Social Consciousness, Perceived Person-Organization Fit, and Corporate Social Responsibility as Drivers of Strategic Competitiveness

Theodore Hayduk III, Texas A&M University
Matthew Walker (Advisor), Texas A&M University

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Sport organizations are faced with a glut of qualified applicants. Therefore, optimizing aspects of the hiring process may help generate competitive advantage. Using the strategic human resources management (SHRM) and social responsibility (SR) literatures as guides, a hypothesized relationship between prospective applicant social consciousness, perceived person-organization fit (P-O Fit), sport organization SR, and application likelihood was proposed. These relationships were tested using a job application vignette. The analysis was completed using a conditional process model with P-O Fit as the mediator and SR as a moderator. The primary thrust of the analysis was twofold: to establish a baseline for P-O Fit as the causal mechanism of application likelihood, and to test whether P-O Fit could be influenced by varying degrees of organizational SR. Results indicated that prospective applicants who are socially conscious are more likely to feel greater P-O Fit, regardless of SR communication. Additionally, more SR communication led to a greater chance of application likelihood.

Conceptual Framework

Among the most important contributions to the strategic management literature in the past forty years has been the examination of firms from the ‘resource side’, as opposed to the ‘product side’ of the operational discussion (Wernerfelt, 1984). In early strategic management works, scholars disagreed when attempting to define a ‘resource’ and is associated attributes (Barney, 1991; Helfat & Peteraf, 2003; Peteraf, 1993; Priem & Butler, 2001). As the academic discourse has progressed, the trend has centered on a more inclusive rather than exclusive definition; whereby money, physical assets, materials, people, reputation, power and influence, knowledge, technology, patents and copyrights, and many other possessions now qualify as firm-level resources. In this manuscript, one of these resources in particular is examined—people. The examination of a firm’s human resources (HR) from a strategic perspective is referred to as strategic human resource management (SHRM). SHRM aims to apply what scholars already know about general human resources to the processes needed to meet future organizational objectives (Ratna & Singh, 2013). These processes include recruitment, orientation, training and development, performance management, motivation, succession planning, diversity management, and evaluation (Taylor, Doherty, & McGraw, 2008).

However, despite a robust pursuit within sport management, Doherty (1998) pointed out that of the sport-related organizational behavior (OB) studies examining behavioral outcomes, only one tenth addressed employee entry and turnover. Even assuming a regular growth pattern over the past two decades, it is clear that this area requires attention. Additionally, Doherty (1998) reported that of the same set of studies, most operationalized the performance construct at the individual-level-of-analysis as opposed to attempting to understand how individual outcomes may influence organization-level indicators. Moreover, Doherty (1998) rightly pointed out that a wealth of knowledge on this topic appears in educational contexts, while a distinct lack of application in other settings exists. In the years since, this gap has only been partially filled as scholars have studied these phenomena in the context of volunteers (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Taylor & McGraw, 2006) as opposed to paid employees. Finally, Doherty (1998) noted a lack of variables originating from the firm’s external environment.

Based on this prior work and the identified gaps in the sport-based OB/HR literature, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in three ways. First, the work broadens sport researcher understanding of how factors pertaining to the hiring process might influence organization-level performance. Second, the analysis is undertaken in the context of professional sport—a focus which needs continual exploration (Slack, 1995). Third, the influence of a macro-sociological trend is included in this analysis, and its role in a sport organization’s ability to amass an optimal applicant pool is evaluated.

Hypothesis Development

Based on a review of literature not provided here due to space limitations, the following hypothesis was formulated in regards to the relationship(s) between an applicant’s social consciousness, their feelings of prospective person-organization fit (P-O Fit), and a sport team’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) communications.

H1: The relationship between an applicant’s level of social consciousness and application likelihood is mediated by P-O Fit, with the pathway between social consciousness and P-O Fit moderated by the applicant’s CSR exposure.
This Hypothesis is what until recently would be referred to as a moderated mediation model. However, this nomenclature has been distilled in recent years in favor of the term conditional process modeling (CPM), which refers to a family of regression-based statistical procedures wherein moderation and mediation are both hypothesized to affect the dependent variable simultaneously. In sum, the singular Hypothesis represents a concurrent system of variables as opposed to a set of individual relationships.

Method

We utilized a vignette in order to elicit responses from participants. The vignette was intentionally modeled after a typical entry-level job posting on a sport-specific job website (e.g., TeamWork Online). In order to test the influence of the SR moderator on respondent application likelihood, four different vignette versions were produced that depicted differing levels of SR involvement as explained by Dahlsrud’s (2008) five dimensions of SR. Following the vignette, we used a 21-item survey instrument to capture variables of interest and control variables. The sample consisted of N=519 cases obtained using Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk (M-Turk) system. M-Turk is designed to serve as an online community where a wide variety of human intelligence tasks (HITs) can be completed online by paid workers.

Analyses

Mathematically, rather than evaluating individual pathways in the mediation model using statistical significance testing (Barron & Kenny, 1986), CPM bootstraps the sampling distribution of the ab pathway (the mediation/indirect effect) in order to derive a confidence interval (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). A benefit of effect size bootstrapping is that it makes no assumptions about the shape of variable distributions or the ab sampling distribution, thereby circumventing the power issues introduced by subtle asymmetries in the ab sampling distribution (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Following Preacher and Hayes’ (2004) best practice recommendations, the hypotheses were tested using 10,000 bootstrapped samples at a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval.

Results

The conditional indirect effects at all four values of SR exposure fall between their corresponding 95% Bias-Corrected Bootstrapped CI, indicating statistically significant influences. Of greater importance than interpreting these coefficients individually is examining the trend in coefficients throughout the range of the moderator values (Hayes, 2013). In this respect, we see a small/moderate upward trend in the values of the coefficients as participants are exposed to more SR. Moreover, this trend is constant and more pronounced as participant SR exposure is increases. This means that the effect of SR exposure becomes stronger as more SR is communicated to the protective applicant (H1 supported).