



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY

*Jönköping International  
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# CSR in Sports Organisations

A Multiple Case Study Aimed to Explore the Factors  
Influencing Sports Organisations Adoption of CSR

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AUTHORS:

*Johansson, Mattias 950511-1832*

*Svensson, Pontus 960810-5277*

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Authors: Johansson, Mattias and Svensson, Pontus - Group 69  
Tutor: Mark Edwards  
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## **Abstract**

CSR has become a more frequent activity in the sport industry. Several sports organisations have adopted this socially acceptable concept, making it present during sporting events and matches. Today, CSR has been developed to a competitive advantage and those organisations who conduct their CSR activities might be able to obtain organisational goals outside the pitch. Therefore, it is important to understand and establish the underlying factors behind this adoption, so stakeholder can grasp the goals.

With the support of Swedish sports organisations CSR the goal was to discover the influencing factors for membership-owned sports organisations adoption of CSR. This study used a qualitative, multiple case study approach to gather the information from the relevant sports organisations. Interviews were the main source of the empirical data collection.

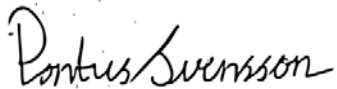
The results were identified via the stakeholder perspective, resource-based view and determinants of corporate social responsibility in professional sport. In conclusion the major findings illustrate that Swedish sports organisations are mainly influenced by internal factors in the adoption of CSR.

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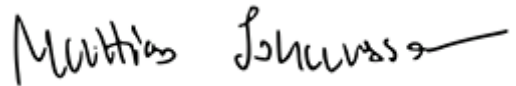
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Pontus Svensson



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Mattias Johansson

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# 1. Introduction

*The ambition with this chapter is to provide the reader with a background of the CSR in relation to sports. It also illustrates the problem and opportunities sports organisations encounter when adopting CSR. Lastly the purpose, research question and delimitations are included.*

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## 1.1 Background

Taking a look back in history social, economic and environmental issues have been a highly interesting topic for researchers and practitioners (Carroll, 1999), where researchers focused on the businesses and their responsibilities in society (Porter & Kramer, 2011). This increased focus has lead business to increase their responsible and sustainable behaviour (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010) as a result of pressure from external stakeholders such as customers and independent organisations (Hayes & Kapur, 2012). However, in a sports context, Corporate Social Responsibility has long been neglected by researchers (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007; Walters 2009).

The sports industry has grown rapidly in Sweden (Wagner, 2017; Abrahamsson, Leifby & Ros, 2017; Feldin, 2017) (See Appendix 1) and globally over the last few years (Mullin, Hardy & Sutton, 2014), due to this growth the sports industry has attracted more stakeholders' on an increased international platform (Humphreys & Ruseski, 2008), but also more focus from scholars (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007; Walters 2009). This development has resulted in new expectations, because sports organisations possess the opportunity to create additional value for stakeholders (Breitbarth & Harris, 2008) through their unique characteristics; passion, economics, transparency and stakeholder management (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009), which can also bridge social and economic gaps in the community (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). With the sports industry rapidly growing over the last years and expectations increasing on sports organisations, many adopted CSR since nowadays CSR is acknowledged as a competitive advantage (Guarnieri & Kao, 2008; Burke & Logsdon, 1996; Hack, Kenyon & Wood, 2014).

Furthermore, proof illustrating that sports can offer a bridge over social and economic gaps has been identified in the Olympic Games and other major sporting events, as these events often yield income to hosting nations (Flanders, 2013). Nonetheless, the major sporting events are not the only CSR influencers, all sports organisations can affect the different aspects of CSR in a positive way. Smith and Westerbeek (2007) argue that by integrating CSR into their strategies sports organisation can play an important role in supporting communities due to their close relationship with different stakeholders such as fans and sponsors, which gives them the ability to influence communities in a unique way. Moreover, it has been argued that practitioners will be beneficial from working with CSR (Breitbarth & Harris, 2008), leading to an increased attention by scholars such as Babiak and Wolfe (2009), Smith and Westerbeek, (2007) and Walters (2009). Therefore, the authors of this paper argue the importance of understanding the concept in a sports organisation environment and the different factors influencing the organisations to implement CSR activities in a successful way and gain a competitive advantage.

## **1.2 Problem formulation**

As previously stated, adoption of CSR activities among sports organisations has increased, yet research on the relationship of CSR and sports inadequately describes why sports organisations are adopting CSR. Babiak and Wolfe (2009) argue much is still needed in the field of research in sports relation to CSR. The authors of this thesis, argues the importance of understanding the actions and underlying factors in CSR and sports, due to sports organisations unique position in society.

The narrow research with sports and CSR can potentially lie in the fact there is no established definition of CSR (Dahlsrud, 2006). The lack of a universal concept might imply membership-owned sports organisations have different reasons for engaging in CSR compared to privately owned sports organisations (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). This has been a huge intriguer and influencer in the process involving the topic decision for this thesis. Currently, the majority of research conducted on CSR in relation to sports organisations has focused on North America professional leagues (Ratten, 2011; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009) were the ownership differs from Sweden. Instead Swedish sports

organisations are regulated by 51% ownership rule where the organisation has to be owned by members (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2017).

Finally, Babiak and Wolfe (2009) mention that differences in membership-structure can play a crucial role in CSR adoption. Based on that most research is conducted in North America, one could argue that investigating the view on CSR adoption among sports organisations in Sweden is relevant for the literature in CSR and sports.

### **1.3 Purpose**

The goal of this qualitative study is to address the factors influencing the adoption of CSR activities within membership-owned sports organisations. To address this issues the authors of this thesis selected Swedish sports organisations because of the 51% rule active in Sweden. More specifically the researchers of this paper are going to look at how CSR is defined and what factors influence Swedish sports executives to implement CSR, furthermore how these factors developed over time will also be investigated. This thesis aims at contributing both to practitioners and researchers interested in CSR in a sports context through the empirical findings in this thesis.

### **1.4 Research Question**

Based on the purpose discussed above our research question for this thesis follows;

*RQ. What factors influence membership-owned sports organisations to implement CSR activities in their strategies?*

### **1.5 Delimitations**

This thesis is bound by three main limitations; firstly, the research will be conducted from a Swedish perspective with Swedish sports organisations relationship to CSR. Despite this, the results may be useful in countries with similar ownership structures. Secondly, the authors acknowledge the number of interviewed organisations may limit the results since CSR is specific to each organisation. However, the authors of this thesis believe the



research will be valid in a broader context for sports organisations with similar situations. Lastly, the authors recognize, the presented factors and literature are primarily related to traditional firms, it is still argued they are valid in a sports industry context.

## 2. Literature Review

*This chapter presents existing literature within the field of CSR, sport industry and influencing factors. It will also describe how the two main topics have interacted according to previous scholars.*

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### 2.1 Concept of CSR

The first signs of CSR were illustrated in Howard. R Bowen's book *Social Responsibilities of the Businessmen* in 1953. Bowen suggested that businessmen should have a socially responsible team that reports on the business practices and problems potentially affecting society. This first benchmark in the social responsibility literature paved way for further development of the CSR concept. The modern concept of CSR was defined by Carroll (1979) to include the components of legal, economic, ethical and discretionary responsibilities. In 1991, Carroll developed these concepts into the highly popular "Pyramid of CSR" consisting of the components legal, economic, ethical and philanthropic and Carroll argues organisations must fulfil one step in the pyramid before engaging in the next step. Carroll (1999) discussed other major contributions to CSR during the 90's and 80's such as stakeholder theory (Freeman & Reed, 1983; Donaldson & Preston, 1995) and corporate social performance (Clarkson, 1995; Wood 1991). So, the concept of social responsibility (SR) has been active for decades but the focus has lately shifted towards CSR because corporations increased their dominance in society (Carroll, 1999; Porter & Kramer, 2011). Since CSR is relatively new, scholars have had different opinions and ideas on how to define the concept CSR (Dahlsrud, 2006; Moir, 2001; Clarkson, 1995).

For example, the concept of CSR can include human rights (Cassel, 2001) corporate governance (Matten & Crane, 2005), environmental (Hart, 1995; DesJardins, 1998; Visser, 2010; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2010) but regardless of definition, the main purpose of implementing CSR is to work towards sustainable practice beyond the firm interest and further than required by law (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Carroll, 1979). Both Friedman (1970) and Campbell (2007) discuss CSR from an economic perspective, with Friedman (1970) diverting from the classic view of CSR and strongly argued that firms social responsibility is to maximize shareholder values. Campbell (2007) argued that economic conditions will affect the chances of organisations engaging in CSR activities.

Concerning the major diversions, in CSR several scholars have mapped the concept of CSR, to achieve a better understanding of the concept (Garriga & Mele, 2004; Dahlsrud, 2006; Moir, 2001; Van Marrewijk, 2013; Maon, Lindgreen & Swaen, 2009).

In addition to mapping the concept, scholars have attempted to establish why CSR lacks a universal concept (Matten & Moon, 2008; Argandoña & Hoivik, 2009; Dahlsrud, 2006, Moir, 2001). Matten and Moon (2008) argue that the fragmentation in the concept exists because CSR overlaps several other related concepts in the business-society sphere. Argandoña and Hoivik (2009) address this statement by illustrating a lack of integration among concepts is possibly due to different views, in relation to geography, of business in society. In his mapping, Dahlsrud (2006) found five dimensions in CSR: the environmental, the social, the economic, the stakeholder and the voluntariness. Dahlsrud (2006) argue the problems with diverse definitions on CSR lies in how CSR is constructed by scholars around a determined context rather than the actual definitions used by scholars. Moir (2001) uses a similar approach by examining definitions by scholars and organisations, but spends significant effort discussing theories usable in explaining the concept of CSR such as stakeholder theory and social contracts theory.

CSR as a phenomenon has not only been discussed by scholars, the concept has also attracted interest from governmental organisations aiming at more sustainable business practices and laws, which can be seen in non-scholar definitions on CSR from World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2000) and Commission of the European Communities (2001). Both organisations definitions are focusing on behaving ethically, integrating social and environmental issues while improving economic development.

## **2.2 Quantity of Concepts Leads to Flexibility and Interpretation**

Moreover, since there is no consensus among scholars on the concept, both practitioners (O'Dwyer, 2003; Johnston & Beatson, 2005, Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010), and researchers contributing to a theoretical development (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001) have struggled with the concept. Based on this several scholars argue that one definition of CSR would be beneficial for organisations (Johnston & Beatson, 2005; McWilliams & Siegel 2001;

O'Dwyer, 2002; Hack et al., 2014). Johnston and Beatson (2005), McWilliams and Siegel (2001) as well as Lindgreen and Swaen (2010) argue that CSR has grown to play a significant role for managers in directing and defining how businesses should act ethically. Still, findings from interviews with business managers illustrated that the complexity of CSR hindered a clear understanding of the concept for managers (Johnston and Beatson, 2005; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001; O'Dwyer, 2002). Related to the complexity with CSR Hack et al., (2014) believe a positive average and standard for social responsibility will be beneficial for executives processing CSR.

Two scholars who have investigated the reasons behind multiple definitions of CSR are Argandoña and Hoivik (2009) and Hopkins (2004). According to Argandoña and Hoivik (2009), geography through cultural, historical and socio-economic factors possess a huge impact on the varieties of definitions. Argandoña and Hoivik (2009) also mention the language as a decisive factor to why there are several definitions, where Sweden was exemplified because the word "social" has a completely different meaning in Sweden compared to other countries. Hopkins (2004), on the other hand, argues the dialogue has been highly flawed because scholars include multiple concepts, such as corporate governance and corporate citizenship. By including multiple concepts in the dialogue Hopkins (2004), argues this generates a confusion among researchers.

Van Marrewijk (2003) and Okoye (2009) reject that one definition of CSR would benefit managers. Van Marrewijk (2003) believes the idea of "One solution fits all" should be abandoned because of biases towards specific interests will affect the development of the concept. This conclusion has been criticized by Dahlsrud (2006) for lacking empirical evidence. Both Van Marrewijk (2003) and Okoye (2009) argue that various flexible definitions of the CSR concept should be accepted because it will help managers match the organisations values with CSR activities.

### **2.3 Factors Influencing Implementation of CSR**

The following section will cover the literature on some of the most relevant factors influencing organisation to implement CSR. The decision-making process of implementing CSR can be influenced by both external and internal factors

(Anagnostopoulos et al., 2014). The reason why it is important to understand the underlying factors of the adoption process is the potential development into sustained competitive advantages (Hart, 1995). Westerbeek and Smith (2007) argue nothing separates business organisations from sports organisations with respect to CSR activities, but the factors influencing the implementation process can differentiate. Furthermore, Giulianotti (2015) believe that one explanation for sports organisations implementation of CSR might be the enhanced productivity, profitability, corporate profile, and marketing.

## **2.4 External Factors**

External factors are forces which the organisation cannot affect, in the business environment which possess the ability to affect business operations and objectives (BusinessDictionary.com, 2018). The external factors; consumer expectations, financial opportunities, community, sponsors and legal aspects are discussed in this section as influencing external factors for sports organisations to adopt CSR.

### **2.4.1 Consumer Expectations**

Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) argue that by understanding consumer reactions to CSR initiatives, organisations can develop and accommodate CSR strategies that are optimal for their business. Pelozo and Shang (2010) supported this view by arguing that CSR activities have the potential of creating a stronger relationship with shareholders. Walker and Kent (2009) argue that sports organisations face increasing pressure from consumers to act in socially acceptable ways. They found that fans value socially responsible efforts and speak favourably of the sports organisations conducting them implying consumers will pressure sports organisations to increase their reputation through socially acceptable actions. Furthermore, Golob, Lah, and Jančič (2008) strengthens the highlighted importance of a customer focus, they found that customers generally have high expectations of CSR.

Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) research on consumer reactions on CSR matches Van Marrewijk (2003) view that one solution fits all should be abandoned since by tailoring

their CSR activities towards specific customers preferences they will improve their relationship with customers and in the long run improve their financial performance (Orlitzky et al., 2003; Tsoutsoura, 2003; Waddock & Graves, 1997; Margolis, Elfenbein & Walsh, 2009).

#### **2.4.2 Financial Opportunities**

Orlitzky et al., (2003), Tsoutsoura (2003), as well as Waddock and Graves (1997), found that CSR has a positive association with financial performance. This implies that organisations can meet the social, environmental and financial opportunities while contributing to a bottom-line benefit. Moreover, findings by Malik, 2014; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006 suggest that CSR can contribute positively to an organisations market value and product market growth. Following that CSR is positively related to future financial performance, implies according to Orlitzky et al., (2003) and Waddock and Graves (1997) that good management and Corporate social performance are positively related.

McWilliams and Siegel (2001) propose a different perspective, that CSR initiatives will not necessarily increase profitability since both costs and revenues will rise to maintain the equilibrium in comparison with a firm not engaging in CSR. Hence, there will be a neutral relationship between CSR and financial performance. It should be pointed out that McWilliams and Siegel (2001) themselves critic their own work by addressing the issue that many hypotheses in the paper are hard to test empirically. Further, through a cost-benefit analysis, it could be determined how much capital organisations should spend on CSR (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). The question was addressed through a supply and demand theory on the firm, with the result that there is a maximum level which organisations should spend on CSR to maximize stakeholder expectations while maximising profit.

#### **2.4.3 Community and Sponsors**

Argandoña and Hoivik (2009) and Campbell (2007) argue that communities and geographic locations have an influence over CSR activities. Argandoña and Hoivik (2009) argue that since the industrial revolution, CSR has evolved differently depending

on cultural, socio-economic and particular conditions. Campbell (2007) on the other hand, highlights the importance of a dialogue between community groups and the corporation, so there will be a higher frequency in regards to CSR activities. Further, Babiak and Trendafilova (2011) argue that a corporation's behaviours are affected by the community leaders and norms which translates to the community expectations of the sports organisations.

A huge part of the sports organisations revenues consists of the sponsors incentives, implying that the sponsors are considered the most important stakeholder (Plewa & Quester, 2011). Plewa and Quester (2011) argue sponsorships become more effective if the organisations leveraging the sponsorship includes social responsibilities. Even more related to the community is one of the highlighted sponsors in Plewa and Quester (2011), namely community-minded sponsors, who influence the sports organisations to implement their CSR activities in the local area. Moreover, Cousen and Slack (1996) highlight that companies believe sponsorship provided to local sports teams enables them to enhance their bank of trust in the local community.

#### **2.4.4 Legal**

Carroll (1991) introduced the aspect of legal requirements in his pyramid of CSR, as the second step in the pyramid. Hence, organisations must obey the law set by society and work within the perimeters of it, but also relatable to the ethical responsibility which is to act and behave correctly even when not compelled by the law. Matten and Moan (2008), as well as McWilliams and Siegel (2001), discuss corporate social responsibility in the sense of how firms take actions to increase the social welfare beyond the economics, legal requirements and interest of the firm. Furthermore, Matten and Moan (2008) argue that CSR is located in a broader responsibility where governments, organisations, and legal frameworks operate in corporations. Campbell (2007) research has a similar focus and results where he argues that organisations will behave more socially responsible the greater the monitoring and regulations from stakeholders.

## **2.5 Internal Factors**

Internal factors are strengths and weaknesses an organisation possesses, and these factors can help the organisation achieve its objectives (Businessdictionary.com, 2018). Scholars identified several influencing internal factors: match with organisations mission, reputation and brand image. These factors are evaluated and discussed in following paragraphs.

### **2.5.1 Match with Organisations Mission**

Székely and Knirsch (2005) identifies several internal factors that will affect the organisation to consider an implementation of CSR, these factors were categorized into three categories, market, managerial and operational factors. The managerial and operational factors involve the relationship between mission and CSR implementation (Székely & Knirsch, 2005). Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill (2006) found that a low fit i.e. when social initiatives fail to coordinate with the organisation's mission, potential CSR initiatives will become a liability instead of an opportunity. So, Becker-Olsen et al., (2006) argue that social initiatives should be sensitively selected, so consumers perceive these actions as motivated by the organisations.

Sheth and Babiak (2009), as well as Babiak and Trendafilova (2010), found that sports organisations use a strategic approach when engaging in CSR activities. The sports organisations ensure the social responsibility actions impact the organization's business positively while achieving the ethical, philanthropic and legal responsibilities. In addition, Babiak and Trendafilova (2010) found, although to a lesser extent, institutional pressures motivating executives.

Furthermore, Ratten and Babiak (2010) and Du et al., (2010) highlight the risks of CSR communication. It is considered a risky matter because deploying CSR with the sole purpose of self-interest, can backfire and ruin the organisations image if consumers identify extrinsic motives behind their CSR activities (Ratten & Babiak, 2010). Hence, Du et al., (2010) argue the importance of convincing stakeholders that CSR activities align with organisation's goal.



### **2.5.2 Reputation**

The backside of CSR can be scandals, such as the Enron scandal in 2001 (Whitehouse, 2006). Because scandals might enhance the customers' awareness a disaster can have a negative impact on the reputation (Whitehouse, 2006; Wagner, Lutz & Weitz 2009). Presently, customers put pressure on organisations because their CSR actions fail to connect with the organisations reported standards (Wagner et al., 2009). Moreover, McWilliams, Siegel, and Wright (2006) argue that CSR can be a vital part of organisations business strategies. Therefore, CSR can be considered a strategic investment and tool for reputation building (McWilliams et al., 2006; Fombrun, Gardberg & Barnett, 2000) but also to broader company benefits other than purchase behaviour (Lichtenstein, Drumwright & Braig, 2004) for organisations.

There is also a balancing act for organisations engaging in CSR (Morsing, Schultz & Nielsen, 2008; Du et al., 2010; Ratten & Babiak, 2010). If customers perceive that organisation are engaging in CSR for self-interest reasons or public relations reasons this can lead to damaged reputation (Du et al, 2010). On the other hand, a negligence of CSR might also backfire, making organisations fall out of favour with the customers and in the long run lose support and reputation (Ratten & Babiak, 2010; Du et al., 2010).

### **2.5.3 Brand Image**

How CSR can affect the brand image has been discussed by several authors such as Brønn and Vrioni (2001), Lai, Chiu, Yang and Pai (2010), Sheth and Babiak (2009) and Du et al., (2010). Brønn and Vrioni (2001) investigated the effects of CSR in a cause-related marketing activity, establishing that cause-related marketing can influence the brand image. Similar results were found by Lindgreen, Swaen and Johnston (2009) Du et al., (2010) and Lai et al., (2010) who argue that CSR activities can have a positive impact on brand image generating stronger, long-term relationships with stakeholders.

Sheth and Babiak (2009) found a relationship where high percentage winning sports teams feel less pressure to adopt CSR initiatives to enhance their brand image. Similarly, low winning percentage teams feel increased pressure to enhance their brand image through CSR initiatives. Sheth and Babiak (2009) findings illustrate how North American

sports organisations prefer to engage in CSR activities which are familiar and traditional to the sports industry because this decreases the chances of drawbacks. Closely related to this research is Werther and Chandler (2005) who argue that CSR activities can if used wrongly disrupt an organisation's brand image, moreover they argue that CSR initiatives are becoming a strategic necessity.

## **2.6 Relationship between CSR and Sports Organisations**

In today's globalized world, sports organisations are adopting CSR practices in their strategies, because today CSR is acknowledged as a competitive advantage (Guarnieri & Kao, 2008; Burke & Logsdon, 1996; Hack et al., 2014). Scholars argue that sports organisation have a unique opportunity through its factors: passion, economics, transparency and stakeholder management (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009) to create additional value and bridge social problems in society (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007; Flanders, 2013). The fact that sports organisations can bridge social problems has led to increased pressure from stakeholders (Breitbarth & Harris, 2008; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Although many researchers recognize the benefits CSR can bring to sports organisations and society through the unique position in society. However research on the combination of sports and CSR is minimal (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Sheth & Babiak, 2009, Walters, 2009). The focus of the current research has been on North American professional leagues with privately owned sports organisations (NHL, MLB, NFL, NBA) (Sheth & Babiak, 2009; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009), although Walters (2009) focused on English football clubs, while Smith and Westerbeek (2007) are based in Australia.

Giulianotti (2015) highlights several categories of social interventions: neo-liberal, strategic developmental, developmental interventionist, and social justice. Margolis and Walsh (2003) argue that research on CSR should shift focus from financial and social performance towards examining the processes, context, and outcomes of CSR. In a response to this Babiak and Wolfe (2009) presented their research on internal and external contextual forces leading sports organisations to adopt CSR practices. The importance of stakeholder understanding is emphasized Giulianotti (2015), Anagnostopoulos, Byers and Shilbury (2014) and Levermore and Moore (2015), meaning that expectations and demand from various stakeholders should be considered, hence making the sports

organisations influenced by this stakeholder understanding. Babiak and Wolfe (2009) also argue that success for sports organisations lies in the capability to collaborate with multiple stakeholder relations and maintain this relationship. Moreover, this argumentation follows Smith and Westerbeek (2007) that a stakeholder perspective is beneficial for sports organisations when considering the combination of CSR and sports, which they refer to as sports corporate social responsibility. Smith and Westerbeek (2007) propose that social benefits can be achieved through the power of sports in matching the objectives of communities, which can lead to economic profits for managers in sports and corporate.

Giulianotti (2015) identifies positive impacts from adopting CSR such as enhanced reputation via public releases, while, Levermore and Moore (2015) highlights potential risks and emphasizes on the importance to consider the potential results of business activities on stakeholders. Anagnostopoulos et al., (2014) findings are similar to previous researchers since they argue that the stakeholders have an important role on managers' decision-making, meaning that sports organisations have to build trust towards their stakeholders.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

*This chapter presents the different frameworks used to identify the influencing factors for adopting CSR.*

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#### 3.1 Determinants of CSR in Professional Sport

As discussed earlier Babiak and Wolfe (2009) address the issues of change in ownership as a future direction of research. Based on the fact that the authors of this paper are investigating membership-owned sports organisations, The framework proposed by Babiak and Wolfe (2009), Determinants of Corporate Social Responsibility in Professional Sport: Internal and External Factors (**See Appendix 2**) is considered relevant for analysis and discussion in this paper.

The framework presented is based on theories from Barney (1991) and Oliver (1991). Barney (1991) focused on internal resources and how these resources must be valuable, rare and inimitable for organisations seeking a competitive advantage. On the other hand, Oliver (1991) focused on the strategic responses to institutional pressures. Both works were determined valuable by Babiak and Wolfe (2009) since Barney (1991) determine to which extent sports organisations use internal resources as a rationale for CSR initiatives. Oliver (1991) was relevant in relation to the external pressures driving CSR in professional sport. Oliver (1991) argued that organisations will respond differently given the nature of the external pressures which are: Cause, Constituents, Control, Context, and Content. The framework of Oliver (1991) is extensively discussed by Babiak and Wolfe (2009) with relevance to professional sports and it was found that all categories are relevant for professional sports.

Babiak and Wolfe (2009) merged Oliver (1991) and Barney (1991) into one framework with two dimensions (**See Appendix 2**). The result of merging both internal and external resources was a framework exploring factors influencing sports organisations adoption of CSR initiatives. Babiak and Wolfe (2009) argue that two dimensions (Internal and External) should be considered when creating an effective CSR strategy. Moreover, Babiak and Wolfe (2009) argue that depending on whether the organisations mainly focus on external pressures or internal resources when deploying CSR initiatives, naturally they

will engage in specific CSR “boxes”. Presently there are four boxes in the framework: Stakeholder-Centric CSR, Strategic-CSR, Ad Hoc CSR and Corporate-Centric CSR.

Stakeholder-Centric CSR occurs when external pressures are dominant in the process of implementing CSR activities, while for Strategic-CSR the focus is high on external and internal factors. Babiak and Wolfe (2009) specifically recommend Strategic-CSR as the optimal approach since it leverages both your internal competencies while devoting themselves to social needs. The two other approaches discussed in the framework are Ad Hoc-CSR and Corporate-Centric CSR. AdHoc-CSR is not discussed since Babiak and Wolfe (2009) argue that a CSR program will not exist without an internal or external pressure. The final approach Corporate-Centric CSR appears in organisation with high internal pressure but a low level of external pressures.

## **3.2 Stakeholder Theory**

The scientific investigation of stakeholder theory was separately explored by Ian Mitroff and Edward Freeman during 1983, Freeman has been considered the “father of stakeholder theory” (Laplume, Sonpar & Litz, 2008). The stakeholder perspective (Donaldson & Preston, 1995) has been argued vital for sport organisations, because their success lies in establishing and maintaining relationships with important stakeholders (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). Scholars emphasize the importance of stakeholder perspective in relation to sports organisations since the expectations and demands vary between different stakeholders (Giulianotti, 2015; Anagnostopoulos et al., 2014; Levermore & Moore, 2015).

Freeman (1983) stated that stakeholders are those who have a claim on the firm, such as suppliers, and customers for example. Crane and Matten (2016) as well as Smith and Westerbeek (2007) expanded this definition by discussing stakeholder as an individual or group who can be harmed or benefit from a decision by the organisations, but also whose rights can be violated or respected by the organisations. So, stakeholders differ from situation to situation and organisations must acknowledge all stakeholders interest. Moreover, by involving all stakeholders’ interests a firm has the possibility of maximising its value (Jensen, 2001). Jensen argues that value maximization provides managers with

a single objective in comparison to stakeholder theory who yields several options for managers. Furthermore, Jensen (2001) proposes long-term value maximisation as the solution to multiple objectives yielded from a traditional stakeholder theory. Following Smith and Westerbeek (2007), Crane and Matten (2016) and Freeman (1983) definitions, Stakeholder theory can be defined as; acknowledging, all stakeholders with a claim at the firm, in the decision-making process.

### **3.3 Resource-Based View**

The Resource-based view is an influential managerial framework used to establish which strategic resources and capabilities within the organisation have the capability to deliver a competitive advantage. Which has gained significant attention from scholars in the strategic management field such as Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1991). In a RBV perspective, resources are defined by Wernerfelt (1984, p.172) as “anything which could be thought of as a strength or weakness of a given firm” and Barney (1991, 1995) argues that for organisations to achieve a sustained competitive advantage three criteria need to be met. These three criteria are: *valuable, rare and inimitable*. Moreover, a key aspect in the Resource-based view argued by Barney (1991) and Peteraf (1993) is that the organisation's resources must be heterogeneous and immobile to have a sustained competitive advantage. In addition, the resource-based view focuses on the internal resources of the firm and the process of identifying these capabilities and resources (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993; Wernerfelt, 1984). A key development in the RBV framework was derived by Hart (1995) who saw a need for a framework including the environmental effects of business decision-making processes. Hart (1995) added an environmental perspective establishing a natural-based-resource view, which would generate greater understanding of competitive advantages based on the organisations responding and actions in relation to the natural environment. Research has also been conducted on the relationship between CSR and the RBV, with the framework creating a better understanding why and how organisations engage in CSR (McWilliams, Siegel and Wright, 2006; Branco and Rodrigues, 2006).

## 4. Methodology

*This chapter will describe, discuss and defend the different choices of method. It will further explain the manner of data collection and analysis, going through all the steps from research design to ethics of research.*

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The ambition of this thesis was to explore differences and similarities between the factors influencing membership-owned sports organisations current CSR activities, and to achieve this a qualitative and inductive research approach was deemed most suitable. Moreover, since the ambition was to explore difference and similarities, the specific method chosen was a multiple case study method. A multiple case study method was identified as the most applicable method to obtain information from the five respondents, and to create an understanding of differences and similarities. Furthermore, Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010) argue that it is essential to understand different activities and outcomes from behaviours, therefore face-face interviews was selected as the main source of data collection. The approaches are justified, developed and explained in following sections, describing how the method was applied to discover the findings.

### 4.1 Research Design

#### 4.1.1 Descriptive Research

A research design can be seen as the blueprint or plan designed to answer the research question (Dulock, 1993). Researchers can structure their research through three approaches, namely, exploratory, descriptive and causal. Exploratory research requires the capability of observing, the competence of collecting information and ability to construct explanations, while causal research focuses on the cause of a particular phenomenon. The descriptive research is conducted with a structured and well-understood problem and used to describe characteristics of a population (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Descriptive research emphasizes on planning, therefore, the decisions of how many and who to interview was done beforehand, the questions were narrowed down and consistency played a key role in the interview process, meaning that all interviews were conducted in a similar way (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). A research question involving the question “what” is suitable for descriptive research (Ghauri &

Grønhaug, 2010). Therefore, the fact that we are investigating what factors are influencing sports organisations to adopt CSR, implies a descriptive research will best fit the purpose. This problem was further evaluated and different solutions were considered and these solutions were in this thesis identified as the factors influencing the sports organisations to implement their CSR programs.

#### **4.1.2 Paradigm**

The guiding framework illustrating how research should be directed is called a paradigm. It takes into consideration people's philosophies, their presumptions about the world and the essence of knowledge (Collis & Hussey, 2013). The process involving the designing of the research is associated with the two paradigms, positivism and interpretivism. Knowledge originates from 'positive information' since it can be scientifically documented, through logic or mathematical verification. Positivism is also independent of us, researchers, and it will instead advocate logical reasoning so that precision, objectivity and/or predict social phenomena. This was not applicable during this thesis, because positivism will not draw a conclusion but instead find relationships between different variables. The ambition of this work, on the other hand, was to establish conclusions and linkage between the interviews and literature review. To proceed in a successful manner, an approach ignoring other relevant findings was not the most suitable. Interpretivism was instead considered to be more open and take other aspects and findings into consideration, therefore it was argued that interpretivism was the best applicable paradigm. Interactions with the respondents is a core activity during interpretivism, because of the impossibility to divide what stays in the social world from what is in the investigator's brain (Creswell, 2014; Collis & Hussey, 2013).

## **4.2 Research Strategy**

The role of theory in relation to research is known as the difference between deductive and inductive research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To distinguish between the two, deductive implies that the theory comes before research and inductive means that the latter comes before theory (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Deductive research starts with a theory that will be tested through hypothesis testing, concluding through a rejection or confirmation of the



hypothesis, which is in line with quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This thesis was derived from a qualitative work since it was argued that CSR is unique for every individual and therefore, based on previous research a relationship between organisations interpretation of CSR should be non-existent. An inductive research strategy gave insights into these unique CSR programmes and the underlying factors influencing them. The inductive research was present in this study since the empirical data was collected before theories were identified. The theories used to analyse the data in this study were useful in understanding the factors influencing membership-owned sports organisations to implement CSR activities.

Furthermore, the findings in this thesis will be derived from the frameworks: Determinants of Corporate Social Responsibility in Professional Sport, Stakeholder Theory, and Resource-Based View. We are aware that the first framework takes into account the resource-based view, but the other findings from Oliver (1991) which Babiak and Wolfe (2009) used were not argued to be relevant for this study. Instead, the stakeholder theory was included since the literature illustrated that a stakeholder perspective is important in relation to sports organisations.

### **4.3 Data Collection**

Two data collection strategies were applied in this study. The structuring of organisational documents and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews, described in the next section. The best and most credible findings will be provided by primary data (Saunders et al., 2011) therefore this thesis relied on primary data. However, facts and data retrieved from other sources, equivalent to secondary data, were also studied. The secondary data studied during this research was categorized as written documentary data (Saunders et al., 2011). Business reports and relevant information in regards to our case organisations were of use. Jönköping University's library was also a big provider of the literature via electronic and physical books. Data sources such as “Primo”, “Google Scholar” and “Diva” were of use during the literature review with keywords: *CSR*, *Sports Organisations*, *Social*, *Influencing Factors*, *Competitive Advantage*, and *Sports Management*. These keywords were

considered important by the authors and were used in various combinations to find relevant literature.

#### **4.4 Qualitative Work**

The debate between quantitative and qualitative is ongoing and the decision considering which approach to undertake cannot be inspired by a competitive advantage (Smith, 1983). Carefully analysing which of the two approaches is most appropriate for the study is therefore very important. Qualitative research has always had an important role in international business (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004), hence it is proven that it has been successful and remained a core approach of how data collection can be conducted. Qualitative research is viewed as a reliable source when it comes to establishing new theories and insights (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004). Therefore authors of this thesis decided to collect their data through a qualitative research approach. The reasoning behind this choice was the expectancy of flourishing, interesting and well-thought dialogues with the clerical staff, and that the interviews would provide the thesis with in-depth thoughts and ideas with regard to a handful of sports organisations work with CSR. The goal was to illustrate what factors influence sports organizations to implement CSR to their operations, and therefore a qualitative study was the most suitable since it often provides the researchers with a background to experiences or behaviours (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010).

#### **4.5 Multiple Case Study Method**

According to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010) case studies is connected to descriptive research. The case study is appropriate when the researcher studies a phenomenon hard to investigate for an external person. A case study will provide the researcher with in-depth knowledge when studying an organisation, data collection in case studies can be achieved in three different ways. It is impossible to draw conclusions for entire industries via single case studies, which is why this research increased the number of cases from single to multiple. Researchers have to understand and grasp this weakness of case studies, and instead by creativity further study the uniqueness of each and every case

(Bryman & Bell, 2015). They argue that the strength of a case study is achieved the focus is shifted from generalizability to particularization, this implies that the researchers of this thesis will concentrate on the uniqueness of the cases to grasp its complexity.

Commonly used methods by researchers in case studies are interviews, collections or observations. This thesis was derived from both interviews and collections, making a case study suitable. Case studies can be structured into single and multiple case studies. The single case is often used when the data is limited or the researcher is focusing on a single critical case (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Moreover, single case studies are often used for a deductive purpose when the case matches all requirements of the theory. Regarding multiple case studies De Vaus (2011) argues is necessary for inductive approaches and should be used when resources are sufficient, to provide a deeper understanding and more insight. According to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010) and Yin (2003) since multiple case studies aims at exploring differences and comparisons it is imperative the cases are carefully selected and justified. Based on the close connection between case studies and a descriptive research, multiple case studies was justified to use. Moreover, according to scholars, CSR is unique for each and every one, the authors needed to interview several respondents to obtain in-depth knowledge and insight on sports organisations CSR activities to facilitate the data analysis. Furthermore, since the authors aimed at interviewing the responsible person for the CSR activities, a case study was argued most suitable. Furthermore, the cases included both the interviews and information collected from the sports organisations websites.

## **4.6 Sampling**

The main interest was the membership-owned Swedish elite sports organizations opinions and operations considering CSR, therefore the respondents were to be decided in regards to country (Sweden) and level of the organisation (elite). The sample size of interviews was appropriate since it follows Bryman and Bell (2015) findings with a minimum size of five respondents. The respondents were chosen with the requirement that the organisation was familiar with and currently engaged in CSR. It gave unique insights when it came to factors influencing their implementation of CSR activities. Moreover,

the sports organisations represented clubs from both the two top divisions of football and the highest division in ice-hockey since CSR activities were not very common in the second highest division in ice-hockey. The five sports organisations were represented by Jan Ryrlén (IF Elfsborg), Linda Brevitz (HV71), David Svensson (Falkenbergs FF), Hans Svensson (Frölunda Indians) and Martin Ericsson (BK Häcken). The respondents in each sports organisations were carefully selected as each clubs spokesperson for CSR activities. Because CSR activities in sports organisations is a relatively new action the interviewees were responsible in different degrees. Martin Ericsson for instance only worked part-time with CSR, while Jan Ryrlén worked full-time with CSR.

## **4.7 Case Introduction**

Below is a brief introduction and justification to the membership-owned sports organisations chosen by the researchers. The main justification for all chosen organisation was the ownership structure i.e. membership-owned sports organisations. The authors of this thesis aimed at attaining interviews with sports organisations in the two major sports in Sweden, football and ice-hockey, the reason these two sports were chosen were their size and impact in society. Furthermore, the clubs local magnitude was also considered when selecting the cases, all of the cases had to be the biggest sports club in its local area.

### **4.7.1 Case 1 – IF Elfsborg**

IF Elfsborg was founded in the early stages of the 20th century in the municipality of Borås and have since grown to be one of Sweden's most successful football clubs. Since making their debut in Allsvenskan in 1926, the team has participated in 74 seasons in the top tier, winning a total of five championships and ranking 5th in the overall points in the history table, this makes IF Elfsborg a successful Swedish football club. The club has 258 sponsors and an average attendance around 7000 per game. The amount of stakeholders and the big impact in society are two reasons why this IF Elfsborg was selected for this study.

IF Elfsborg current CSR program, Vi Tillsammans is one of the oldest established programmes in Sweden, therefore, a lot of attention has been turned to them. During the

decision process of the different cases, it was quite obvious how much time and room IF Elfsborg provides their program with. According to their website, they employ three people dedicated solely towards Vi Tillsammans, this proves that IF Elfsborg is an experienced and serious club in regards to CSR, justifying the decision to interview IF Elfsborg (IF Elfsborg, 2018; Boryellow, 2018).

#### **4.7.2 Case 2 – HV71**

HV71 was crowned Swedish champions last season (Season 16/17) and the club was established 1971 when Husqvarna IF and Vätterstads IF were consolidated. HV71 are currently one of Sweden's greatest ice hockey teams with its 33 seasons in the top tier. They play their games in Kinnarps Arena with a capacity of 7000 people. With around 1000 partners and sponsors, there are many stakeholders, which we believe indicates different expectations on them (HV71, 2018).

According to their website, there is no official spokesperson responsible for CSR, but their CSR projects were discussed on their website. Presently, there are six existing projects: Gratis Hockeyskola, Min Första HV-match, Den sjunde spelaren, Barnkliniken på Ryhov, Barncancerfonden Västra and Bubs familjeläktare. Furthermore the information related to Min Första HV-match stated that it provides over 5000 people with the opportunity to experience live ice hockey. They have around ten more active projects that seemed to be organised by external companies. (HV71, 2018) With their big range of projects, it is proven they have a deep understanding and experience in CSR.

#### **4.7.3 Case 3 – Falkenbergs FF**

Falkenbergs FF was founded 1928, and during the 21st century they established themselves as an elite club. Currently they are located in Superettan, the second highest division in football. Falkenbergs FF was promoted to Allsvenskan 2013 and stayed there for three consecutive seasons. Currently, their record attendance is 5406 people (Falkenbergs FF, 2018).

Jan Ryrlén in IF Elfsborg identified Falkenbergs FF as a sports organisation that has recently become active in CSR, which is the main reason why Falkenbergs FF was chosen for this study. Furthermore, Falkenbergs FF quite recently assigned David Svensson as responsible for the clubs CSR activities. This made Falkenbergs FF interesting to interview to gain a perspective from a club relatively new to CSR activities and with a big impact in its local area.

#### **4.7.4 Case 4 – BK Häcken**

Multiple elite clubs in football currently reside in Gothenburg but according to the last season's standings BK Häcken is the top club. Located on Hisingen, BK Häcken play home games at Bravida Arena, which was completed as recently as 2015. BK Häcken are more famous for foreign football supporters as the organizer of the Gothia Cup compared to their achievements on the pitch. The Gothia Cup, the world's largest youth tournament, hosts 1700 teams from 80 different countries each year (BK Häcken, 2018).

The main reason for approaching BK Häcken for this thesis, is that the club organises the Gothia Cup, world's largest youth football tournament. This would provide a perspective of what it is like organising a tournament of this size. Moreover, BK Häcken significant growth over the last few years made it interesting to understand if the influencing factors have changed during this growth.

#### **4.7.5 Case 5 – Frölunda Indians**

Frölunda Indians are an ice hockey club from Gothenburg currently playing in SHL. They won the championship as recently as the season 2015/2016 and the Champions Hockey League was also won 2016 and 2017. Frölunda Indians are currently West Sweden's only professional hockey club in the top divisions and their current slogan is "Vi ger oss aldrig!" Frölunda Indians have been a power factor in Swedish ice-hockey for many years and being the sole professional club in West Sweden means they can attract the majority of sponsors around Gothenburg (Frölunda Indians, 2018).

The main reason the authors approached Frölunda Indians for an interview on their CSR project were the amount of stakeholders involved in the club, but also that they are the main ice-hockey club in West Sweden giving them a major opportunity to engage in CSR. According to their website, they named their CSR program “Gemenskapen” and there are nine active CSR projects right now “Hockeyskolan, Lek-Is, Gemenskapens läktare, Regionsnätverket, Frit-Is, Sommarhockeykola, Hockeyakademin, Skridsko för nyanlända and Hockeygymnasiet”. This program has 19 partners who mainly supports the projects (Frölunda Indians, 2018).

#### **4.7.6 Comparison of the Cases**

There are several similarities between the selected organisations, simply by examining the justifications for the selected cases. The cases fulfil the justification of 1) Active team in the tiers decided relevant by the authors. 2) Active in the relevant sports (Ice-hockey and Football). 3) Membership-owned.

The cases were carefully selected predicting similar results over the cases since comparisons would be drawn (Yin, 2003). All the cases history illustrates successful years in the top tier, however, one team differentiates right now since Falkenbergs FF are playing in the second highest tier (Superettan). Moreover, several of the teams have recently won their respective leagues leading to average attendances over 5000 at home games, but also more sponsors associating with the team. The sports organisations were also similar in regards to market share in the local area where the selected sport organisations often were the largest associations in the local region. The successful years and market share in the local areas, has increased the impact the chosen sports organisations have on society. Yet the marketing element differed a lot between the sports organisations. Three of five sports organisations had a clear and easy accessible link to their active CSR program. Implying they had a clear marketing strategy for their CSR activities. Lastly, all of the sports organisations have active youth operations, but BK Häcken differentiates due to the magnitude of Gothia Cup, the world's biggest youth tournament, attracting around 1700 youth teams.

## 4.8 The Interviews

Interviews are a method for collecting data where the interviewee is given questions, to find out why they act in a certain way, there are three types, unstructured, structured and semi-structured (Collis & Hussey, 2013). Semi-structured interviews provide the subject possibilities to expand their answers on the topic and give the interviewers possibilities to develop questions during the interview. Semi-structured interviews are based on a few starting questions (See Appendix 3) and it differentiates to a completely structured interview where all questions are pre-determined (Collis & Hussey, 2013). Since the authors of this thesis, aimed at creating open and flourishing discussions, semi-structured interviews were justified as the best approach.

The aim of the research was to investigate how and especially why sports organisations implement CSR activities into their strategies, to find this relationship semi-structured interviews with sports executives were conducted. More specifically, the individuals chosen for the interviews were responsible for the organisations CSR or sustainability programmes. So, the choice of interviewees was based on the worker's familiarity and responsibilities in relation to their CSR program, the reason behind this decision was to make sure that trustworthiness and knowledge were secured. Further, it will lead to evidence that identifies what influences them in their decision-making i.e. how they implement CSR into their strategies. By interviewing these specific people via a semi-structured approach, the hope was to get in-depth answers indicating how and why membership-owned sports organisations work with CSR, and what influences them to implement CSR programmes. The interviews were conducted within a timeframe of one month, the reason was time management reasons due to the beginning of the football season and ending of the hockey season. Three of the five interviews lasted for around one hour (IF Elfsborg, HV71, and Falkenbergs FF), while Frölunda Indians was finished in half an hour. All the interviews were structured and conducted in a similar way, however, Hans Svensson in Frölunda Indians was considered to be more prepared and experienced when it comes to responding to interviews.



*Table 1 Interview Times and Respondents*

<b>Cases selected</b>	<b>Respondent and position</b>
<b>IF Elfsborg</b> <b>Interview time: 55:42</b> <b>Date: 16<sup>th</sup> of March</b>	<b>Jan Ryrlén, Operations Manager of Vi Tillsammans</b>
<b>HV71</b> <b>Interview time: 59:59</b> <b>Date: 19<sup>th</sup> of March</b>	<b>Linda Brevitz, Public/Supporter responsible</b>
<b>Falkenbergs FF</b> <b>Interview time: 59:09</b> <b>Date: 18<sup>th</sup> of April</b>	<b>David Svensson, CSR responsible</b>
<b>BK Häcken</b> <b>Interview time: 40:04</b> <b>Date: 18<sup>th</sup> of April</b>	<b>Martin Ericsson, Event coordinator</b>
<b>Frölunda Indians</b> <b>Interview time: 29:35</b> <b>Date: 19<sup>th</sup> of April</b>	<b>Hans Svensson, Business Development Manager</b>

## **4.9 Data Analysis**

Saunders et al., (2011) highlight several analysis approaches to qualitative research data. They are: thematic analysis, template analysis, grounded theory analysis, cross-case analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis and narrative analysis. The authors of this thesis argue that the cross-case analysis method was the most appropriate approach, and it will be justified in the following paragraph.

#### **4.9.1 Cross-Case Analysis**

The main idea behind a cross-case analysis is to become familiar with each case to analyse it in a good manner. More specifically information in each individual case should be well understood by the researchers (Eisenhardt, 1989). The process of analysing different cases will include the emerging of unique patterns of each case before proceeding to generalization. Eisenhardt (1989) believes that investigators familiarity with each case will make the cross-case comparison smoother. The development of patterns for the cases became obvious when listening to the audio recording of the cases and summarising the main parts in the interviews, establishing similarities and differences.

The cross-case analysis started in some occasions immediately after the interviews were the authors of this thesis matched and established contrasts between all the cases based on the literature review. Eisenhardt (1989) argue that a tactic for conducting a good cross-case analysis would be to select categories. Selected categories in this thesis were influential factors (Consumer expectations, financial opportunities, community and sponsors, legal, match with organisations goal/mission, brand image & reputation). Another tactic used in line with Eisenhardt (1989) recommendations was the pairing of the cases, there were, for instance, several similarities between Frölunda Indians and IF Elfsborg since both of them offered a partnership to their sponsors, not vice versa. In conclusion these different tactics used when analysing the interviews was undertaken with the ambition to go beyond initial impressions, which is in line with Eisenhardt (1989) recommendations.

#### **4.9.2 Quality of Research**

The usage of interpreting questions such as “Do you mean that this is one of the major factors to why you implement CSR activities?” which were highlighted by Bryman and Bell, (2015), were asked in order to secure trustworthiness and identical interpretations of the respondent’s answers. This is related to the concept “grasping the meaning of others” (p.205), which Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010) identifies. Furthermore, a similar understanding considering the findings from the interviews was ensured via the analysis and discussion between the researchers directly after the interviews were conducted. This activity was practiced to ensure that the findings were reliable and interpreted similarly.

Case studies are most commonly analysed through identification of similarities and differences, which the researchers of this thesis aim to obtain. The aspects flexibility and interpretation are related to descriptive research (Ghuri & Grønhaug, 2010) and it provides researchers with opportunities to be more adaptable. Furthermore, the fact that all the interviews were audio recorded secures the trustworthiness in relation to interpretation, because it means that challenges such as taking notes at the same time as keeping a flourishing discussion will be avoided. Quality of the research data is guaranteed if three criteria are fulfilled: reliability, replication, and validity (Bryman & Bell, 2015). These three criteria are more related to quantitative studies, however, it is argued that researchers have to take them into account during qualitative studies too (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Reliability refers to the fact that the results can be repeated without any differences (Bryman & Bell, 2015). So, for example, a thesis would be considered reliable if the results can be repeated accurately by an external observer. This was guaranteed because the respondents felt comfortable to express their honest ideas and reasoning behind their implementation of CSR, since the interviews were arranged in the interviewees' natural setting. Justifying that an external observer can repeat this study was further secured through the deep descriptions of all the cases.

The second criteria of quality, replicability means others should be able to repeat the research and test whether the findings in a specific research are trustworthy (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This procedure of testing is something every research paper should be open for, which means the study has to be capable of replication (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Therefore, all the procedures and justifications must be clearly stated throughout the study.

Bryman and Bell (2015) highlight the last and probably most important criteria is validity. Ghuri and Grønhaug (2010) identify four different types of validity: descriptive, interpretative, theoretical and generalizable and they refer to different questions that should be answered when analysing the research data. Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2015) identify four different sorts of validity and they were namely: Measurement, internal, external and ecological validity. The first three validities are more related to quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015) therefore, only the ecological validity will be justified. The ecological validity emphasizes that comfortability and as little research

related factors should be involved in the data collection. The researchers of this thesis have therefore conducted the interviews in a manner dissimilar to research conducted interviews.

### **4.9.3 Research Ethics**

Ethics in research refers to the rights of the respondents versus researchers' behaviour (Saunders., et al, 2011). Ethics has over the years developed to be a principle and value that influences the researchers' behaviour, leading to a demand for an understanding of ethics, which cannot be ignored during research activities (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). The researchers' aim was to produce a credible and valid thesis, with that said several policies have been agreed upon since it is argued that trustworthiness is not achieved until one can prove the credibility (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). As Saunders et al., (2011) highlights, several ethical issues arise when entering different stages of a research project and they were taken into consideration and carefully answered throughout the process of this research paper. Privacy of participants and the voluntary nature of participation are two ethical factors that often are harmed during research interviews (Saunders et al., 2011). This was secured via two procedures. The respondents had the opportunity to schedule the interviews when suitable and decide whether they wanted to be anonymous or not in the paper. Maintenance of confidentiality (Saunders et al., 2011) was guaranteed since the researchers emphasized on honesty and trust during the interviews. Honesty and trustworthiness implied that the respondents felt more open to talk freely. Finally, objectivity (Saunders et al., 2011) was achieved throughout the process of data collection, because the questions asked during the interviews were not suggestive. In addition, all the questions were open for elaboration and the researchers avoided responses in a manner exposing judgements around the answers.

## 5. Empirical Findings

*The following chapter describes the most relevant findings in regard to the theoretical framework and research question. The structure follows an individual case presentation to make the most important findings from each case clearer.*

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### 5.1 Introduction

Our empirical findings point towards that Swedish membership-owned sports organisations are influenced and driven by internal factors in the adoption of CSR activities. As indicated in **Table 2** all clubs state brand image as the primary internal factor for engaging in CSR. The respondents also discussed that brand image is two-fold, since clubs engage in CSR because they have a strong brand but also the potential improvements to their brand image. Looking at external pressures, several clubs discussed community and sponsors are influencers in CSR activities, but the main factors were still argued to be internal.

*Table 2 Factors Influencing the Adoption of CSR*

Case Study	Main internal factors influencing?	Main external factors influencing?
IF Elfsborg	Brand Image, Reputation	Not influenced by external forces
HV71	Brand Image, Reputation	Community and Sponsors, Financial
Falkenbergs FF	Brand Image, Match with mission	Community and Sponsor
BK Häcken	Brand Image, Reputation, Match with mission	Community and Sponsors
Frölunda Indians	Brand Image	Not influenced by external forces

## 5.2 Case 1 – IF Elfsborg

### **IF Elfsborg Current CSR Activities**

Jan Ryrlén started the interview by stating: “*We began back in 2009*” and “*The club has never been in it for the money*”. This illustrates IF Elfsborg were one of the ground-breakers in CSR and sports in Sweden, being one of the first to devote a full-time employee towards CSR. Further, with respect to the economic situation IF Elfsborg are not and have never been profitable through their CSR activities. Instead of monetary results Jan emphasizes other intangible results such that he and IF Elfsborg have been nominated to European football development network (EFDN).

Throughout the interview with Jan Ryrlén it was established IF Elfsborg are mainly engaged in local community-orientated operation named Vi Tillsammans and with several sub-projects, such as Jobb Tillsammans and Framtid Tillsammans. These projects are mainly conducted in cooperation with the municipality (Borås Stad) aiming at helping people outside society such as long-term unemployed, struggling teenagers and recovering drug addicts. Proving the importance of Jobb Tillsammans in helping long-term unemployed Jan stated:

*“We have somewhere between 20-40 people each year we send back to the workforce.”*

This proves the important role IF Elfsborg has in the municipality of Borås acting as an intermediary between Borås Stad and IF Elfsborg sponsors, in the project Jobb Tillsammans. With respect to the environmental pillar of CSR, Jan acknowledges that in the future there will be higher demands on environmental issues but currently:

*“The environmental aspect is difficult for us, it has been discussed, and Borås Arena is owned by Borås Arena AB, which is fully owned by IF Elfsborg, but it is rented out to Borås Stad, who handle the daily operation.”*

### **Factors Influencing Adoption of CSR**

Jan argues the main internal factors influencing IF Elfsborg to engage in CSR activities are brand image and reputation.

*“I actually believe, if I’m going to be completely honest that there exist no bigger brand in Västergötland than IF Elfsborg.”*

With respect to IF Elfsborg strong regional brand he believes the club have a major opportunity to influence other organisations to engage in CSR through their project Jobb Tillsammans.

*“The biggest opportunity with our brand image is that we can open doors which maybe nobody else can.”*

Indicating the club see themselves as an intermediary connecting organisations and people through CSR.

Jan strongly argue that IF Elfsborg are driven solely by internal reasons, but he acknowledges that today sports organisations feel external pressure from sponsors and communities. It implies that the organisations need to engage in CSR, otherwise they risk losing sponsors which could be devastating for a sports organisation dependent on their incentives from partners. The main reason that IF Elfsborg feel no pressure from external parties are because their CSR activities are advanced and well integrated in the organisation, because they have been engaged in CSR activities for so long, the pressures from sponsors or other external influencing factors does not exist, but rather IF Elfsborg have always been driven through internal reasons. This can be seen through Jan statements:

*“From the beginning it was solely internal reasons, we saw the opportunities we have and we do not only want to be seen as a football team but an organisations caring for the community.”*

and

*“The external pressure did not exist when we began, nobody demanded we should work with CSR when we began.”*

Furthermore, a match with the clubs mission was not explicitly described, however Jan argues that dedication is crucial and meaning that the sports organisation has to be passionate for the same factors as the ones targeted in the CSR activities, as seen through this quote:

*“You have to be dedicated and burn for these questions, you cannot do this casually.”*

### 5.3 Case 2 – HV71

#### **HV71 Current CSR Activities**

Linda Brevitz described that HV71 have been active within CSR projects since 2014. Today main focus lies in community-oriented CSR activities, with children and families as main focus group, especially those in bad economic situation with no opportunities to attend ice-hockey games. Linda states that:

*“The tickets go primarily to children and youth in bad situation, but also adult with illnesses and addictions.”*

These activities are primarily seen in their projects *Den Sjunde Spelaren* and *Min Första HV-Match* aiming at helping families and children in bad economic situation attend games through handing out free tickets. Moreover, HV71 close collaboration with the municipality (Jönköping Kommun) and sponsors leads to coverage of the ticket costs as Linda discusses in our interview:

*“Min Första HV-Match, is the greatest CSR project run by us, and it involves 70 operation in 16 municipality who get access to 5500 tickets per season”*

and

*“in this project we have roughly 80 sponsors, who cover parts of the ticket costs.”*

*Den Sjunde Spelaren* on the other hand, collaborates with seven local high schools with the main goal of *“Filling up the standing section and retaining the supporter culture”* but Linda argues this projects gives youths the opportunity to do something important during their spare time.

The environmental aspects of CSR was discussed and Linda argued that HV71 are not able to affect the environmental standards in their facilities, because of a complex ownership structure. Although they consider the impact and strive to encourage people to travel by public transports *“To and after the games we have the hockey busses for the audience”* but for the facilities it is hard because *“We own the rink, but rent it through the municipality.”*



## **Factors Influencing Adoption of CSR**

Linda argued that one main goal with the adoption of CSR was to enhance their supporter culture. This implies that they want more people to join their standing section, to establish a welcoming and open culture including everyone. People should feel included in their organisations culture since she mentioned that they have the *“desire to give the troubled kids and youth”* a valuable activity to engage in. Furthermore, Linda sees potential in helping youths to find role-models in the HV71 players and the sole ambition with their CSR activities is to provide them with important activities during their spare-time. Therefore, the factors influencing their work are rooted internally, where HV71 and Linda argued that their well-recognized brand and reputation in the local area are two big influencers.

Linda felt that the gains from CSR activities could be more since she believes that their marketing is really poor and external stakeholders’ experiences a hard time finding evidence behind their CSR activities:

*“We are really bad at paying attention to what we actually contribute to the community, in reality we rarely talk about it.”* and *“We are designing a new marketing brochure, with all our CSR projects. And beforehand it probably was not updated for four years.”*

However, Linda mentioned that there is external pressure which can be related to the fact HV71 are relatively new in CSR activities:

*“Our partners are starting to state in the deals that they want CSR projects.”*

and

*“They want to contribute through their sponsorship in HV71.”*

Linda argued that there has been a huge increase considering the partnership, hence the external parties influencing their CSR activities are more today compared to 2014:

*“At the beginning we had 28 external partners”*

and

*“Today we have over 70 external partners, who are active in 16 municipalities which receive around 5500 tickets each season.”*

Linda discussed the increase external pressure from partners but also highlighted this pressure mainly took place in form of discussion rather than precise demands. Moreover, Linda pointed out that HV71 are mostly motivated by internal factors, namely the possibility to use their brand and reputation but also that today there is an external pressure to engage in CSR activities from sponsors and partners adding mandatory CSR activities in deals with HV71.

## 5.4 Case 3 – Falkenbergs FF

### **Falkenbergs FF Current CSR Activities**

Falkenbergs FF are mainly engaged in CSR activities relating to aiding immigrants and youths with the main goal of becoming “*The entire Falkenbergs association*”. The first highlighted CSR activity involved a full day of football where Falkenbergs FF players participated in a friendly match. Falkenbergs FF have just recently started structuring and planning their CSR activities, as well as appointing David Svensson as responsible for CSR. The first big initiative was undertaken before the season 2017 was started, and it involved the recruitment of volunteers to the home games at Falcon Alkoholfri Arena. David Svensson mentioned that the goal of this project is to provide the volunteers with opportunities to do something worthwhile during their spare time. Even though they are currently in a planning stage their vision is to become:

*“The entire Falkenbergs association.”*

Because Falkenbergs FF have just recently began with CSR activities the club are still in the planning stage, implying a lack of experience. This stage involves scanning of the local sports associations CSR projects, expectations from stakeholders and competitive sports organisations’ CSR projects, to create a picture of the current situation. David Svensson believed that

*“one should not invent the wheel a second time, but instead learn from others.”*

With respect to the environmental side of CSR, Falkenbergs FF logic follows the other respondents. The facilities are owned by the municipalities hindering Falkenbergs FF for engaging in major environmental operations, but Falkenbergs FF argues that much can

be achieved through environmental projects. They are not actively working towards becoming a more environmentally friendly organisation, but the workers are taught to consider it in their everyday activities.

### **Factors Influencing Adoption of CSR**

*“An association in its whole is one form of CSR, since one has children and youths in the operation, a meaningful spare time, health aspects and other related activities, many voluntary energies. It means a lot socially to be part of an association either as an active or voluntary, so in that way I believe that it can be considered as CSR only by existing as an association.”*

David Svensson argues that every present sports organisation should be identified as a CSR project, the same goes for Falkenbergs FF. David believes an elite sports organisation affects many people and corporations in the society, so by only existing in higher divisions in football one will be active within CSR. David believes through Falkenbergs FF reputation and brand a potential exists to grant people, with the opportunity to learn how a sports club works, with all its procedures and activities outside the field. Furthermore, David sees opportunities to operate in different ways compared to traditional firms. The current CSR work involves the research activity because David argues there already exists other organisations both locally and around the country, who works in a good way with CSR. This was mentioned on several occasions by David, because Falkenbergs FF are relatively late on CSR

*“One should not invent the wheel a second time, but instead learn from others.”*

Therefore, Falkenbergs FF are influenced by these external and already existing CSR operators. Moreover, Falkenbergs FF are also closely connected to IF Elfsborg and David sees IF Elfsborg as a club inspiring them to work more actively with CSR. There is no outspoken demand from external stakeholders, such as sponsors or the municipal, to implement CSR activities.

*“There is a greater expectation and demand externally today compared to before, maybe a couple of years ago. The community, sponsors, municipality, organisations and the public that one should do more.”*

However, David believes that sponsors and locals insert a substantial pressure on the organisation and that some sponsors have the capability of including CSR activities in their expectations on the club. The marketing was illustrated as one way to make the brand grow stronger, he says that *“if you are not visible, you do not exist”*, furthermore, it would also connect more people with the club. David argues though this is not a major reason, but he hopes that people will feel proud by being connected with Falkenbergs FF, not only for their results on the field but also for their activities in society.

There has always been a presence of CSR activities, but never in an active way. The major changes for Falkenbergs FF is related to the external pressure that has grown over the years, leading to the appointment of David Svensson as responsible for their CSR activities. David believes that sponsors focuses more on the CSR activities today compared to 15-20 years back.

## **5.5 Case 4 – BK Häcken**

### **BK Häcken Current CSR Activities**

Martin Ericsson highlights that:

*“The operations is very complex, since we have both BK Häcken and Gothia Cup, and which very few elite clubs have today a youth section, which is also a part of our CSR.”*

This indicates several of BK Häcken CSR activities are operated through Gothia cup, creating a complex situation with several challenges for the organisations. These challenges encompass how the organisation can expand beyond Gothia Cup which run one week on a yearly basis, but also how to integrate Gothia Cup in the daily operations. As Martin states:

*“Since we have Gothia Cup, which is a major operation, has led to lesser resources for an agenda of CSR in BK Häcken.”*

Currently, a challenge for BK Häcken CSR activities is

*“To find a good network you can trust. There is so many who want something.”* At the moment BK Häcken *“interacting with other clubs on Hisingen”* but also *“work daily with the youth operations and the municipality.”*

For example BK Häcken and the municipality (Gothenburg) arrange an event called “Friday Football” where they invited kids and youth to play football in an indoor hall. Martin believes BK Häcken and other clubs around Gothenburg have a responsibility to keep youth off the streets. BK Häcken extensively network to find partners interested in cooperating around CSR activities instead of compete against each other. This networking follows the clubs vision to become *“Hela Hisingens Lag.”*

With respect to the environment just as most Swedish sports organisations the municipality owns and runs the daily operations of the stadium which hinders BK Häcken from engaging in major environmental projects, but Martin points out that

*“With regards to the environmental aspects, we engage roughly the same amount as the rest. Of course there is an acknowledgement, but no active environmental CSR. To engage fully in the environmental CSR is not possible due to resources.”*

Moreover *“There are so many other parameters to focus on right now.”*

BK Häcken instead focus on health and diets for youths *“There are things everywhere, but we try to tie it to football and activity.”* This implies the organisations are trying to connect all activities with their core values.

### **Factors Influencing Adoption of CSR**

Martin highlighted several influencing factors to adopt CSR, the two main factors was external partners and BK Häcken own brand. He believes that local businesses, sponsors and partners put pressure on BK Häcken to actively work with CSR and this pressure has its roots in the last few years of success, which BK Häcken has experienced. The organisations has grown significantly, leaving more stakeholders affected by their operations, but also attracted more sponsors and partners with substantial expectations.

*“We get several requests from many organisations and you try to assist, even though you are not super active. Instead you supporting an already existing event through players, marketing and competence.”*

Also connected to the development of BK Häcken, is the number of supporters at games and trainings who may not directly pressure BK Häcken, but the organisation feel part of their mission is to connect with them. Currently, Hisingen itself has people with several different nationalities, which is partly why BK Häcken use the slogan “Hela Hisingens Lag” to create a community. Martin states:

*“Reflected by the nationalities on Hisingen, but it is not a direct CSR activity”*

Moreover, in relation to the slogan “Hela Hisingens Lag”, the club work with the local youths and organisations. Further, he discussed that activities, such as, reaching out to local youths, are part of using and strengthening their brand. By engaging with people, the rumour about BK Häcken will spread and generate positive outcomes for both the youths and BK Häcken. But in essence the internal motivators play a significant purpose for BK Häcken to engage in CSR, more specifically the organisations see an opportunity in interactions with local clubs.

Furthermore, Martin discusses that the factors influencing BK Häcken has not changed over the years, but increased in quantity. He exemplified the sponsors and partners as two influencers who increased concurrently with BK Häcken growth in recent years.

*“Today, people want to work less in projects and more long-term, and the municipalities have a demand for it.”*

## **5.6 Case 5 – Frölunda Indians**

### **Frölunda Indians Current CSR Activities**

Frölunda Indians began working actively and structured with CSR in 2015, with today’s projects being “Åttans Spårvagn”, Movember, “Gemenskapens Läktare”, Frit-Is to name a few. Hans Svensson, describes that their current CSR activities focus on children with the first active project “Åttans Spårvagn” focusing on children, especially those who have never been in touch with an ice-sport before. “Gemenskapens läktare” follows this logic by inviting children and collecting children from the entire Gothenburg to watch their first games. The third major project involving children is “Frit-Is” intended for children in the age 10-12 and the goal is to teach them how to skate. All these projects focus on

children from various ages and location in Gothenburg following Frölunda Indians current state of CSR were

*“99 percent of our projects are socially focused.”*

Other CSR projects occur during Christmas time the players visit Drottning Silvias hospital in Gothenburg and hand out gifts to children and provide the hospital with equipment needed, this is an initiative from the players. During November when the players are involved in Movember, which is a foundation collecting money to benefit the research on prostate cancer.

In relation to the environment, Hans argued that there is not a lot of room for bigger projects. The reasons is similar to earlier interviewees since the municipality owns their facilities and all related operations. However, Hans mentioned

*“The big environmental effect will begin when they start the construction here in the city, Västlänken. It will affect the co-workers and supporters and we will then promote the usage of public transportation.”*

The development for Frölunda Indians in relation to CSR comes with the more structured way of operating, they narrowed down their activities in their business plan, so that they can attract new sponsors and partners.

*“That is when it has started for real, it has become a clear program which we have been guided from.”*

### **Factors Influencing Adoption of CSR**

One major factor to adopt CSR, according to Hans Svensson, is the opportunity to affect the children's opinions and interests. He emphasizes on the importance that everyone has something meaningful to do after school, in order to avoid falling outside the community and argues that Frölunda Indians has an important role to fill via their brand. He says that *“the world is in front of you and you can choose which way to go.”* The route youngsters choose is something Frölunda Indians are eager to influence through their brand and the availability Frölunda Indians offer to them was exemplified as a good alternative, according to Hans. To teach the youth and children how an association works was also mentioned as crucial for Frölunda Indians. Their brand was not as strong before the

establishment of their CSR projects as it is today, since they were not familiar in the suburban areas. However they have seen results that their brand image has been more recognizable because of their CSR activities, hence making it a reason for them to continue these projects.

A second type of brand that was mentioned by Hans was the players' brand. He believes that the usage of their professional players in different CSR activities will enhance their brand and make them more familiar outside the rink. Hans argues that the players benefit from being visible outside the rink and they increase their opportunities when it comes to enhancing their value.

Frölunda Indians also have a close collaboration with local clubs, but Hans mentioned they were not influenced by them in a significant manner. Similarly with respect to external pressure Frölunda Indians has not identified any significant pressure from sponsors or the community, rather conversely:

*“We are the ones visiting the companies, telling them what Gemenskapen is about, what programs we have and how they are beneficial for the society, today we notice that more and more of the companies include it on their agenda, that they want to do good for the society but they do not know how they can do it, and one way to help them is to include them in our program.”*

So, Frölunda Indians act as an intermediary by introducing their partners to relevant projects, and since many partners have been identified and actively act as partners in projects this means a lot for Frölunda Indians when negotiating with partners. Their close partnership with the schools around Gothenburg was also acknowledged as a factor that could encourage partners to be a part of the CSR projects.



## 6. Analysis

*In this section the empirical findings will be analysed on the basis of the previous literature and the theoretical frameworks. The analysis will be split up in to sections following the structure from the empirical finding to facilitate a creative and understandable analysis.*

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### 6.1 Membership-Owned Sports Organisations CSR Work

*Table 3: CSR Focus*

Case Study	CSR Focus
IF Elfsborg	Unemployed, Communities, Schools
HV71	Youth, Unemployed, Schools
Falkenbergs FF	Unemployed, Immigrants, Schools
BK Häcken	Youth, Schools
Frölunda Indians	Youth, Communities, Immigrants, Schools

When analysing the data several indications were established showing a relationship in CSR activities, shown in **Table 3**. The findings demonstrate that all the sports organisations work with the social aspect of CSR, and focus of the activities is aimed towards benefitting the local citizens and stakeholders.

The results from the conducted interviews contradict the findings in the previous literature in CSR. Through previous research, it is evident that several definitions of CSR exist which should lead to various interpretations by practitioners. However, the collected data in this thesis contradicts earlier researchers' findings since the Swedish membership-owned sports organisations have a similar focus with regard to CSR. A potential reason Swedish sports organisations focus on the social aspect of CSR can be related to the ownership of the organisations facilities. Since all of the sports organisations (except HV71) facilities are owned by the municipality, this restricts the organisations from engaging in major environmental CSR activities at the facilities.

*Table 4: The main Findings in the Cases*

<b>Case Study</b>	<b>Type of CSR?</b>	<b>Main internal factors influencing?</b>	<b>Main external factors influencing?</b>
<b>IF Elfsborg</b>	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Brand Image, Reputation</b>	<b>Not influenced by external forces</b>
<b>HV71</b>	<b>Corporate - Centric</b>	<b>Brand Image, Reputation</b>	<b>Community and Sponsors, Financial</b>
<b>Falkenbergs FF</b>	<b>Stakeholder - Centric</b>	<b>Brand Image, Match with mission</b>	<b>Community and Sponsor, Financial</b>
<b>BK Häcken</b>	<b>Corporate - Centric</b>	<b>Brand Image, Reputation, Match with mission</b>	<b>Community and Sponsors</b>
<b>Frölunda Indians</b>	<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Brand Image</b>	<b>Not influenced by external forces</b>

## **6.2 Internal Factors**

### **Brand Image and Reputation**

Two closely related factors both in the literature and in reality are brand image and reputation and both these factors were found to be the major influencing factors in Frölunda Indians, IF Elfsborg and HV71 respective CSR activities. All three teams share the convenience of being the major team in respective region (in their sport), leading management to find an advantage in using the strength of their respective brand and reputation in their CSR activities. Relating this to Barney findings (1991, 1995) it can be concluded Frölunda Indians, IF Elfsborg and HV71 brands are valuable, rare and imitable. Their strong local presence gives them major opportunities to tailor CSR activities through their brand, yielding competitive advantages.

Another type of brand discussed by Frölunda Indians was the players' brand, which was frequently used at events and initiatives. From a sports perspective, player brand can be considered valuable, rare and inimitable to respective sports organisations. Moreover, Frölunda Indians argued player brand can yield unique opportunities to capture advantages through CSR.

Brand image and reputation influencing the adoption of CSR activities was also discussed by McWilliams et al., (2006) and Fombrun et al., (2000) with the argument that CSR can be a strategic investment and tool for reputation building. Looking at the interviews it was found that Frölunda Indians and IF Elfsborg use CSR activities because of their strong brand and reputation but also to increase their brand awareness in the region, IF Elfsborg also highlighted that their reputation can act as door-opener for social projects, which can be seen as a strategic investment for brand and reputation building in the region (McWilliams et al, 2006; Fombrun et al, 2000)

HV71 differ from Frölunda Indians and IF Elfsborg because their ultimate goal and motivation to engage in CSR activities is to attain more fans and increase the supporter culture in the club, which will increase the long-term financial performance. This corresponds well with the literature by Orlitzky et al., (2003) and Tsoutsoura (2003) among others who argue that CSR initiatives and activities can increase the long-term financial performance. Based on this, a conclusion can be drawn that HV71 are using their brand and reputation in CSR activities to increase their long-term revenue and profit while creating a livelier supporter culture.

Based on the similarity between Frölunda Indians and IF Elfsborg, both would according to Babiak and Wolfe (2009), be classified as strategic-CSR since both organisations are influenced primarily by internal factors (**See Table 4**). Connecting this to Barney (1991), the clubs are engaged in strategic-CSR because they are leveraging their brand and reputation extensively while devoting themselves to CSR.

### **Match With Club Mission**

Currently, BK Häcken has the ambition to become “Hela Hisingens Lag” while Falkenbergs FF ambition is “Hela Falkenbergs förening”. So, although brand and reputation influence the decision-making process for Falkenbergs FF and BK Häcken, they illustrate a different influencing factor to adopt CSR into their operations, namely the match with the clubs mission. This implies a similar mind-set striving to become a club for all and in the literature Becker-Olsen et al., (2006) and Sheth and Babiak (2009) identifies that a match between clubs mission and their CSR activities is crucial, in order to make it beneficial for the organisation, and looking at BK Häcken work it can be seen they are creating an opportunity for themselves and local clubs to reach new youth members.

Jan Ryrlén from IF Elfsborg said that “*You have to be dedicated and burn for these questions, you cannot do this casually*”. So although these factors were not explicitly mentioned by the other respondents as a major influencing factor, there still needs to be a connection among the CSR activities and the internal orientation as discussed by Becker-Olsen et al., (2006) and Sheth and Babiak (2009).

### **Legal Implications**

The results indicated the legal aspect did not influence sports organisations to engage in CSR, but rather the legal implications worked as a foundation for the sports organisations. We draw the conclusion that sports organisations work beyond the required law with their CSR projects, hence the legal requirements are not acting as influencing factors in their work. Following the literature, by Carroll (1991) it is argued that organisations need to be profitable and obey the law before they can consider engaging in ethical and philanthropic activities and the arguments by Matten and Moan (2008) and McWilliams and Siegel (2001) on how to increase social welfare beyond legal requirements are similar. In conclusion, the findings from the literature review where the law was highlighted as a potential influencer contravene the findings.

## 6.3 External Factors

### Community and Sponsors

Frölunda Indians and IF Elfsborg illustrate a close cooperation with stakeholders such as sponsors, partners, the municipality and local clubs. This was discussed by Plewa and Quester (2011) and Cousen and Slack (1996) through community-minded sponsors. Although there was a close collaboration with sponsors and partners neither of the mentioned organisations have felt any pressure to engage in CSR activities, conversely they have asked relevant stakeholders whether they wanted to participate in CSR activities. Hence, attracting community-minded sponsors (Plewa & Quester, 2011; Cousen and Slack; 1996) and community leaders (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011) to networks tailored specifically on CSR activities. Moreover, the importance of maintaining relationships with stakeholders (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009) was seen in the actions of several clubs. BK Häcken, Frölunda Indians and IF Elfsborg illustrate a great part of their CSR activities involved networking with relevant stakeholders in Gothenburg area. This follows the literature in sports management and CSR (Giulianotti, 2015; Anagnostopoulos et al., 2014; Levermore & Moore, 2015), who encourages a stakeholder perspective when engaging in CSR.

Contrarily, there were clear indications Falkenbergs FF and BK Häcken feel pressure from their sponsors and partners to use CSR activities in a more strategic and planned approach. This can be explained by community-minded sponsors, discussed by Plewa and Quester (2011) and Cousen and Slack (1996) wherein community-minded sponsors identify an opportunity to use Falkenbergs FF brand and reputation in CSR activities by pressuring them to engage in certain activities. While in BK Häcken case the increased pressure from sponsors and partners can be connected to CSR initiatives through the Gothia Cup. By using Gothia Cup, sponsors can reach a wider scope and thereby enhance their brand and reputation. On the other hand, HV71 discussed a completely different view compared to Plewa and Quester (2011) and Cousen and Slack (1996) findings since they argued that community-minded sponsors have disappeared and today larger firms arrange sponsorship deals from established headquarters in bigger cities.

Connecting the similarities between BK Häcken and HV71, both would be categorized as Corporate-Centric CSR in Babiak and Wolfe (2009) framework (See **Table 4 and Appendix 2**). As mentioned in the above discussion, the reason both organisations are engaged in Corporate-Centric CSR is that there exists an external pressure to engage in CSR. Babiak and Wolfe (2009) argue that a synergy between core business activities and CSR is present, this is illustrated in both cases (BK Häcken & HV71). Currently, BK Häcken builds their CSR program around their core business activities, the Gothia Cup, while HV71 ties their CSR activities to the matches, which is their core business activity. There still exists external pressure, in BK Häcken they will have to respond to the Gothia Cup visitors' expectations. HV71 is similar since their main focus is external parties who have demands too when visiting the matches.

Falkenbergs FF, on the hand, differ most in comparison to the other sports organisations. Falkenbergs FF would be considered engaging in Stakeholder-Centric CSR, where the external pressures are the main determinants for engaging in CSR. According to Bruch and Walter (2005), Stakeholder-Centric CSR initiatives will not sustain in the long run, as they are not based on Falkenbergs FF core competencies, but instead exist because of an external pressure. Looking at future directions for Falkenbergs FF, the organisations will have to move towards engaging in CSR due to their internal resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991) to achieve a competitive advantage.

### **Collaborations over borders**

An important factor, which was not covered in the literature but highlighted through the data collections was the cooperation with other clubs. Through the interviews, it was found that the majority of Swedish clubs cooperate with each other and two major collaborations were found among the interviewed clubs; Falkenbergs FF and IF Elfsborg; Frölunda Indians and BK Häcken. These co-operations can potentially influence the clubs more than they will admit as it leads to pressures in adopting and following other clubs. Currently, IF Elfsborg and Falkenbergs FF are involved in SEFs "CSR-råd" with the ambition to cooperate among clubs in the two leagues (Allsvenskan and Superettan). This cooperation was clarified when interviewing IF Elfsborg since they highlighted that sports organisations who make mistakes in relation to CSR will bring negativity and criticism to other sports organisations working with CSR. However, one author discussed

these co-operations and the reasoning behind them. Since Whitehouse (2006) findings illustrate that scandals can hit hard on other organisations more than the one responsible for the scandal, hence organisations should emphasize on co-operation and educate each other.

### **Process Development**

Looking at the development of CSR in the selected sports organisations, the reasoning and influencing factors have differentiated. This is mainly related to the starting point of respective CSR activities since different demands and pressures exist during time periods. As discussed by IF Elfsborg, sports organisations such as Falkenbergs FF will experience more pressure from community and sponsors due to the increasing pressure to act socially responsible today. On the other hand, when IF Elfsborg started to engage in CSR, there were no external pressures because during this time period sports organisations were not expected by society to engage in CSR. Moreover, the pressures from society can be seen in Falkenbergs FF activities which focus on immigrants, a debated topic in the Swedish society. Looking at BK Häcken the same experience can be found as the club has increased in size and therefore, increased interest and pressure from stakeholders.

## 7. Conclusion

*The conclusion and answers to the research question are presented in this chapter.*

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Throughout history, society has often highlighted firms' responsibilities in relation to their production and movement of products. Therefore, CSR is frequently used by business organisations as a response to the issues by improving the welfare of society through activities and programmes. In recent years sports organisations have joined traditional business organisations by engaging in CSR activities, however, so far most research on CSR and sports organisations has been conducted in the US. Most organisations in the US are privately owned where the club is often used as a facade by the owners, hence the authors of this thesis investigated why membership-owned sports organisations are engaging in CSR.

This lead to the research question;

*What factors influence membership-owned sports organisations to implement CSR activities in their strategies?*

This matter was investigated through a qualitative case study with interviews of Swedish sports organisations with the main objective discovering what factors influence the decision of sports organisations to engage in CSR. It was found that membership-owned sports organisations in Sweden are mainly influenced and driven by internal reasoning in their CSR activities. More specifically it was found that the brand and reputation are the main influencing factors to engage in CSR. This is a two-folded approach where they engage because they have a strong brand and reputation in the region, but are also eager to improve their brand and reputation among the municipalities. It was also found that external factors such as pressure from community and sponsors have a lesser extent in the influence of participation in CSR, but they are still present in the daily work. Looking at how the process has developed over the years it was found that pressure from external factors has grown significantly over the years and specifically, new sports organisations engaging in CSR will endure this pressure. To conclude, following Babiak and Wolfe (2009) research new sporting organisations will presumably engage in a stakeholder-centric CSR in comparison to the more historical strategic CSR.



## 8. Discussion

*Lastly, this chapter illustrates findings that the researchers have established via the empirical data. These findings were not considered to answer the research question, however too valuable to exclude from the study. The practical implications, limitations and future research topics are also discussed.*

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In the interviews the environmental aspect of CSR was discussed, however, all of the respondents argued that because the facilities were owned by the facilities it hindered the sports organisations from acting green and engaging in major environmental projects. From an outside perspective, this can be seen as a fair excuse, but it is still evident that environmental friendly activities can be conducted outside the arena and facility. For example, activities such as recycling and public transportation are opportunities independent of the facilities, and Falkenberg's FF was the only sports organisation who explicitly saw opportunities to engage in environmental projects. Overall, sports organisations could focus more on the environmental aspects of CSR, especially with the pressure stemming from today's globalized world and its effects on nature.

Furthermore, with respect to CSR activities, it was identified that the sports organisations are lacking in the marketing department. All of the respondents agreed there existed huge opportunities in using CSR for marketing activities, yet most of the sports organisations fail to capitalize fully on their CSR activities in their marketing channels. Presently, the marketing focus is mainly on the team and players, meaning the CSR activities are receiving less space in the marketing channels. Especially for those organisations who operate as the single major club in their region, the potential benefit from marketing activities is extensive because the competition is lower and their brand already established and well-recognized. Moreover, a potential gain from the marketing activities might be bigger engagement from others, hence a door-opener for other projects. We believe the development of different projects can be beneficial to the engaged people since there is currently only one or two people responsible for the conducted and established projects.

## **8.1 Practical Implications**

As illustrated through this study scholars cannot agree on one single definition of CSR, because of several interrelated concepts influencing the overall concept. However, by just studying empirical cases such as Swedish sports organisations it becomes clear there exists a universal agreement between the organisations. This implies an advantage for start-ups, who can seek guidance from more experienced organisation engaging in CSR. The drawback of a similar focus is the environmental side of CSR, which due to a lack of guidelines has been foreseen by the organisations. The environment was discussed by all respondents as a future challenge. Furthermore, due to the main focus being the social aspects it might be hard to compete with a different focus, such as the environment.

Moreover, during all the interviews the role as an intermediary for the sports organisations between stakeholders was highlighted. The sports organisations have major opportunities to work as a connector in the local regions, such as providing unique possibilities by matching unemployed with new workplaces. The authors of this thesis would encourage all municipalities, local business, and local clubs to develop networks and partner with top-tier sports organisations which, as discovered during this study, have unique opportunities with respect to CSR, not found in traditional industries. Practical evidence was shown since municipalities and governments could save money from collaborations with the sports organisations. The saving became a matter when sports organisations, for instance, helped unemployed reach workplaces.

## **8.2 Critical Review**

Since this thesis was limited to Sweden, our findings may differ in other countries with similar ownership structures, such as Germany which was frequently discussed with the respondents during the interviews. The authors acknowledge that these findings may differ to other countries since culture, history and political regulations, can be a changing factor this study. The thesis was also delimited towards two sports, ice hockey and football, meaning that similarities and differences between various sports might exist. The main focus for all organisations was the social aspect of CSR and by investigating sports organisations in other countries, one might find that the sports organisations explicitly

work with an environmental project because of a higher demand for this type of projects. The fact that all of the sports organisations interviewed in this thesis have little experience when it comes to CSR can potentially affect the results. In this thesis, the interviewed sports organisations are relatively new on working with CSR activities, and by examining their work with CSR, it was discovered that as demand from society changes so does the influencing factors.

We are also aware that the sampling size and the hand-picking of sports organisations might not be valid for an entire industry, therefore the findings should be considered as a base for future research.

### **8.3 Future Research**

Based on the findings in our thesis there are several different research routes which could be interesting to explore in future research. Since we conducted a qualitative study on a few selected sports organisations in Sweden the results may differ on a larger scale. Based on this it would be interesting to confirm or deny the results of the sports organisations industry with a quantitative study. Also taking into consideration our study was aimed at Swedish sports organisations where football and ice-hockey are the dominating sports the results may differ in other countries. So, a study looking at countries where other sports than football and ice-hockey are the main sports with the biggest impact on society would be interesting to determine if brand image and reputation as the main influencing factors are only present in Sweden.

In some cases, the sports organisations highlighted the lacked assets and capacity to investigate whether the sponsor's goal with CSR activities were in line with their mission. The respondents argued that sponsors might partner up with the sports organisations, because they lack CSR activities themselves. Based on this an interesting future research approach would be to assess if the sponsors CSR activities match the mission of the sports organisations CSR activities or if there exist a deviation. Closely related to this is the marketing aspect of CSR, this topic was highlighted by all respondents as an operation which they could improve. Since the sports organisations were bad at using their

marketing channels fully to market their CSR activities, it would be interesting to assess the impact of present CSR activities and how customers react to this through marketing.

Finally, since Swedish sports organisation are relatively inexperienced in CSR activities it would be interesting to examine how the organisations analyse their projects and determine which projects are successful and have a future compared to which projects have had a less impact on society.

All of the organisations cooperate with the community and locals on several different levels, especially with local clubs and schools where several activities are arranged. It is obvious in some cases that there is no pressure from these local parties, however a cooperation signals that all parties had a say in the deals and activities.

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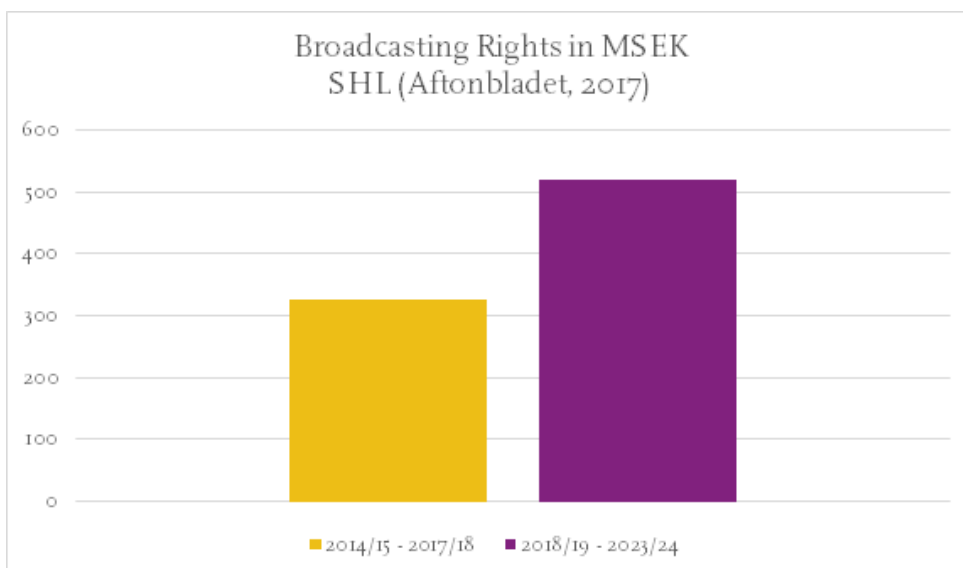
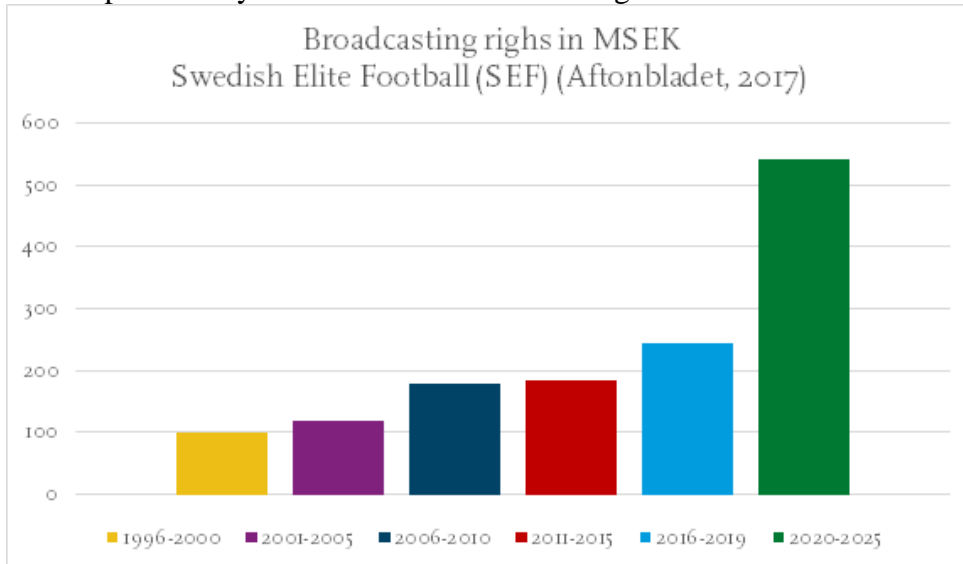
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## 10. Appendices

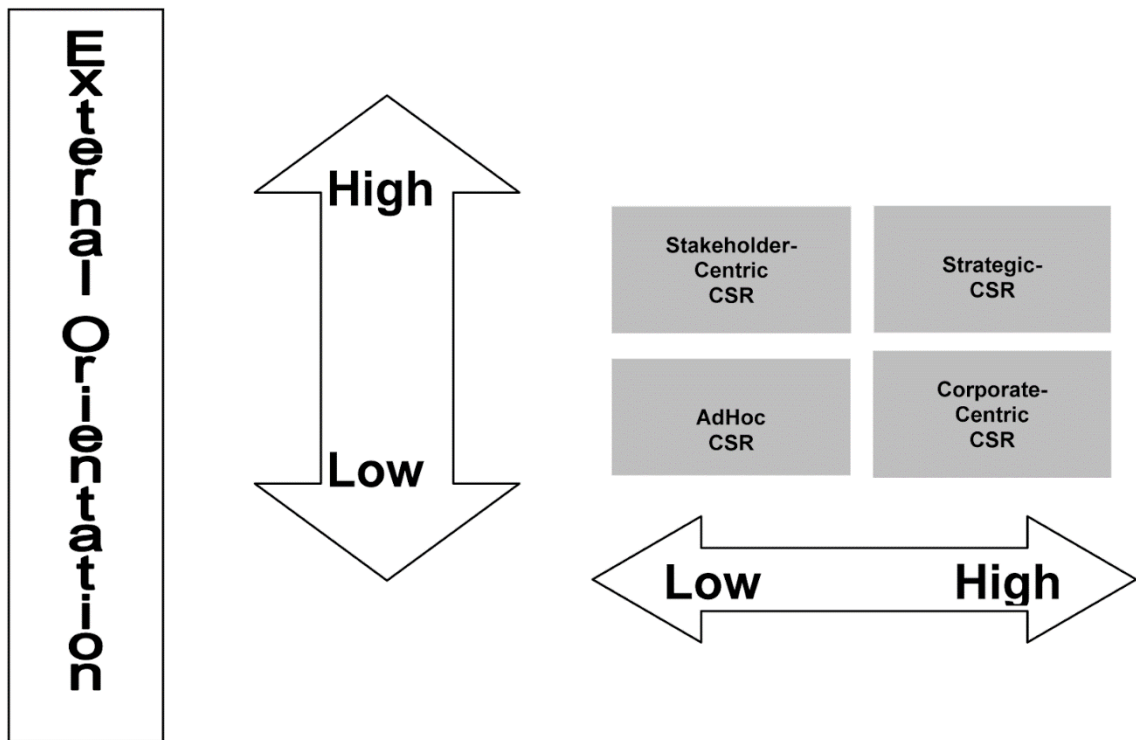
### Appendix 1 – Broadcasting Rights in Swedish Sports

All numbers are based on estimates from sport journalists Abrahamson, Leifby, Ros (2018) and Wagner (2017) at Aftonbladet. The actual amount of money in the deals has been kept secret by the broadcasters and the leagues.





## Appendix 2 – Determinants of the Adoption of CSR in Professional Sport



## **Appendix 3 – Interview Guide**

### **Introduction:**

What is your name and position within the sports organisation?

How long have you been employed and do you work with CSR on a full-time basis?

### **CSR Activities:**

How does the organisation work with CSR?

What is your current CSR activities?

Do you focus on the environmental side of CSR?

What are the influencing factors that have inspired you to adopt CSR activities?

If you would rank these factors, which two are the most influential?

What affects the design of you CSR projects?

### **Process Development:**

What is your experience from the active CSR projects?

How has the development been in the sport industry in regards to CSR?

How has the factors influencing your adoption changed over the years?

If you have finished a project, how do you evaluate it?

## Appendix 4 - Translations of Quotes

### IF Elfsborg

“We began back in 2009.” - “Men som sagt vi började 2009.”

“The club has never been in it for the money.” - “Men det var inte drivkraften för oss, pengar eller nånting sånt.”

“We have somewhere between 20-40 people each year we send back to the workforce.” - “Och vi har väl åtminstone någonstans mellan 20-30-40 varje år som vi slussar vidare.”

“The environmental aspect is difficult for us, it has been discussed, and Borås Arena is owned by Borås Arena AB, which is fully owned by IF Elfsborg, but it is rented out to Borås Stad, who handle the daily operation.” - “Miljön är svår för oss, vi har diskuterat den, för vi, visserligen Borås Arena till exempel ägs av Borås Arena AB, som är Elfsborg, det är helägt, men vi hyr ut den eller Borås Arena AB hyr ut till Borås Stad, som driftar alltihopa.”

“I actually believe, if I’m going to be complete honest that there exist no bigger brand in Västergötland than IF Elfsborg.” - “Och jag tror faktiskt, om jag ska vara riktigt ärlig att det finns inget större varumärke i Västergötland än Elfsborg.”

“Biggest opportunity with our brand image is that we can open doors which maybe nobody else can.” - “Så det är största fördelen som vi har med vårt varumärke att vi kan öppna dörrar som kanske ingen annan kan.”

“From the beginning it was solely internal reasons, we saw the opportunities we have and we do not only want to be seen as a football team but an organisations caring for the community.” - “Från början var det helt bara internt, vi såg dom möjligheterna som vi har att och just som jag sa att vi vill ses som inte bara ett a-lag utan vi vill ses som en klubb.”

“The external pressure did not exist when we began, nobody demanded we should work with CSR when we began.” - “Den externa pressen fanns inte när vi startade, det var ingen som ställde krav på att man skulle jobba samhällsmässigt när vi startade, det fanns inte på kartan då.”

“You have to be dedicated and burn for these questions, you can not do this casually.” - “Man måste vara dedikerad och brinna för de här frågorna, du kan inte göra detta med liksom en klackspark.”

### HV71

“The tickets go primarily to children and youth in bad situation, but also adult with illnesses and addictions.” - “Dom går ju främst till barn och ungdomar då som har svårt, men även vissa vuxna verksamheter med psykisk ohälsa och missbruk.”

“Min Första HV-Match, is the greatest CSR project run by us, and it involves 70 operation in 16 municipality who get access to 5500 tickets per season.” - “Min Första HV-Match, det är de största CSR-projektet som vi har i egen regi, i klubben där vi

involverar idag över 70 verksamheter i 16 kommuner som får tillgång till 5500 biljetter per säsong.”

“in this project we have roughly 80 sponsors, who cover parts of the ticket costs”. - “I det projektet så har vi 80 sponsorer ungefär då, som går in och täcker upp en del av biljettintäkter.”

“To and after the games we have the hockey busses for the audience.” - “Men till matcherna och efter matcherna så har vi hockeybussarna som går då.”

“We own the rink, but rent it through the municipality.” - “Vi äger ju C och D-hall, men vi hyr ju den via kommunen och sen så. Det är ju vår hall, men vi hyr den av kommunen.”

“desire to give the troubled kids and youth.” - “att kunna ge barn och ungdomar möjligheten.”

“We are really bad at paying attention to what we actually contribute to the community, in reality we rarely talk about it.” - “Nej men jag tycker att vi är jättedåliga på att uppmärksamma vad vi egentligen gör, vi pratar egentligen inte om det alls så mycket.”

“We are designing a new marketing brochure, with all our CSR projects. And beforehand it probably was not updated for four years.” - “Vi sitter med en ny marknadsföringsbroschyr som, där vi har liksom sammanfattat alla CSR-projekt.”

“our partners are starting to state in the deals that they want CSR projects.” - “våra partners ändå börjar att alltså i avtalen idag så kan de ha med CSR-projekt.”

“they want to contribute through their sponsorship in HV71.” - “dom vill va med och bidra i sina avtal med HV71.”

“At the beginning we had 28 external partners.” - “Då hade vi 28 verksamheter med.”

“Today we have over 70 external partners, who are active in 16 municipalities which receive around 5500 tickets each season.” - “vi involverar idag över 70 verksamheter i 16 kommuner som får tillgång till 5500 biljetter per säsong.”

## **Falkenbergs FF**

“An association in its whole is one form of CSR, since one has children and youths in the operation, a meaningful spare time, health aspects and other related activities, many voluntary energies. It means a lot socially to be part of an association either as an active or voluntary, so in that way I believe that it can be considered as CSR only by existing as an association.” - “Att en förening i sig självt är en form av samhällsansvar, med tanke på att man har barn och ungdomar i verksamheten, en meningsfull fritid, hälsoaspekter och den biten, många ideella krafter, betyder mycket rent socialt att vara med i en förening antingen som aktiv eller ideellt, så sätt tycker jag att det kan vara ett samhällsansvar i sig då att vara en förening.”

“The entire Falkenbergs association”. - “Hela Falkenbergs förening.”

“One should not invent the wheel a second time, but instead learn from others.”- “Man behöver inte uppfinna hjulet en gång till, istället kan man lära från andra.”

“If you are not visible, you do not exist”. - “Om du inte syns, finns du inte.”

“There is a greater expectation and demand externally today compared to before, maybe a couple of years ago, the community, sponsors, municipality, organisations and the public that one should do more.” - “Det finns utifrån en större förväntan och krav idag än vad det fanns kanske längre tillbaka ett antal år sen, omgivningen, sponsorer, kommun, organisationer och allmänheten att man ska göra mer.”

## **BK Häcken**

“The operations is very complex, since we have both BK Häcken and Gothia Cup, and which very few elite clubs have today a youth section, which is also an part of our CSR.” - “Ganska Komplex, Har både BK Häcken och Gothia cup, och som väldigt få elitföreningar har idag en breddverksamhet, som också är en stor del av CSR.”

“Since we have Gothia Cup, which is a major operation, has led to lesser resources for an agenda of CSR in BK Häcken.” - “Eftersom vi har haft Gothia Cup, och det är en enorm apparat, har det inte riktigt funnits resurser att driva en egen agenda i CSR.”

“There are so many other parameters to focus on right now.” - “Det finns så många parametrar att fokusera på just nu.”

“With regards to the environmental aspects, we engage roughly the same amount as the rest. Of course there is a acknowledgement, but no active environmental CSR. To engage fully in the environmental CSR is not possible due to resources.” - I relation till miljöaspekterna, vi engagerar oss uppskattningsvis i samma mängd som resten. Visst har vi märkt det, men vi arbetar inte aktivt med miljön i vårt samhällsansvar. The är inte möjligt därför resurserna inte finns tillgängliga.”

“Today, people want to work less in projects and more long-term, and the municipalities have a demand for it.” - “Idag märker man att folk vill jobba mindre i projekt och se mer långsiktigt, kommunerna har ett krav.”

“Reflected by the nationalities on Hisingen, but it is not a direct CSR activity.” -

“Speglas av nationaliteter och Hisingen, inget direkt CSR arbete.”

“We get several requests from many organisations and you try to assist, even though you are not super active. Instead you supporting an already existing event through players, marketing and competence.” - “Får väldigt många förfrågningar från många olika organisationer och då försöker man, så det ser ut som att man är superaktiv och drivande. Utan man stödjer ett befintligt evenemang med spelare, platser, marknadsföring, kompetens.”

“Interacting with other clubs on Hisingen.” - “Interagera med andra klubbar på Hisingen.”

“Work daily with the youth operations and the municipality.” - “Det dagliga arbetet med ungdomsverksamheten och kommunen.”

“To find a good network you can trust. There is so many who want something.” -

“Hitta ett bra nätverk, som man kan lita på. Många som vill mycket.”

“There are things everywhere, but we try to tie it to football and activity.” - “Finns saker överallt, men försöka knyta det till fotboll och aktivitet.”

### **Frölunda Indians**

“99 percent of our projects are socially focused.” - “99 procent av våra projekt är fokuserade på det sociala.”

“The big environmental effect will begin when they start the construction here in the city, Västlänken. It will affect the co-workers and supporters and we will then promote the usage of public transportation.” - “Den stora miljöpåverkan blir ju nu när man börjar bygga en massa här i stan, Västlänken. Det påverkar medarbetarna och supportrarna och då kommer vi påverka att man ska använda kollektivtrafiken.”

“That is when it has started for real, it has become a clear program which we have been guided from.” - “Det är då det har blivit på riktigt om man kallar det för det, det har blivit ett tydligt program som vi nu arbetar utifrån då.”

“the world is in front of you and you can choose which way to go.” - “Världen ligger framför dig och du kan välja vilken väg att ta.”

“We are the ones visiting the companies, telling them what Gemenskapen is about, what programs we have and how they are beneficial for the society, today we notice that more and more of the companies include it on their agenda, that they want to do good for the society but they do not know how they can do it, and one way to help them is to include them in our program.” - “Det är vi som besöker företagen, berättar vad vi gör inom Gemenskapen då, vilka program vi har och vilken nytta vi gör i samhället, vi märker mer och mer att företagen har det på sin agenda idag att man vill göra nytta tillbaka till samhället men man vet inte hur man ska göra det då, och ett sätt att hjälpa dem är att gå med i vårt program.”