Toward A Model of Interorganisational Citizenship Behavior and Innovation: A Study of Sport Clusters

Anna Gerke, Université Paris Sud 11  
Michel Desbordes (Advisor), Université Paris Sud 11  
Geoff Dickson (Advisor), Auckland University of Technology

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Previous research on sport clusters have employed both conceptual and empirical approaches (Hillairet, 2005; Kellett & Russell, 2009; Parker & Beedell, 2010; Porter, 2008; Richard, 2007; Shilbury, 2000; Stewart, Skinner, & Edwards, 2008; Viljamaa, 2007). The cluster concept is applicable in the sport context but further research is necessary to understand interactions, co-operation and competition between industries and organizations in clusters (Shilbury, 2000). Given the size of the sporting goods industry and its international trade (Andreff, 2006a, 2006b) the industry provides an interesting empirical and conceptual context for sport management research (Andreff, 2008; Andreff & Andreff, 2007).

The major purpose of this research is to investigate how inter-organisational citizenship behaviour (ICB) influences product innovation in sport clusters. This study will inform our understanding of the source, ownership, control, and diffusion of innovative knowledge in inter-organisational relationships. Secondly, this research maps out relationships and interactions between industries and organisations in specific sport clusters. This will create a better understanding of cluster benefits and the inter-organisational relationships and behaviour that underpin them. Thirdly, this research provides insights with regards to industry restructuring in the context of sport organisations. This phase of the research will permit an assessment of the functioning and the long-term sustainability of sport cluster as a delivery system for new sport products and sport disciplines. Overall, this research aims at an increased awareness and understanding of clusters, their organisations, relationships and interactions in order to disclose potential benefits of cluster with regards to innovation. This is expected to lead to a higher overall innovativeness and value creation within a cluster as a whole, and for individual organisations in the cluster. The authors’ intention is furthermore to interpret the results in a wider context, such as other sport or consumer goods markets with similar characteristics, and countries and locations with similar conditions.

Previous research on clusters refers to Alfred Marshall’s work on industrial districts (ID) (Marshall, 1890, 1920) as main point of reference (Amin, 1994; Asheim, 1996, 2000; Becattini, 2002; Bellandi, 1996, 2002; Camagni, 1993, 1995; Corolleur & Courlet, 2003; Ottati, 1994). All following concepts consist of the idea that a group of organisations benefit from each other by being part of the group. The concepts have commonalities such as spatial proximity, high product specialisation, high level of division of labour, etc. Clusters develop either naturally due to historical and socio-cultural conditions, or they are artificially created through governance bodies and policies. Cluster are defined as a group of inter-connected and interdependent organisations which can be identified along the value chain and in related industries (Porter, 2008).

Autry, Skinner, and Lamb (2008) developed the concept of ICB based on prior research on organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). OCB was initially coined by Organ (Currall, 1988; Organ, 1997) by defining it as discretionary behaviour of individuals within an organisation that is not formally rewarded but promotes the functioning of the organisation. Autry, Skinner & Lamb (2008) apply the OCB concept to study inter-organisational relationships in supply chains. Shilbury (2000) argues that a cluster can be considered as the value chain for all involved organisations. Hence, we suggest that ICB can be applied in the context of clusters.

Product innovation is the process and result of a number of incremental innovations also described as “creative destruction” (Schumpeter, 1942, p. 83). Utterback (1996, p. 57) considers product innovation as “creative force” which is especially important for sporting goods firms because technology is an important consumption lever (Hillairet, Richard, & Bouchet, 2009). Sporting products are technologically complex products that are often required to fulfil contrary characteristics (Desbordes, 2001). This applies primarily to equipment-intensive sport industries (Andreff, 2006b). Andreff (2006a) argues that primarily equipment-intensive sporting goods are subject to
international trade but that this research area has been neglected by scholars so far. Why should research combine the three concepts described above, cluster, inter-organisational and innovation research? Innovation is one of the outputs of clusters. Clusters are informal and discretionary in nature (Porter, 2008). We suggest, that they present a favourable environment for the development of ICB which might be a potentially driver for innovation (Autry, et al., 2008).

This research compares sport clusters in France and Australasia that are centred around sailing and surfing. These equipment-intensive sports differ significantly in their maturity and level of organisation (Andreff, 2006a; Hillairet, 2005). Previous studies found that sport clusters exist or emerge in both locations in these sports (Chetty, 2004; Glass & Hayward, 2001; Hillairet, 2005; Richard, 2007; Stewart, et al., 2008). The first part of the research addresses the question of how sport clusters and their inter-organisational relationships have emerged. Cluster, their organisations, and their inter-relationships are mapped out. This part of the research uses social network analysis as a qualitative method to document the research results (Scott, 1987, 2005). Semi-structured interviews and secondary data will construct each cluster as a case study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). Interview participants will be boundary-spanning representatives from different organisations within the clusters. The second part of the study is quantitative and investigates how ICB (independent variable) influences product innovation (dependent variable). A conceptual framework using structural equation modelling will be suggested. The survey will target boundary-spanning personnel in the cluster organisations as these people function as “catalyst” between the organisations in order to facilitate product innovation. ICB will be operationalized using the dimensions suggested by Skinner et al. (2009): inter-organisational tolerance, altruism, loyalty, compliance, conscientiousness, constructiveness and advancement. Product innovation will be operationalized through innovation categories used before: revolutionary innovations, technical innovations, use innovations, improvements (Hillairet, et al., 2009). Multivariate analysis will be used to process and analyse the data. Sources to track product innovation will be professional journals, manufacturer publications, firm representatives, competitions, trade shows, professional athletes, lead users, schools, clubs, and more.

Insights about the relational mechanism between ICB and product innovation is expected to enable firms to take advantage of this mechanism. Knowledge about the creation and dissemination of innovation is expected to improve the overall innovativeness and performance of clusters. This will impact positively on the region where the cluster is located and its respective cluster organisations. The project started in 2011, hence preliminary results for the NASSM in 2012 will focus on the qualitative part of the study, the mapping of sport cluster. The conceptual framework for the quantitative study will be presented as well.