important to most of the companies.

The sports industry including sport clubs are considered to be no different from other industries in terms of social impact (Godfrey, 2009). Sport contains qualities that make it a powerful force in positively effecting quality and scope of corporate social responsibility activities (Anagnostopoulou, Byers and Shilbury, 2014; Dowling, Robinson and Washington, 2013; Smith and Westerbeek, 2007). Growing steadily especially in financial terms have increased responsibilities and the social importance of sport clubs in social life (Hamil and Morrow, 2011). In recent years sport clubs give educational activities place in many areas such as social needs and environmental development by accomplishing social responsibility programs in particular. For example, the organizations in the sports industry in the United States such as NBA, NFL, NHL have defined and adopted CSR programs widely (Babiak 2010; Babiak and Wolfe, 2009; Alexander et al. 2011; Jung, 2012). These sports organizations adopt a mission to create resources for non-privileged members of the community and therefore give important messages to the society (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009). For instance, NBA names their social responsibility initiatives as “NBA CARES” and conducts family development, health, youth and cultural programs (Sheth and Babiak, 2010). Currently many sport organizations including professional sports adopt social responsibility programs as well

as conduct researches about what can be done in this area. Therefore it can be said that professional sport leagues and clubs have a considerable amount of social responsibility programs (Walker, Kent and Vincent, 2010).

In recent years social responsibility activities which are carried out by sports organizations in our country also continued to increase. Sport organizations especially in football and basketball carry out a number of social responsibility programs in partnership with both civil society organizations and enterprises. Sports clubs in the basketball are usually established as corporate sport clubs and therefore some of these sport clubs conduct social responsibility projects with the support of the corporations they are associated with. Aliağa Petkim, Banvit, Anadolu Efes, Olin Edirne etc. are the examples of these clubs as mentioned above.

In recent years, academic research in sport and corporate social responsibility has been a growing field of inquiry and therefore many of the scholars in different fields aim to search and analyze this concept. Social responsibility is a rather new concept for Turkey and there is a need of researches analyzing social responsibility projects and determining the approach of the Turkish sport world to this concept.

Based on this fact the purpose of the study was to analyze the sense of social responsibility of sports clubs in the case of “First Step with Anadolu Efes Basketball Schools” (FSWAEBS) social responsibility project of Anadolu Efes Sports Club. Furthermore it was also aimed to analyze the process of the project and to determine its contributions/effects. It is expected that the results of the study provide a general perspective for CSR activities in sport and create awareness about CSR for all stakeholders in the field of sports in Turkey.

Methodology

The method used in this study was qualitative in nature and was patterned as a case study. Case study is expressed as a detailed examination of an environment, a person, a document or an event (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998: (cited in: Ünlüer, 2010)). In accordance with the purpose of this study only FSWAEBS CSR project was analyzed and thus the design was single-case (holistic).

Sample

A small number of participants was expected based on the detailed and in-depth case study research method (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). In this respect, a manager who is in charge of CSR activities in Anadolu Efes Sports Club was the participant in the

study. During the planning stage primarily verbal consent was obtained from the Club to conduct the research. During the ongoing process a written consent was obtained from the participant as well.

The subject of the study Anadolu Efes Sports Club was founded in 1976 as Efes Pilsen and it won the 1978 second division championship undefeated, earning promotion to the Turkish first division, where it has continuously competed since. In a short time, the Club became one of the milestones of the Turkish Basketball and it has also become a fixture in the Euroleague. Anadolu Efes Sports Club represents its country with tremendous success and made basketball popular in Turkey. Anadolu Efes Sports Club which has been training basketball players of the future for several years is the first Turkish team which managed to reach the final of the European Cup in 1992-93 season. It is also the first team of Turkish basketball history that won the Europe Korac Cup in 1996 and also the first Turkish club to be organizing the Final Four. Anadolu Efes Sports Club won most championships in the history of Turkish Premier Basketball League and added its 13th cup to its museum. The Club won the Turkish Cup and Presidential Cup nine times as the most winning team (2014, March 18, Retrieved from <https://www.anadoluefesspor kulubu.org/kulup/tarihce>)

For more than 30 years Anadolu Efes makes so many firsts in Turkish basketball and continues its contribution to basketball on a European scale within the Euro League (2014, March 18, Retrieved from http://www.anadolugrubu.com.tr/dosyalar/basinodasi/faaliyetraporlari/1_76618326_anadolu_efes2010faaliyetraporu.pdf). In addition to these successes, Anadolu Efes sports club establishes basketball facilities in several provinces on behalf of social responsibility projects. The club has been visiting Tohum Autism Foundation every year within the scope of its social responsibility project ‘Blue Meetings’. After these visits Tohum School pupils are invited to Anadolu Efes’ track games. The ticket revenues of the game are donated to Tohum Autism Foundation (2014, March 10, Retrieved from <http://www.tohumotizm.org.tr/destekci/anadolu-efes-spor-kulubu>).

The case of this study FSWAEBS is another project of the Club. This CSR project won International Business “Stevie” Awards; High Honorary Award of Europe.

Research techniques

Techniques used to ensure the validity and reliability of this qualitative research were as follows:

- Different data collection techniques as face to face interview and document analysis were used as methodological triangulation.
- The participant was told that the data would be used for scientific research only.
- Analysis was conducted by two researchers and researchers completed the analysis process within mutual discussions.
- The findings were arranged to gather meaningful and consistent data.

It is recommended to use multiple data sources in the case studies (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Based on this approach research data was collected by interview and documents. The “interview form” method was used in the interviews. The interview form was prepared according to the semi-structured interview technique. This interview approach was preferred because it gives researchers freedom to gather detailed information to the questions and also to ask additional questions by remaining loyal to the prepared questions and the subjects (Merriam, 2009). The number of questions on the interview form was ten. In the interview form questions were asked primarily to analyze social responsibility in sport in general and in particular to analyze Anadolu Efes Sports Club's CSR activities. Face to face interview took 90 minutes and was recorded using a voice recorder with the permission of the participant. Two researches were involved in the face to face interviews and one of the researchers kept notes together with the audio recording. The other data collection method in the study was document analysis. In the document analysis all the local and national news about FSWAEBS CSR project was reviewed. As a result of this analysis similar news were grouped together and a total of 36 (20 national, 16 local) documents were analyzed as data.

Statistical analysis

Inductive data analysis was used for data analysis. Primarily recorded data was processed and transcribed into a word document. Consequently data was transferred into NVIVO 10 software. After this stage all processes were conducted through NVIVO 10 qualitative analysis software program. In recent years computer programs such as NVIVO are often used in qualitative research. NVIVO facilitates the classification of the data and resources in a systematic way and also facilitates coding, defining themes and presenting those themes as a model (Auld et al., 2007; Hoover and Koerber, 2011; Johnston, 2006). During the analysis process all data was coded. In the next step common themes were reached through coded data. The two researchers conducted all processes together.

Results

Results of the study were compiled in two parts according to the purpose. Results were obtained from the interview with the Anadolu Efes Sports Club manager in charge of CSR activities and from the documents analysis on the local and national written news. In the first section, the reasons of the tendency to CSR in sport in general, difficulties and challenges that should be considered in CSR were presented. In the second section, primarily the reasons of Anadolu Efes Sports Club to tend to the corporate social responsibility was presented. The findings of the process of FSWAEBS project and its contributions were also presented in the second section.

1. Corporate Social Responsibility in Sport

The findings were compiled in two parts: the reasons of the tendency of sports clubs to CSR in sport and challenges and difficulties that should be considered in CSR.



Figure 1. Corporate Social Responsibility in Sport Based on Research Findings.

1.1 The Reasons of the Tendency towards Corporate Social Responsibility in Sport

The results of the study indicated that the reasons of the tendency toward corporate social responsibility in sport were creating corporate image, being prestigious, sport being a communication tool, sharing profit, speed of sport in reaching target group and also the focus of attention of sports (Figure 1). The statement of the participant emphasized that sport is an important tool in terms of communication: "I mean sport is a very effective medium to communicate. Many brands try to use sport in this sense. However one way communication does not help sport and sport environment to develop and grow".

1.2 Difficulties Experienced in Corporate Social Responsibility Activities in Sport

Difficulties of the club to carry out CSR activities were standpoint and cost (Figure 1). At this point a statement like: "It is very expensive. Because funding something like that is not easy either. It needs money. So there budget comes in." explains that these kind of projects have high cost.

1.3 Things to be Considered in Corporate Social Responsibility Activities in Sport

According to the results activities in CSR in sport should not be advertising purposes, should not have commercial expectations and should not be too obvious. It is understood from the statement of the participant that Anadolu Efes Sports Club is careful about these considerations. He said: "This is not something we try to say or to present what a wonderful thing we are doing, let's everyone get to know that Anadolu Efes Sports Club is doing such a social responsibility projects! We do not want to advertise this at all. We usually do not prefer them used as commercial material." Figure 1. also shows that expertise, sustainability, having budget, free of charge and institutional structure were the other issues that should be considered.

2. "First Step with Anadolu Efes Basketball Schools" Corporate Social Responsibility Project

In this part the FSWAEBS project which won International Business "Stevie" Awards; High Honorary Award of Europe and also Social Responsibility Program of the Year in Middle East and Africa was analyzed. As a result the purpose and process of the project, its contributions and the factors affecting the success of the project were determined as themes.

2.1 The reasons of Anadolu Efes Sports Club to tend to the corporate social responsibility

The results indicated that creating spectator consciousness, communication, feeling responsible, promoting basketball and helping people in need were reasons of Anadolu Efes Sports Club to tend toward the CSR (Figure 2.). the statement : “... in the past there were many children in Hakkari who were trying to be involved with basketball, to do something of their own but having no shoes to play. A teacher became a pioneer and contacted to us. We were interested in this subject.” showed a high level of sense of responsibility of the club. Results also showed that the club has a sense of responsibility for bringing basketball to Massa. The following statement proves this argument clearly: “It is a need arising from being a team of Turkey and feeling responsible for spreading this knowledge”.

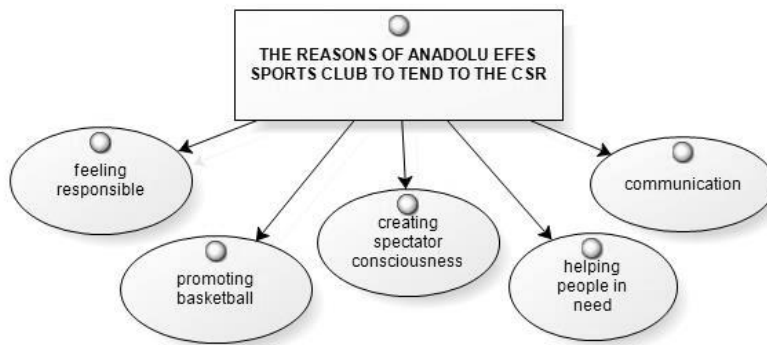


Figure 2. The Reasons of Anadolu Efes Sports Club to Tend to the Corporate Social Responsibility According to the Results

2.2 The Process and the Contributions of the First Step with Anadolu Efes Basketball Schools Project

Figure 3 shows the purpose and the process of the FSWAEBS. In addition to this it also shows the contributions of the project. Findings demonstrate that purposes of the FSWAEBS were; raising healthy generations, promoting sport culture and basketball, preparing children for life, educating basketball coaches and reaching out to children who have no access. The words of the participant: “we are a sport club active in the basketball branch but we are an Istanbul team. We are only in Istanbul we are not able to be in any other city. We did not have an opportunity to bring our knowledge, sport

culture and discipline to other cities until the First Step project was born” referred to promoting sport culture and the words: “We are after a mentally and physically healthy living generation.” referred to raising healthy generations.

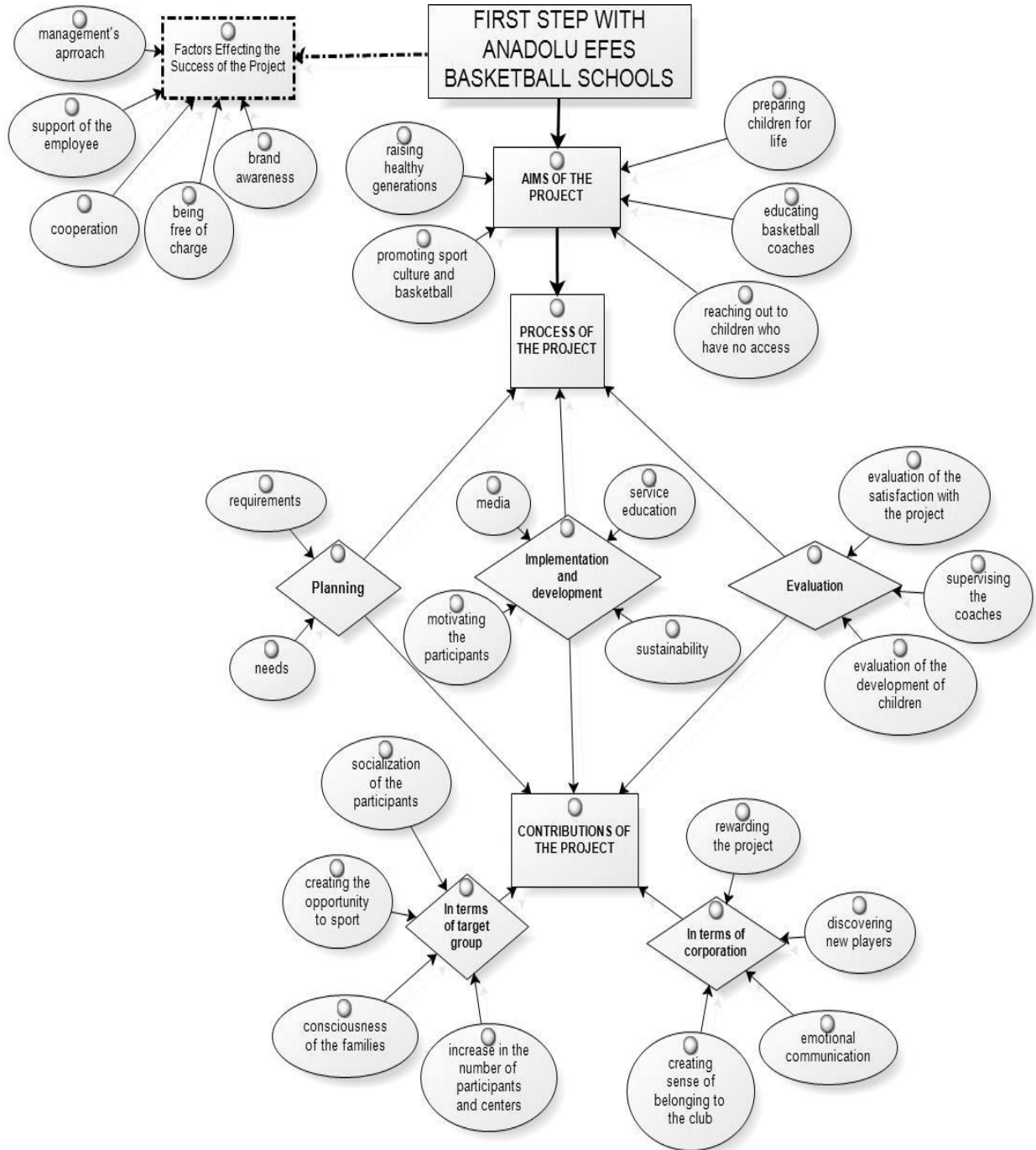


Figure3. First Step with Anadolu Efes Basketball Schools Corporate Social Responsibility Project.

The findings of the FSWAEBS process were given within the planning, implementation-development and evaluation dimensions. It is understood that in the planning stage the project focused on requests and needs. Subsequently motivating the participants, media communication, service education and sustainability compose the content of implementation-development dimension. Finally, the findings in the evaluation dimension were supervising the coaches, the evaluation of the satisfaction with the project and the evaluation of the development of children. For example, the participant referred to the satisfaction measurements toward families in his statement: "On the other hand, the families of these people were important for us. We established a communication network with them too. We asked to them "are you satisfied with these services or not? Do you have any needs?" and they gave us feedback and that part therefore developed like that."

At the end of this process all contributions were discussed in two titles: "in terms of corporation" and "in terms of target group". When the contributions of the project were evaluated in terms of corporation it can be said that the project was awarded, new players were discovered, emotional communication and sense of belonging to the club were created. The sense of belonging to the club was one of the important contributions in terms of corporation. "Although we did not have such a claim people there felt like they were playing for Anadolu Efes. Thus their self esteem was raised and also they felt belonging. That was the most important contribution for the club."

In terms of target group the contributions were socialization of the participants, creating opportunity to sport, consciousness of the families and increase in the number of participants and centres. In one of the many newspaper articles (2013) revealing the increased number of centres and participants this aspect of the project was mentioned as follows: "Since its establishment in 2004 during the last 8 years FSWAEBS has been providing free basketball training for more than 20 thousand children all over Turkey, Sarajevo and Cyprus. And it continues free basketball trainings in 2012-2013 in total of 40 centres. In addition, with regard to the statements of the participant it was clear that the project was not only for children but also for the families and acquaintances to create awareness. "The project was not only for children. The families who brought their children to the First step Schools were also influenced and the people around them also say "it is so good, children are going there and get involved with sport instead of hanging around and doing silly things."

According to the findings, the factors affecting the success of the project were standpoint of the management, support of the employee, cooperation, being free of charge and brand awareness. Participant stated that: “there are two reasons that they are involved in what we do: first, the education which is given by real basketball brand in Turkey. Therefore it gives an incredible trust. They are aware that they are going to have a real education given by right persons with right equipment in a right place. Only the name of the club is even enough for that.” This statement shows that especially awareness of club brand was an effective factor in the numbers of participation.

Discussion and Conclusion

Smith and Westerbeek (2007) expressed that sport has a number of unique factors that will affect the quality and the scope of CSR activities. The reasons of the tendency towards CSR activities as seen in the first stage of the research were consistent with those posed by Smith and Westerbeek (2007) which were: speed of reaching the target group, an effective communication tool and being focus of attention for many people. One of the results of the study was corporate image and Doğan and Varinli (2010) similarly argued that when it comes to enterprises CSR is closely related to perceived corporate image. Additionally Kelgökmen İliç (2010) stated that the essence of a corporate social responsibility activity is contribution to society. For this reason CSR activities are considered one of the most important tools in creating a positive image. Findings of the research indicated that corporate image is important for non-profit organizations as much as for profit organizations. It is even a determining factor for non-profit organizations directing to the CSR activities. Furthermore, CSR activities are also known to be effective in developing team image or brand image for sports clubs or in development of marketing strategies for increasing sense of belonging (Jung, 2012).

Having corporate sense of social responsibility as a manager might be considered as one of the preconditions for the realization of social responsibility awareness in an organization. In this context, the managers in sport organizations first have to adopt the social responsibility concept as an idea. Breitbarth and Harris (2008) also remarked that some of the professional sports managers consider CSR as a mandatory management strategy for their managerial tasks and with this perspective carry out the social responsibility activities. However the emphasis of the participant involved in the study from a managerial perspective suggested that there are difficulties in managing CSR activities in our country. Focusing more on sporting success as a sport

manager can be shown as the reason for that (Sönmezoğlu and Çoknaz, 2014). According to the results a major challenge of CSR activities were the costs. Enterprises in particular when deciding on CSR activities give importance to the issue whether the costs outweighs the social benefits (Top ve Öner, 2008). Therefore, this issue should not be seen as a problem specific to sports organizations. However the cost especially when considered in connection with the status of non-profit sports organizations can be better understood how difficult it is to carry out CSR activities for these organizations.

According to the results a number of issues need to be considered in CSR activities. Among these issues such as Veliöğlu and Çoknaz (2005) highlighted that CSR activity should not be for advertising purposes, there should be no commercial expectations and should not be too obvious. These considerations assure that CSR activities are not converted into commercial purposes. Sincere and sustainable efforts made on behalf of social responsibility ensure organizations to grow further in the public eye (Kelgökmen İliç, 2010). So it is obvious that corporate social responsibility efforts should not be seen as a form of advertising just to improve the reputation of the organizations.

The results derived from the second part of the study were only related to Anadolu Efes Sports Club. When the reasons of Anadolu Efes to tend towards CSR were considered, the factors like: creating spectator consciousness, communication, feeling responsible, promoting basketball and helping people in need draw attention. In particular, helping people in need was notable as one of the main reasons of social responsibility activities. In addition to their sporting activities sports clubs should consider the contribution to the economic and social development of the community as one of its most basic tasks. Zoroğlu (2001) indicated that the most important contribution of an organization within the context of sense of responsibility towards the community is to focus on low-income families and on the areas that are insufficient in public services in order to increase the level of general welfare of the society. In this sense, the Anadolu Efes Sports Club contributes to social development through their activities in the areas where sport services are less accessible.

According to Göksu (2006) CSR should be considered as a sense emerging from social demands which can be changed in content and also should be sensitive to the requirements and needs of the society. When viewed from this perspective it is understood that Anadolu Efes Sports Club evaluates the demands in the planning of the project and identifies the regions where the project will be carried out according to the

requirements and the needs. There is no doubt that Anadolu Efes aiming primarily at promoting basketball, spreading sport culture across the country and raising healthy generations, follows the standard path to plan the CSR activities. Another striking case is the sensitivity of Anadolu Efes to the issues of child health and active living in a similar way to MLB (Major League Baseball) (Babiak, 2010).

The results demonstrate that the Anadolu Efes Sports Club gives media communication an important place during the implementation and the development phase of the project. The statements of the participants indicate that the club provides information to the local newspapers and radio stations as well as to national newspapers about the project. So, in order to achieve the objectives of the project obviously it is aimed to provide effective media communication. Similarly John et al. (2014) found in their study that Greek professional sport clubs and organizations used similar communication tools to expose their CSR efforts.

Contributions of the project in terms of corporation and target group appeared from the results. Bringing basketball to the different regions of Anatolia where there is limited access to sport is an important contribution in terms of target group of the project. Erdemli (1996) refers that “every human being has a right to sport on the basis of Olympic education”. So, one of the most important issues in terms of social responsibility activities in sport should be reaching children and young people who are not entitled to this right, just like what Anadolu Efes is doing. When we look at the contributions in terms of corporation one of the important results was to obtain a huge contribution in terms of corporate image and reputation through an international award project which was won. When we look at the literature it is expressed that CSR is either a preventive measure for corporate reputation or an effective marketing tool to increase corporate reputation (Walker, Kent and Vincent, 2010: 188).

What is important for organizations is to create an idea and culture of responsibility in which their employees can also participate and then to be involved in activities which are appropriate for the idea of social responsibility in order to promote and sustain the idea (Çerik ve Özarslan, 2008). Breitbarth and Harris (2008) emphasize that social responsibility projects in sports which reached success are a step further if the athletes adopt the project. Research results also indicate that Anadolu Efes Sports Club is not only embraced by athletes but by the entire organization, i.e. managers, coaches and athletes. This should be considered as one of the positive contributions to the success of the project.

As a result, when this research is taken into consideration with the scope of the activities of Anadolu Efes Sports Club, it indicates that volunteering and feeling responsible are the starting points for conducting corporate social responsibility projects in sport. Because when these structures are having the status of association they are needing financial support but still they carry out projects in which extra costs are involved. This again is an indication of work which cannot be carried out without volunteering and social sensitivity. Despite all the difficulties, CSR should take place among the work of sport organizations. Because sport being a professional business requires sports clubs in a competitive environment not to be too distant from the current approaches. According to the results the factors that lead profit institutions to CSR also apply to sports clubs. Considering both in terms of institutionalization and following the actuality as one of the conditions of being a professional, it is expected from the sports professionals in our country to embrace the CSR activities. The study was designed as a case study therefore data was obtained from a single sample and the documents of this sample. Although the variations of data provided the limitation of the study in this sense must be eliminated by examining other examples in further studies. It is hoped that when CSR studies conducted by sport clubs increase, the relevant limitation would disappear.

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