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Framing Sports' Corporate Social Responsibility: U.S. Women's Vs. Men's Soccer Leagues

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FRAMING SPORTS' CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

U.S. WOMEN'S vs. MEN'S SOCCER LEAGUES

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Dedication

My family, whose support and encouragement has always pushed me to work harder and be better, but also have fun doing it.

My younger sister, Clara, and my girlfriend, Sarah, whose passion for women's soccer not only inspired this project, but a similar passion for the game in me.

My dedicated and supportive professors Dr. Painter, Dr. Sahm, and Dr. KC, whose guidance has steered me to success in this project.

My amazing friends, who may have distracted me from this project at times, but provided much needed encouragement, fun, and laughs throughout my arduous research.

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Abstract

Professional sports are a rich industry for corporate social responsibility (CSR) research because today's sports organizations are big businesses that generate shared identities and strong affective connections among fans, teams, and players. Further, today's professional sports consumers expect organizations to behave in socially responsible ways and to give back to their communities. While nearly every sports organization, like most other major businesses, practices CSR, sports teams are in a unique position because they receive greater media coverage than other businesses. Not all of this coverage is positive, however, as news reports about the controversy over compensation inequities in women's soccer have elevated conversations about gender equity not just in sports, but also in society at large. Moreover, research suggests that men's team sports receive much greater coverage than their women counterparts. These differences in media coverage and compensation create a compelling context for comparing news reports of the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) and Major League Soccer (MLS) team's socially responsible behaviors. Specifically, this quantitative content analysis compared local newspaper coverage of three NWSL and three MLS teams' corporate social responsibility (CSR) behaviors. The results indicate that there were significant differences in the quantity, tone, and framing of the CSR coverage. Not only did the MLS receive significantly greater and more positive coverage than the NWSL, but also the issue, source, and visual frames differed significantly between leagues. These findings' implications in terms of CSR, framing, and gender theories in the context of the professional sports industry as well as practical suggestions for journalists and news consumers are also discussed.

Framing Sports' Corporate Social Responsibility:

U.S. Women's vs. Men' Soccer Leagues

Introduction

Soccer is the most popular sport in the world, with a following that includes nearly half the global population (Clinch, 2018). Although football and basketball remain more popular in the U.S., soccer is rapidly overtaking baseball as the third most-watched team sport in the states, especially among younger viewers (Norman, 2018). As with most professional sports organizations, these soccer teams are also closely associated with and financially dependent upon their host communities. Many of these teams not only rely on their host cities to help finance their stadiums, but also they depend on local residents to buy tickets and promotional items, local businesses to purchase sponsorships, and local media to promote and cover their games. Since these teams are businesses that rely on stakeholders' perceptions of their brand identities and reputations to generate most of their revenue, their relationships with their host communities are critical to their success and longevity (Siegfried & Zimbalist, 2000). Moreover, the organizations' socially responsible behaviors, especially as covered in the media, are important determinants of their identities and reputations (Walker & Kent, 2009).

Beyond the direct economic link between sports organizations and their communities, research suggests that a wide range of businesses who behave as responsible corporate citizens accrue a multiplicity of benefits (e.g. Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, , 2007; Fombrun, Gardbert, & Barnett, 2000; Lichtenstein, Drumwright, & Braig, 2004; Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006). While altruistic intentions may motivate some organizations to engage in socially responsible behaviors (Rumsey & White, 2009), research indicate that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is also positively related to an organization's stakeholder relationships and financial performance

(Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010). Unlike other businesses, however, sports organizations and athletes are under constant public and media scrutiny, with televised games and players who become celebrities and role models. Arguably, this increased visibility makes sports organizations' CSR behaviors even more salient in their communities. Indeed, recent disputes over the legality, if not the ethicality, of NWSL players earning a fraction of their MLS counterparts' salaries have resulted in increased news coverage of professional soccer beyond the playing field (Das, 2019).

Based on a growing body of research analyzing how sports organizations engage in and report their socially responsible behaviors to influence stakeholder perceptions (Filizöz, & Fişne, 2011; Irwin, Lachowetz, Comwell, & Clark, 2003; Sheth & Babiak, 2010), this quantitative content analysis compares local newspaper coverage of NWSL and MLS teams' CSR behaviors. To conduct this analysis, the three MLS and NWSL teams owned and operated by the same umbrella organizations in Portland, Houston, and Orlando were selected. Next, the quantity, tone, and framing of each team's CSR-related coverage in their local newspapers was analyzed. Finally, the finding's broader theoretical and practical implications in terms of suggestions for future analyses of sports organizations' CSR and the ways in which the media frame these behaviors are discussed.

Literature Review

U.S. Soccer League Development

Professional soccer had a slower rise to popularity than many of the other major professional sports in the United States. Early leagues founded after soccer's introduction in the U.S. in the 1860s folded due to the Great Depression and inter-league disputes. Despite a short era of success in between, the sport did not experience a resurgence until the 1960s. In 1967, two

leagues were founded, the United Soccer Association and the National Professional Soccer League. One year later, the two merged to form the North American Soccer League (NASL) (NASL, n.d.). The NASL rose to prominence with the signing of Pelé in 1975, who had led the Brazilian National Soccer Team to three World Cup titles (Lewis, 2017). Even in the twilight of his career, the presence of a world class star such as Pelé allowed the NASL draw crowds of 60,000 fans and more (Lewis, 2017). This success was short lived, however, as the league was able to recruit other stars after the Pelé's retirement, but none with the draw of the Brazilian legend (Lewis, 2018). The NASL ultimately folded in 1984 due to poor decision making, but its impact on the sport's popularity in the United States set the precedent for the formation of the MLS soon after the World Cup nearly a decade later (Lewis, 2018).

Record setting attendance at the 1984 Olympic soccer games in Los Angeles spurred the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the world soccer governing body, to award the United States the 1994 World Cup (Janofsky, 1988). These World Cup soccer competitions occurred at nine locations across the country and reignited U.S. interest in the sport. In fact, Major League Soccer (MLS), the men's soccer league in the U.S., was chartered just two years afterwards. The MLS began with 10 teams in Denver, Columbus, Washington D.C., Dallas, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Boston, New Jersey, San Jose, and Tampa Bay. Despite this initial burst of enthusiasm, the MLS struggled during its first eight years, with several teams folding and financial losses reaching $300 million (Eligon, 2005). However, major investors saved the league from defaulting in 2001, and a period of league growth and expansion ensued (Baxter, 2015).

Women's professional soccer saw a similar failure of early leagues as the sport struggled to gain popularity in the U.S. Along with many other women's professional sports, the

development of women's professional soccer lagged behind many men's leagues that gained

popularity in the 20th century. Even in England, women faced a ban from soccer for over 50

years after the English Soccer Federation felt threatened by an early women's soccer game that

drew a large crowd of spectators (BBC News, 2014).

In the U.S., the first professional women's soccer competitions occurred in 1951, with

four St. Louis teams playing one another for two seasons until the league disbanded.

Subsequently, women's soccer failed to gain significant ground until 1972, when the U.S. passed

Title IX legislation (Wolf, 2019). This law mandated that colleges distribute funding equally

among men's and women's sports teams. In addition, it required schools to have one more

women's than men's sports team. Facing a decision on how to comply with these rules, many

schools, including major athletic institutions like the University of Texas, chose to add soccer as

a women's only sport (Maher, 2018). In addition, the increase in funding allowed more female

athletes to receive scholarships, thereby increasing the motivation for women to pursue sports

beyond a recreational level.

The 1980s saw a major popularity boost for women's collegiate soccer in the U.S. as the quality

of players increased since more women athletes were awarded athletic scholarships. The 1980s

had seen several organized international women's soccer games in both Italy and Mexico, and

many countries, especially in Europe, began creating women's soccer leagues around this time

(Wilson, 2018). Seeing the success of women's college soccer in the U.S. and professional

soccer around the world, the United States Soccer Federation created a National Team in 1985.

This team competed in the first Women's World Cup Tournament in 1991 and its popularity led

to the formation of the first U.S. women's soccer league, the USL W-League, in 1995 (Timm-

Garcia, 2019; Kassouf, 2019). Although the national team was relatively successful in

international competitions, the domestic league struggled to gain viewership in the following

years. After the U.S. Women's National team won the 1999 World Cup, another league was

formed in 2000 to capitalize on this success. This league, the Women's United Soccer

Association, featured eight teams, but only played for three seasons when it disbanded due to

financial losses in 2003 (Lauletta, 2019). After these various failed attempts to develop a

professional U.S. women's soccer league, the National Women's' Soccer League (NWSL) was

finally formed in 2012, six years after the MLS was established. Although two of the eight

original NWSL teams have since folded, three expansion teams have joined the NWSL since its

inception (Smith, 2019). At present, there are nine teams competing in the NWSL and 24 teams

in the MLS, all of which practice and promote CSR.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Whether based on the noble belief that doing good is the right thing to do, or on the more

pragmatic notion that doing good is good for business, most of today's businesses actively

engage in and promote their CSR behaviors (Lindgreen, Swaen, & Johnston, 2009; Morimoto,

Ash, & Hope, 2005). While its origins lie in philanthropy, organizational scholars have

conceptualized and investigated CSR for more than 40 years. For instance, Sethi (1975)

suggested that CSR encompassed three distinct elements: proscriptive social obligations (legal

and economic responsibilities), prescriptive social responsibilities (ethical norms, values, and

expectations), and preventive social responsiveness (policies and programs that anticipate

adverse conditions and community needs).

While researchers seem to have reached a consensus that CSR is a necessary

contemporary business function (e.g., Zhang & Swanson, 2006), most studies have focused on

the relationships among the organizations' social behaviors and financial performances (e.g.,

McWilliams & Siegel, 2000). Further, defining corporate social responsibility is more complicated than one might expect. For example, after analyzing 37 definitions, Dahlsrud (2008) concluded that CSR is the management of an organization's relationships with its community, the environment, economic development, and its stakeholders in a voluntary manner. Further, Dahlsrud (2008) concluded that CSR has five broad dimensions (social, environmental, economic, stakeholder, and voluntariness), but that its definitions and practices are socially constructed in different industries.

Theoretical Framework

CSR Theories

To explain how CSR works in sports, it is important to understand the theoretical frameworks guiding our understanding of these behaviors. To do so, Garriga and Melé (2004) divide CSR theories into four categories: instrumental, political, integrative, and ethical. Each of these theoretical views of CSR explain a particular viewpoint on their practices, and each play an important role in CSR for sports teams. First, sports teams are for-profit businesses, so instrumental theories, which view CSR as an avenue to generate revenue, may play an important role in how it is conducted. Second, the political aspect of CSR is also relevant because professional sports teams rely on their local communities and governments for support. This political aspect of CSR views socially responsible behaviors as tools for gaining power and maintaining the social contract between the organization and society. Third, sports CSR must also take into account integrative and ethical theories since integrating societal demands and fulfilling ethical obligations are necessary for teams to build and maintain relationships with their communities, including those who are financially invested in the organizations.

Shareholder theory is an example of an instrumental CSR theory, and it was pioneered by Milton Friedman (1970) in his famous argument that "the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits." This theory conceptualizes corporations as private businesses distinct from governmental or social organizations. Further, shareholder theory contends that business managers and employees are contractually obligated to maximize revenues for the shareholders or owners, and to act in the public interest only to the extent required by law (Keinert, 2008).

Alternately, R. Edward Freeman (2010), the pioneer of stakeholder theory in 1984, combined the political, integrative, and ethical aspects of CSR in his argument that corporations must recognize and respect the interests of any group "who affect or is affected by the organization's purpose" and/or have an "interest, right, claim or ownership in an organization" (p. 52). Stakeholder theory maintains that CSR should include issues related to the common good of all those who have a stake in the organization, and that the economic benefits accrued by the shareholders are merely one aspect of responsible corporate citizenship. In line with the stakeholder theory of CSR, Carroll (1979) explained that: "Corporate social responsibility encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time" (p. 500). Further, Carroll (1991) provided a graphic representation of this four-part model in the form of a pyramid that has become one of the most frequently used theoretical frameworks for analyzing CSR (p. 42).

The base of Carroll's (1991) CSR pyramid encompasses the corporation's economic responsibilities because businesses are organizations that sell the goods and services that society needs and wants. In return, society allows businesses to take profits when they add value, benefitting all stakeholders. Further, this economic responsibility is the baseline measure that must be met for an organization to remain operational, and without which, all other

considerations are moot. The second section of Carroll's (1991) CSR pyramid encompasses the organization's legal responsibilities. These legal responsibilities are based on society's requirement that businesses act in accordance with the laws and regulations governing their behavior, to conduct themselves as law-abiding corporate citizens, and to meet their legal obligations to societal stakeholders.

Beyond society's economic and legal requirements, the third section of Carroll's (1991) CSR pyramid focuses on the extent to which the organization behaves as an ethical corporate citizen. Such normative expectations include behaviors that may not be codified into laws and regulations, but which are judged by society's standards of justice and fairness. These ethical expectations are not requirements, but they include behaving in a manner consistent with and respectful of society's ever-evolving mores and norms, especially in terms of doing no harm. These ethical responsibilities are especially relevant for major American sports that often follow the integrative theory of issues management and use CSR to address social issues, particularly those which arise within their specific sport or league.

Finally, an organization's philanthropic responsibilities form the apex of this CSR pyramid (Carroll, 1991). Although labeled responsibilities, these discretionary philanthropic actions are not required or even necessarily expected in an ethical sense, but they are desired by society. Moreover, philanthropy has historically been one of the most important elements of CSR, and it is viewed as more discretionary or voluntary than the organization's social requirements and ethical expectations. Overall, however, Carroll (2016) contends that this CSR model should be viewed as a unified or integrated whole illustrating that organizations should strive to make a profit, obey the law, engage in ethical practices, and be good corporate citizens.

CSR in Sports

The context in which corporate social responsibility and its coverage will be analyzed in this study is the U.S. professional sports industry. As a result, it is important to not only attempt to define CSR, but also explain how it is practiced, what it does, and why it is important. Professional sports teams, like those in the MLS and NWSL, are organizations and companies that have images, reputations, and relationships to maintain with their stakeholders. However, it is important to note a major difference between professional sports and other organizations. That is: professional athletes and sports teams are under constant media scrutiny (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). This scrutiny includes televised games as well as the celebrity and role model status that many professional athletes achieve. Even in the NWSL, which sees far less television airtime of its games than the MLS, many players serve as role models. As a result, professional sports organizations and athletes are constantly subjected to public scrutiny.

This public scrutiny has two major effects when it comes to sports organizations' corporate social responsibility. The first effect is that these teams have an increased need for corporate social responsibility, particularly in their communities (Heinze, Soderstrom, & Zdroik, 2014). Professional sports teams develop fan bases in specific cities and their team names frequently pay homage to a characteristic or historical event unique to that community (Heere & James, 2007). As a result, the connection between the organization and its host community is often clearly established, and the teams become a symbol of civic pride. Thus, corporate social responsibility is an important tool for maintaining relationships between the teams and their host communities (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). In addition, the athletes on those teams usually call their host cities their homes, and therefore they have a stronger motivation, if not obligation, to work for stronger and better communities in which to work and live in (Heinze, Soderstrom, & Zdroik,

2014). Moreover, many of these sports organizations' CSR activities address issues that are

particularly sensitive or relevant in their particular communities. Thus, sports organizations

frequently pursue the mutual benefits that can be accrued through community-based efforts

(Heinze, Soderstrom, & Zdroik, 2014). By engaging in such corporate social responsibility

activities and programs, these teams and athletes may improve the overall well-being of their

communities. Further, they may also gain significant competitive advantages over other teams,

develop a stronger and more supportive and fan base, and improve the setting in which they live

and work (Heinze, Soderstrom, & Zdroik, 2014).

   Being subjected to constant media and public scrutiny may also make corporate social

responsibility an easier task for sports organizations in some ways. Sports have always been a

unifying force in American society and around the world. Due to their notoriety, many of these

times become rallying points for their host cities and communities after crises or natural disasters

(Heinze, Soderstrom, & Zdroik, 2014). For example, when Hurricane Katrina devastated New

Orleans, the National Basketball Association's (NBA) New Orleans Hornets were forced to play

part of their season in Oklahoma City. Upon their return, the team experienced unprecedented

success, winning their first playoff series in years (Markazi, 2015). This success was an

emotional boost for the community and served as a symbol of civic resilience for the city of New

Orleans. Additionally, sports teams' unifying power allows them to rally their communities to

support particular events, causes, and organizations (Heinze, Soderstrom, & Zdroik, 2014). This

unifying power could be especially important for NWSL teams, whose battle against wage

discrimination transcends sports.

   Sports teams also conduct CSR efforts for a variety of other reasons. For example, the

National Football League (NFL) has suffered reputational crises and image damage from issues

surrounding domestic violence, concussions, and other health issues. These controversies essentially forced the league to take action to mitigate the damage to its image. According to Walker and Parent (2010), many sports organizations use CSR activities to counter the negative perceptions or consequences associated with that sport or league. For example, athletes in the NFL have suffered and reported increasing occurrences of a degenerative brain disease, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), due to violent contacts during games. While the NFL has made conscious efforts to address this issue with helmet improvements and player safety rules, it is important to note that one of the league's primary charities conducts research on sports health and related injuries (NFL, 2012). While this philanthropic action is an attempt to address the problem rather than hide it, it illustrates how businesses are often spurred to conduct CSR efforts in an attempt to address issues that arise within their organizations. However, the public's perceptions of these issues and the organization's subsequent CSR efforts are frequently shaped by the ways in which the media frames them.

Framing CSR Coverage

Framing is one of the most commonly used theoretical frameworks for analyzing the ways in which the news media organize their stories as well as the influence of news coverage on viewers' perceptions. In short, Tewksbury and Shefuele (2009) explain that framing refers to the ways in which journalists use central organizing ideas to define and give meaning to the events, issues, and individuals they cover. Framing can occur consciously or unconsciously, and people often frames issues in line with their own beliefs, although in journalism, such framing tends to be deliberate. These journalistic frames may define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and/or suggest remedies in ways that magnify particular aspects of the issues, information sources, individuals or groups they cover (Entman, 1993). Further, these media

frames may also influence the public's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in specific ways (Tewksbury & Scheufele 2009).

Whenever the media's influence on public perceptions of an organization is in question, the ways in which the organization and its actions are framed are frequently analyzed. As noted previously, corporations, and particularly professional sports organizations, are increasingly subjected to public and media scrutiny. As a result, the framing of these organizations' CSR activities is extremely important in terms of both its content and potential effects. In particular, some scholars have analyzed the framing of CSR activities in terms of their fit, or the extent to which they align with the organization's mission, values, and activities. The results of this research indicate that CSR fit generally enhances its positive influences on stakeholder perceptions (de Jong, & van der Meer, 2017; Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, S., 2007). Moreover, framing theory suggests that the ways in which information about the organization's CSR activities are mediated in news coverage may influence stakeholders' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors as well.

Conceptualized as independent monitors of corporate behaviors, the news media may frame an organization's CSR activities in ways that influence public perceptions (Wang, 2007; Zhang & Swanson, 2006). In fact, research testing the influence of CSR fit and media coverage indicates that the majority of all CSR coverage was positive, but that CSR fit positively impacted media coverage (Lunenberg, Gosselt, & De Jong, 2016). However, the lack of fit did not necessarily lead to negative framing, only to potentially more neutral coverage (Lunenberg, Gosselt, & De Jong, 2016). Moreover, fit influenced the ways in which the CSR activities were framed in generally positive ways, such as being perceived as structurally embedded within an organization (De Jong & Van der Meer, 2017). However, some negative effects of CSR coverage

supported prior findings that low levels of CSR fit are associated with stakeholders' perceiving

CSR as manipulative and then generating counter-arguments against the organization's activities

(Drumwright, 1996; Ellen et al., 2000).

Gendered Sports Coverage

In this study, gender is one particular aspect of CSR fit and media framing at the center of

the analysis. Specifically, there appears to be a consensus in the literature that men's sports

teams and athletes receive much greater media coverage than women's sports teams and athletes

(Bernstein, 2002; Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015; Fink, 2015; French, 2013; Godoy-Pressland,

2014). When investigating this disparity, Kian and Hardin (2009) found that the reporter's

gender was directly related to their coverage of men's and women's sports. Specifically, their

results suggested that men reporters covered men's sports more than women, who covered

women's sports more than men (Kian & Hardin, 2009). In addition, Kian and Hardin (2009)

found a significant trend away from traditional, masculine frames when men covered women

athletes, suggesting a possible break with entrenched, gender biased framing seen in previous

studies. However, they also found that female athletes continued to be framed as less athletic and

skilled than men athletes (Kian & Hardin, 2009). Further, the results of Seay's (2011) study

indicated that women's sports are framed as less entertaining than men's sports, which suggests

that journalists may be perpetuating the lack of recognition, respect, and equitable compensation

that women athletes receive compared to men athletes.

Today, however, media coverage of the ongoing U.S. Women's National Soccer Team's

(USWNT) lawsuit alleging the U.S. Soccer Foundation (USSF) practiced systematic gender-

based pay discrimination has elevated conversations about gender equity not just in sports, but

also in business and society at large (Goldman, 2019). The suit stems from the USWNT's recent

successes in winning the last two FIFA Women's World Cups while the players received a

fraction of the compensation compared to their much less successful male counterparts. This

spike in recognition and media coverage, however, is out of the ordinary for the coverage of

women's sports, which receive significantly less media attention than men's sports.

Geertsema-Sligh (2019) attributes the gender difference in sports coverage to the fact that

traditionally, journalism was not considered a profession suitable for women, a common theme

for many lines of work. As a result, the development of women as journalists, and especially

sports journalists, lags behind men in terms of representation (Geertsema-Sligh, 2019). Indeed,

sports journalism remains mostly male-dominated, although some organizations are attempting

to change that narrative; for example, ESPN made Doris Burke the first female NBA broadcaster

in 2018 (Gregory, 2018).

In addition to gender disparities in the quantity of coverage, Vincent (2004), found that

female athletes who participate in stereotypically feminine sports, such as tennis or ice skating,

received more media coverage than women who play more aggressive, contact, team sports such

as basketball or soccer, that are traditionally considered more masculine. A similar study by

Tuggle and Owen (1999) indicated that more airtime was given to female Olympians

participating in individual non-contact sports than to women athletes competing in team sports.

Further, Fink (2015) attributed these disparities mostly to systematic and institutionalized sexism

and heterosexism.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

Based on this review of the literature and situated in this theoretical framework, the

purpose of this investigation is to analyze the quantity, tone, and framing of the NWSL and MLS

teams' CSR coverage. First, as previously mentioned, the overwhelming evidence indicates that

men's sports teams and individual men athletes receive more news coverage than women's

sports teams and athletes (Bernstein, 2002; Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015; Fink, 2014; French,

2013; Godoy-Pressland, 2014). Thus, three hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The MLS teams will receive more frequent CSR coverage than the NWSL teams.

H2: The MLS teams' CSR stories will be longer than the NWSL teams' stories.

H3: The MLS teams' CSR stories will focus on particular players or organization members more

frequently than the NWSL teams' stories.

Second, based on media narratives about the NWSL and MLS teams' gender pay inequity

(Clinch, 2018) as well as research suggesting that women athletes are frequently portrayed

differently than men athletes (Fink, 2015; Geertsema-Sligh, 2019; Goldman, 2019; Kian &

Hardin, 2009; Tuggle & Owen, 1999), four research questions are posed to compare the tone and

framing of the coverage:

RQ1: What was the tone of the MLS and NWSL teams' CSR coverage?

RQ2: How were issue frames used in the MLS and NWSL teams' CSR coverage?

RQ3: How were source frames used in the MLS and NWSL teams' CSR coverage?

RQ4: How were visual frames used the MLS and NWSL teams' CSR coverage?

Method

Sample

To test the hypotheses and answer the research questions, the three NWSL and MLS

teams owned and operated by the same umbrella organizations were selected: the Portland

Thorns and Timbers, Houston Dash and Dynamo, and Orlando Pride and City. This sample was

purposefully selected to ensure that the NWSL and MLS teams shared the same organizational

and public relations staffing, structure, and practices.

Data

Next, using the *America's News* database, an exhaustive search was conducted for each

team's CSR-related stories between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2019 in their local

newspapers: *The Oregonian*, *Houston Chronicl*e, and *Orlando Sentinel*. These Boolean searches

included each team's name and a series of keywords associated with corporate social

responsibility. The CSR keywords included: social, responsible, community, charity, nonprofit,

legal, law, court, justice, fair, ethic, economic, financial, money, revenue, stakeholder, owner,

investor, partner, environment, sustainability, diversity, and inclusion (Carroll, 2016; Dahlsrud,

2008; Sethi, 1975). After the searches for each team and keyword in each local newspaper were

completed, the articles were reviewed to eliminate stories that only incidentally mentioned the

team, player/organization member, or CSR issue. Incidental mention stories were operationally

defined as those stories containing fewer than three mentions of a team, player/organizational

member, or CSR issue. As shown in the far-right column of Table 1, this process produced a

population or universe of 273 articles, all of which were coded as explained below.

Unit of Analysis

Each article was considered a single unit of analysis and was coded for length, mentions

and prominence of teams, leagues, and organization members, as well as CSR issue, source, and

visual frames.

Coding Categories

Specifically, each article's word-count was recorded to determine length. Then, mentions

of the six teams as well as the most prominent NWSL or MLS team in each story was coded

based on mention counts, especially in the headline, lede, and image captions. Next, the coders

determined whether an individual team player or organization member was the focus of each

story and then coded for that team and league. To determine whether the tone of each story was

positive, neutral, or negative, coders assumed that the coverage was factual and neutral unless

specific words, especially in the headline, lede, and image captions, were used. For instance,

words such as win, gain, success, asset, growth, inspiration, and honor were considered positive

while words such as loss, unsuccessful, liability, failure, unfair, unequal, and arrest were

considered negative words. Unless the article was overwhelmingly either positive or negative,

however, it was coded as neutral.

To code for the CSR frames in every story, categories were developed based on prior

research (Carroll, 2016; Dahlsrud, 2008; Sethi, 1975). For issue frames, the categories included:

community (e.g., involvement in community engagement and/or social issue activities, events,

organizations); philanthropy (e.g., donating money or resources to charities, nonprofits, or

underserved populations); legal (e.g., compliance with or deviance from laws/regulations and/or

promoting more equitable laws/regulations); ethics (e.g., promoting "better" or more honorable

behavior, diversity, inclusion, fairness, and justice or engaging in dishonorable behavior);

economic (e.g., contributing to the economic development of the community); performance (e.g.,

success/failure of team, playoff appearances; victories; revenue generated; game

attendance/viewership); or salaries (e.g., gender pay inequity or individual player's/organization

members' earnings); and other.

To analyze the ways in which the coverage used source frames, the presence or absence

of sources as well as the categories for those quoted in each story were coded. The source

categories included: no quote; team organization member (owner, executive, manager,

spokesperson); team player; community/nonprofit leader; business sponsor; political/government

official; league official; and journalist/other. Finally, visual frames were coded for the presence

or absence of images in each article as well as whether the people shown and the most prominent person in each image. The visual categories included: NWSL team player/organization member, MLS team player/organization member, or others who were unaffiliated with either league.

Intercoder Reliability

Two trained and independent coders double-coded 20% of the total sample. Intercoder reliability was determined using Krippendorf's alpha and Cronbach's alpha. The reliabilities ranged from 0.84 to 1.0, with an average alpha score of .92, suggesting the results were reliable.

Results

The first hypothesis predicted that the MLS teams would receive more CSR coverage than the NWSL teams. To test this hypothesis, a series of cross-tabulations with Pearson's chi-square coefficient for team mentions and prominence by league were conducted, and the results indicated that MLS teams were mentioned more frequently than NWSL teams, $X^2(1, N = 273) = 19.52, p < .01$. As shown in the first columns of Table 1, MLS teams were mentioned in 205, or 75% of the stories while NWSL teams were mentioned in 172, or 63% of the stories. Likewise, as shown in the second set of Table One's columns, the MLS teams were the most prominent in 183 stories, or 67% of the coverage while the NWSL teams were the most prominent in 90 stories, or 33% of the coverage, and this difference was significant, $X^2(1, N = 273) = 31.68, p < .01$. Thus, H1 was confirmed because the MLS teams were both mentioned and the most prominent in more stories than the NWSL teams.

Table 1: Team and League Mentions and Prominence

	Mentioned		Prominent		Total
	NWSL	MLS	NWSL	MLS	Stories
Houston Chronicle	32	30	20	28	48
Orlando Sentinel	49	80	33	68	101
Portland Oregonian	91	95	37	87	124
Total	172	205	90	183	273

The second hypothesis predicted that the MLS teams' CSR stories would be longer than the NWSL teams' stories. To test this hypothesis, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test with the dominant league in each story as the independent variable and the article word counts as the dependent variable was conducted. The results of the ANOVA indicated that the MLS teams' articles contained a mean of 711 words while NWSL teams' articles contained a mean of 740 words, but that this difference was not significant, $p > .05$. Thus, H2 was not supported.

The third hypothesis predicted that the MLS teams' CSR stories would focus on particular players or organization members more frequently than the NWSL teams' stories. To test this hypothesis, a cross-tabulation with Pearson's chi-square coefficient for individual focus by league was conducted, and the results indicated that the differences were significant, X^2 (1, N = 273) = 4.88, $p < .05$. However, the descriptive results indicated that 64% of MLS stories focused on particular players while 77% of the NWSL stories focused on particular players. Thus, H3 was not supported because professional women soccer players were more frequently the focus of NWSL teams' CSR coverage than were men soccer players in the MLS teams' CSR coverage.

Table 2: Coverage tone by league (in percentages)

	NWSL (n = 90)	MLS (n = 183)	Total (N = 273)	df	X^2	p
Positive	44	63	57			
Neutral	44	33	36	2	12.85	.00
Negative	13	3	6			

The first research question asked about the tone of the CSR coverage across the leagues. To answer this question, a cross-tabulation with Pearson's chi-square coefficient for article tone by league was conducted, and the results indicated that the differences were significant, X^2 (2, N = 273) = 12.85, $p < .01$. Specifically, as shown in Table 2, the NWSL coverage was less positive but more neutral and more negative than the MLS coverage.

Table 3: Issue frames by league (in percentages)

	NWSL (n = 76)	MLS (n = 175)	Total	df	X^2	p
Community	8	19	15			
Philanthropy	3	21	15			
Legal	9	11	10	6	42.37	.00
Ethical	31	10	17			
Economic	4	9	7			
Performance	38	29	33			
Salaries	7	1	3			

The second research question inquired about the use of issue frames in the NWSL and MLS teams' CSR coverage. To answer this question, a cross-tabulation with Pearson's chi-square coefficient for CSR issue by league was conducted, and the results indicated that the differences were significant, X^2 (6, $N = 273$) = 42.37, $p < .01$. As shown in Table 3, the NWSL coverage more frequently focused on ethics, performance, and salaries while the MLS coverage more frequently focused on community, philanthropy, and economic issues.

Table 4: Source Frames by League (in percentages)

	NWSL (n = 76)	MLS (n = 175)	Total	df	X^2	p
No Quote	9	8	9	1	.13	72
Team Organization Member	47	60	55	1	4.06	.04
Team Player	60	30	40	1	27.56	.00
Community/Nonprofit Leader	13	15	15	1	.19	.67
Business/Sponsor	7	7	7	1	.00	.97
Political/Government Official	7	10	9	1	.76	.34
League Official	13	10	11	1	.75	.39
Journalist/Other	0	7	5	1	4.62	.03

The third research question asked how source frames were used in the NWSL and MLS teams' CSR coverage. To answer this question, a cross-tabulation with Pearson's chi-square coefficient for each source quoted in the coverage by league was conducted. As shown in Table 4, team players were significantly more frequently quoted in the NWSL coverage, X^2 (1, $N = 273$) = 42.37, $p < .01$. For the MLS coverage, on the other hand, team organization members (X^2

(1, $N = 273$) = 4.06, $p < .05$) and journalists/others (X^2 (1, $N = 273$) = 4.62, p < .05) were significantly more frequently quoted.

The fourth research question inquired about the use of visual frames in the NWSL and MLS teams' CSR coverage. To answer this question, a cross-tabulation with Pearson's chi-square coefficient for the most prominent images in the coverage by league was conducted and the differences were significant, X^2 (3, $N = 273$) = 122.54, $p < .01$. Although this finding is intuitive given that the vast majority of the most prominent images in the CSR coverage were players from the most prominent league in the story, one interesting finding displayed in Table 5 is that 11% of the NWSL teams' CSR coverage included a prominent image of an MLS player.

Table 5: Visual frames by league (in percentages)

	NWSL (n = 90)	MLS (n = 183)	Total (N = 273)	df	X^2	p
NWSL Player/Org member	70	2	25			
MLS Player/Org member	11	76	55	3	122.54	.00
No Image	3	8	6			
Others	16	14	14			

Discussion

Overall, this analysis of the quantity, tone, and framing of the NWSL and MLS teams' CSR coverage yielded some interesting results. First, as expected, the MLS teams were both mentioned and the most prominent in more of the CSR coverage compared to the NWSL teams, confirming hypothesis one. However, the differences in the length of the stories were not significant, so no support for hypothesis two's prediction that the MLS team stories would be longer than the NWSL team stories was found. For hypothesis three's prediction that the MLS stories would focus on individual players more frequently than the NWSL stories, significant differences were found, but not in the direction predicted. In fact, the results indicate that NWSL coverage more frequently focused on individual players than did MLS coverage.

Some compelling findings also emerged when answering the research questions. First, the NWSL coverage was more frequently neutral and negative than the MLS coverage, which was more frequently positive. Second, the issue and source frames were also significantly different by league. Third, the visual framing significantly differed by league, with the MLS coverage more frequently not including an image while the NWSL coverage more frequently included a prominent image of a player from the other league. Finally, while these comparisons of issue, source, and visual frames across leagues is interesting, it is also important to note that this is one of the first studies to analyze the quantity, tone, and frames used in professional sports teams' CSR coverage more broadly. Thus, the overall results in the tables' totals columns also provide new information about sports CSR coverage.

Sports CSR Coverage

First, when examining the overall quantity of the coverage, notable differences among the local newspapers were found. Specifically, Portland's *Oregonian* newspaper mentioned both of its home teams in significantly more stories than did the *Orlando Sentinel* or the *Houston Chronicle*, X2 (2) = 33.86, p < .01. At least to some extent, these differences may be attributed to the size of the teams' fanbases in each city. The Portland Thorns, for example, have the highest attendance of any NWSL team, nearly doubling the closest NWSL team's attendance with an average of 20,000 fans per game in 2019 (Soccer Stadium Digest, 2019a). The Portland Timbers also generally draw relatively high attendance numbers, placing fourth out of 26 MLS teams in 2019 (Soccer Stadium Digest, 2019a). This large fan base and high coverage numbers may also be due to the teams' successes. For instance, the Timbers won the MLS Cup in 2015, while the Thorns have won the NWSL Shield once and Championship twice since 2016 (Best, 2019; Doyle, 2015).

In terms of the prominence of the NWSL and MLS teams in the coverage, the Orlando Pride are nearly equal to the Portland Thorns, despite having lower attendance numbers and less success in the playoffs than the Thorns. However, the Pride's roster features some of the most well-known women's soccer players in the world, including World Champions and Olympic Gold Medalists Ashlynn Harris, Alex Morgan, Sydney Leroux, and Ali Krieger. International record holder Marta Vieira da Silva, known simply as Marta, also plays for the Orlando team, further increasing the roster's name recognition. It is likely due to these marquee players that the Pride earned nearly as much prominent coverage as the Thorns, even though *The Oregonian* published significantly more stories about its soccer teams. Orlando City, on the other hand, has not been very successful, never reaching the playoffs in franchise history. However, Orlando City ranks in the top half of the MLS in terms of game attendance in 2019, and their roster also features international stars such as Nani (Soccer Stadium Digest, 2019b).

The Houston teams, on the other hand, received the least coverage. This relatively small number of new stories may be attributable to the competition from other professional sports teams. Specifically, both Portland and Orlando only have one other major sports team aside from their MLS and NWSL teams. Houston, on the other hand, has three successful franchises: one each in the NBA, NFL, and MLB. As a result of this competition, the Houston Dash and Dynamo may be covered far less than these other teams.

In terms of the tone of the coverage, most was positive, in line with prior research on the tone of CSR coverage (Lunenberg, Gosselt, & De Jong, 2016). Specifically, 44% of NWSL stories were positive, 44% were neutral, and 12 % were negative. In comparison, 63% of MLS stories were positive, 33% were neutral, and 3% were positive. These differences may be attributable to several factors. First, NWSL stories could be more neutral and negative because

many articles concerned team performance, which was often covered in a neutral tone, and compensation inequity, which was often covered in a negative tone. Second, the NWSL articles more often prominently featured individual players and organization members engaging in CSR activities rather than the groups of players or organization members. In terms of CSR fit, individual players or organization members' activities do not align with sports teams' activities and missions as well as collective activities. Therefore, the individual's prominence in the story may frame the coverage as more of an individual act, and possibly more of publicity stunt, than would a story about a group of team players or organization members engaging in similar CSR activities. Third, when examining the issue frames used in the leagues' coverage, it appears that CSR fit may also play a role in the more positive coverage of the MLS teams. Specifically, while team performance was the most frequent CSR issue frame in all of the coverage, the philanthropy and community issue frames, which are generally very positive behaviors, were more common in the MLS coverage. For the NWSL coverage, however, ethical and salary issues, which may intuitively include more critical or negative statements, were more frequent.

These differences in issue frames may also be due to revenue disparities between the leagues. Specifically, the MLS teams in this study, the Portland Timbers, Orlando City, and Houston Dynamo, generate about $47 million, $39 million, and $23 million in annual revenue, respectively (Smith, 2019). While NWSL teams do not release public earnings statements, it appears that few, if any of these teams are profitable, (Conerly, 2019). As a result, the MLS teams likely have higher philanthropy and community affairs budgets, allowing them to stage and market more charitable and community events than the NWSL teams. This, in turn, results in more frequent coverage of MLS community and philanthropy CSR, even when the NWSL and MLS teams are owned and operated by the same umbrella organizations.

In addition to the quantity, tone, and CSR issue frames used in the news stories, this investigation also found that team organization members were the most frequent source frames used in the overall coverage. However, this finding was largely due to the MLS coverage using team organization member source frames much more frequently than the NWSL coverage, which used team player source frames more frequently. These results are in line with our previous finding that the NWSL coverage more frequently focused on a specific team player than did the MLS coverage.

These findings may be due to the women soccer players achieving greater international success and greater name recognition than the men players, making their quotes more newsworthy to journalists. Additionally, the MLS teams have a greater following than the NWSL teams, and therefore their team names are more recognizable, so the focus may be less individual and more on the organizations as a whole. As a result, the MLS teams may conduct CSR more collectively and the media may quote representatives of the organization as a whole more frequently. Alternately, prior research on gender differences in sports coverage indicate that the media more frequently focuses on individual women athletes than on women athletes on sports teams (Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Vincent, 2004), so this bias against collective or organizational source frames may also be influencing NWSL coverage.

Finally, when analyzing the visual frames used in the coverage, the findings indicated that images of MLS players were the most prominent in the majority of all the coverage. This result may be due to the fact that the MLS is a more recognizable league with a stronger fan base than the NWSL. Therefore, visual frames prominently featuring an MLS player may be deemed more newsworthy than those featuring an NWSL player who may be on a team or in a league with which fewer people are familiar. Indeed, this investigation found that 11% of the NWSL

coverage used a visual frame most prominently featuring an MLS player, but only 2% of MLS

coverage used a visual frame most prominently featuring an NWSL player. Since many of the

news stories analyzed in this study mentioned both the MLS and NWSL, it was not surprising to

find that players from different leagues appeared in stories that were dominated by the other

league. However, the discrepancy between the leagues' coverage in terms of visual frames that

most prominently featured a player from the other league is somewhat surprising, if not

disturbing from a gender theory point-of-view.

Implications

Before proceeding to discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings

in more detail, it is vital to understand the organizational relationship between the U.S. Women's

National Soccer Team (USWNT), National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), and U.S. Soccer

Foundation (USSF). The USWNT has won two straight FIFA Women's World Cups and

dominated international play in recent years. Additionally, nearly all of the women athletes

representing the U.S. at this level also play in the NWSL, and as a result, their NWSL salaries

are often subsidized by the USSF. Even the NWSL itself is partially supported by the USSF. As

a result, the three organizations share strong connections. Therefore, the internal strife arising

due to the lawsuit against the USWNT likely has influenced NWSL coverage, mostly negatively.

However, it could be argued that the aforementioned success had similar impacts on the

coverage. After such success, one would expect not just a greater amount of coverage, but also

more positive coverage. It appears, however, that the legal case has had the greater impact, based

on the findings concerning the tone and issue frames used in the NWSL coverage. The tone of

the NWSL coverage was more neutral and negative and the issue frames were more frequently

focused on ethics and salaries than that of the MLS coverage, which certainly supports this explanation.

This study's findings not only support prior research indicating the men's sports receive more media attention than women's sports, but also it suggests that it is also the case with CSR coverage. As one of the first studies to analyze media coverage of sports CSR, or to compare CSR coverage across women's and men's sports leagues, this finding is notable. When considering these findings, however, it is also important to bear in mind that men's sports had a head start when it comes to establishing themselves and developing their fan base. For example, the first men's FIFA World Cup was held in 1930, while the first women's tournament was not held until more than 60 years later. However, with nearly 30 years of American women's soccer success, one would expect that these players, who show year after year that they are the best in the world at what they do, would gain more respect and recognition than they have received. This lack of recognition despite displays of world class excellence begs the question: will women's sports ever find equity in media coverage?

Although there is abundant research on CSR in the literature most of the analyses of CSR in the sports industry have focused on community development and environmental sustainability. (Walzel, Robertson, & Anagnostopoulos, 2018). The results of this study, however, suggest that team performance was the most frequently used CSR issue frame in all of the coverage, with philanthropy the second most frequent issue frame in the MLS coverage. In light of Carroll's (1991) claim that philanthropy is the least important and vital aspect of CSR since it is simply what a society desires, not what it expects or requires, this finding is theoretically interesting. Moreover, Carroll's (1991) CSR pyramid indicates that the primary, most vital form of CSR is economic, but that CSR issue frame was one of the least frequently used in the coverage.

However, upon reexamination, it could be argued that team performance should fall into the economic category. For example, Pan, Gabert, McGaugh, & Branvold (1997) argue that a team's performance team directly impacts its revenue streams, such as ticket sales. Thus, the coverage of performance is an important element of economic-related actions. Using this line of reasoning, economic responsibilities would become the most frequently reported issue for teams from both NWSL and MLS in this study. This, in turn, would be a more accurate reflection of the CSR Pyramid and expand analysis of the economics of sports CSR.

While studies show that CSR fit is a major factor in predicting positive or negative framing in coverage of CSR activities, both MLS and NWSL teams, for the most part, appeared to engage in fitting, relevant CSR activities. These activities ranged from the MLS making soccer a more accessible sport for youth, an issue that directly affects the development of a new generation of American MLS players. The NWSL, on the other hand, devoted much of their CSR activities to advocating for equal pay and LGBTQ+ rights, which directly affects their players and their major stakeholders.

The most notable issue directly affecting the players is the current lawsuit involving NWSL athletes. This lawsuit and the players' activism may also be viewed as a catalyst for addressing gender pay equity, along with other ethical, gender issues at the larger societal level (Walker & Kent, 2009). Indeed, wage discrimination is not experienced solely in the professional sport realm, as the gender pay gap is an issue frequently up for debate in many industries (Blau & Kahn, 2017). Thus, the issue focus could be a reflection of the needs of society at large, stories of women fighting against the system and its entrenched biases if not misogyny, rather than the needs of the NWSL as an individual organization. This frame choice is problematic because it

casts the NWSL in a more negative light while the MLS is receiving positive coverage of the philanthropic and community work its teams and athletes are conducting

In a practical sense, this research can be applied in many ways. Most importantly, it describes the ways in which frames, specifically in regard to tone, can be applied in misleading ways. Because frames shape our perceptions of the subject, misleading frames can cause false perceptions of said subject. This can be seen with the negative tone used in regard to the NWSL, despite the legal dispute being between USWNT players and the USSF, which likely creates a more negative perception of the league as a whole. As a result, this compounds the problem outlined in the literature that women's sports continued to be covered less and with less respect than men's sports. While journalistic integrity may help correct this false framing in the future, this study should instead be applied to those reading the coverage. The negative framing of the NWSL is likely incidental and due to the negative language used in such legal proceedings, so readers should be more wary of being influenced by such incidental frames.

In addition to this application, it is important to see this study's implications in regard to sports teams and how they communicate their CSR. While the organizations in this study displayed relatively good CSR fit, it did not always lead to a positive tone in the news coverage. Since news outlets can cover CSR through their own research and inquiry, press releases remain an important tool in controlling how the efforts are covered. In this study, the effects of negative terms can be seen, so it would be to the benefit of an organization to be wary of not only the events they release to the public, but the terminology that they use as well. This is especially the case for sports organizations, which are so frequently the subject of public scrutiny and rely so heavily on support from their communities.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the findings in this study are significant and interesting, there are some important limitations that must be noted. First, this study sampled local newspaper stories about three women's and three men's professional soccer teams to draw conclusions about the quantity, tone, and framing of NWSL and MLS teams' CSR coverage. While these teams were intentionally selected because the men's and women's teams in Portland, Orlando, and Houston are owned by the same organization in each city, extrapolating these results to all professional soccer teams' CSR coverage should be done with caution. As with any research that relies on a sample to make inferences about a larger population, there may be other factors that were not examined in this study that could influence the analyses in different ways. Moreover, drawing conclusions about the potential influence of the content in the CSR coverage must also be approached with caution because this investigation did not analyze readers' responses to the stories analyzed.

In fact, future research combining a content analysis with a survey could measure the relationships among CSR coverage and readers' perceptions. Such research could provide some new and useful information for scholars and practitioners, dependent upon the ways in which it supported, refined, and/or revised current assumptions media framing and corporate social responsibility theories. Moreover, an experiment that tested different quantities, tones, and frames in CSR coverage could isolate the effects of these content elements and analyze their influences on viewers' cognitions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions.

Conclusion

Overall, this study provides relevant insights into the uses of frames in the coverage of men's and women's professional sports teams' CSR activities. The results of this study indicate

there are some significant differences in the quantity, tone, and framing of the coverage between men's and women's soccer leagues. Although some variables not considered in this analysis could also be shaping the ways in which the media cover these leagues' CSR efforts, these differences provide some interesting implications for CSR as well as media framing theories and practices. In particular, this study's results indicate that, even in the realm of CSR, women's athletics continue to receive significantly less as well as less positively framed coverage than men's athletics.

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Appendix:

Pro Soccer CSR Reporting Codebook

Q1 Coder's initials

○ PS (1)

○ DP (2)

○ JV (4)

○ Other (3) _____

- -

Q2 What is the year of this report?

○ 2016 (1)

○ 2017 (2)

○ 2018 (3)

○ 2019 (4)

- -

Q3 What is the date of this report? (month/day/year), for example: 05/10/2017 for May 10, 2017

_____

- -

Q4 Cut-and-paste the headline here:

_____

- -

Q5 What is the source of this report?

○ Portland Oregonian (11)

○ Orlando Sentinel (12)

○ Houston Chronicle (13)

Q6 How many words is this report?

○ 0 - 99 words (1)

○ 100 - 500 (2)

○ 501 - 750 (3)

○ 751-1000 (7)

○ 1001 - 1250 (4)

○ 1251-1500 (8)

○ 1501 - 2000 (5)

○ 2000+ (6)

Q7 How many words are in this report?

_____

Q11 What team(s) are mentioned in this report? Check all that apply.

☐   Houston Dash (1)

☐   Houston Dynamos (2)

☐   Orlando Pride (3)

☐   Orlando City (4)

☐   Portland Thorns (5)

☐   Portland Timbers (6)

☐   Others: Enter team(s) below: (7)

_____

Q12 Which team is the most prominent in this report? Especially focus on headline, first paragraph(s), and word-counts related to that team to determine which one is prominent if more than one team is mentioned.

○ Houston Dash (1)

○ Houston Dynamos (2)

○ Dash & Dynamo Equally (3)

○ Orlando Pride (4)

○ Orlando City (5)

○ Pride & City Equally (6)

○ Portland Thorns (7)

○ Portland Timbers (8)

○ Thorns and Timbers Equally (9)

○ Other: enter team below (10)

_____

Q10 Does this report mention the leagues specifically: NWSL or the MLS?

○ Mentions NWSL (1)

○ Mentions MLS (2)

○ Mentions both NWSL & MLS (3)

○ Mentions neither NWSL or MLS (4)

Q9 Is the NWSL or MSL team central or incidental to the content in this report? Especially focus on headline, first paragraph(s), word-counts (team name mentions/related content), and/or image(s) to determine whether the NWSL or MSL team(s) is/are central or incidental to the content in this report. For instance, if the team name is NOT in the headline; the team name is not in the first paragraph and it is only mentioned once and not referred to again in the report; and if there is no image showing team member(s), logo(s), or branded material in the image, it is an incidental mention.

○ Central focus of report (1)

○ Incidental mention in report (2)

Q13 Does this story mention particular players or members of the team organizations?

☐   Mentions particular players (1)

☐   Mentions particular team organization members/employees/coaches/staff (2)

☐   No (3)

Q14 If this story mentions particular player(s) or team organization(s), which team(s) are those players/members on?

☐ This story does not mention particular players (1)

☐ Dash (2)

☐ Dynamo (3)

☐ Pride (4)

☐ Orlando City (5)

☐ Thorns (6)

☐ Timbers (7)

☐ Others: Enter team(s) below: (8)

_____

Q15 If a particular player(s) or team organization member(s)/employee(s) are the most prominent/dominant focus of this report, which team(s) do they play for? Especially focus on headline, first paragraph(s), word-counts, and/or image(s) to make this determination.

☐   No particular player or organization member is the major focus of this report (1)

☐   Houston Dash (2)

☐   Houston Dynamos (3)

☐   Dash & Dynamo Players Equally (4)

☐   Orlando Pride (5)

☐   Orlando City (6)

☐   Pride & City Players Equally (7)

☐   Portland Thorns (8)

☐   Portland Timbers (9)

☐   Thorns and Timbers Players Equally (10)

☐   Other: please enter (11)

_____

☐   This story does not mention particular players (12)

Q16 Who is quoted in this report?

☐   No quotes in this report (10)

☐   Team Owner/Executive (1)

☐   Team Player (2)

☐   Community Leader/Member (3)

☐   Nonprofit/charity official (9)

☐   Other business owner/executive (4)

☐   Political or government official (5)

☐   League official (6)

☐   Journalist (7)

☐   Other (8) _____

Q17 What aspect(s) of CSR is/are mentioned in this report? Check all that apply.

☐   Environmental: recycling, saving water, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (1)

_____

☐   Community: involvement in community engagement activities, events, organizations, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (2)

_____

☐   Philanthropy: donating money or resources to charity or underserved populations, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (3)

_____

☐   Legal: compliance with laws/regulations - promoting more equitable laws, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (4)

_____

☐   Ethics: promoting "better" behavior, diversity and inclusion; fairness, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (5) _____

☐   Economic/Financial: contributing to the economic development of the community, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (6)

_____

☐   Mentions success of team: playoffs; victories; revenue generated; game attendance/viewership, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (7)

_____

☐   Salaries: explain salaries mention below (9)

_____

☐   Other: please explain (8)

_____

Q18 What aspect of CSR is the dominant in this report? Especially focus on headline, first paragraph(s), word-counts (searches and content related to the specific CSR categories listed below), and/or image(s) to make this determination.

○ Environmental: recycling, saving water, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (1)

_____

○ Community: involvement in community engagement activities, events, organizations, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (2)

_____

○ Philanthropy: donating money or resources to charity or underserved populations, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (3)

_____

○ Legal: compliance with laws/regulations - promoting more equitable laws, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (4) _____

○ Ethics: promoting "better" behavior, diversity and inclusion; fairness, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (5) _____

○ Economic/Financial: contributing to the economic development of the community, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (6)

_____

○ Mentions success of team: playoffs; victories; revenue generated; game attendance/viewership, etc. (enter brief explanation in box) (7)

_____

○ Salaries: explain salaries mention below: (9)

_____

○ Other: please explain: (8) _____

Q19 How does this report mention other organizations as well as the NWSL or MSL team? Check all that apply and enter any comments needed to explain selection in the text box:

☐   This report does not mention any other organization (1)

☐   Mentions a charity or charities/nonprofit organization(s) (2)

_____

☐   Mentions community or civic organization(s) such as:club(s) such as schools, Rotary Club, or other non-governmental or non-charity organizations (3)

_____

☐   Mentions corporate (for-profit company) sponsors or partners (4)

_____

☐   Mentions stadium name that includes name of another organization (e.g., BBVA Compass Bank Stadium) (5) _____

☐   Mentions governmental/political organization such as city commission or legal/judicial/courts (6) _____

☐   Mentions team's lawyers/legal representation (7)

_____

☐   Mentions social cause/organization: improving health, caring for kids, advocating for LGBT rights; equal compensation (8)

_____

☐   Other: enter (9) _____

Q21 Can you Google the headline and find this article online? If so, is there an image in this report and who is shown? Click all that are shown.

☐   No image (8)

☐   Houston Dash Player/Organization Member (1)

☐   Houston Dynamo Player/Organization Member (2)

☐   Orlando Pride Player/Organization Member (3)

☐   Orlando City Soccer Player/Organization Member (4)

☐   Portland Thorns Player/Organization Member (5)

☐   Portland Timbers Player/Organization Member (6)

☐   Others (7) _____

Q22 If there is an image, who is the most prominent/dominant?

○ No image accessible (8)

○ Houston Dash Player/Organization Member (1)

○ Houston Dynamo Player/Organization Member (2)

○ Orlando Pride Player/Organization Member (3)

○ Orlando City Soccer Player/Organization Member (4)

○ Portland Thorns Player/Organization Member (5)

○ Portland Timbers Player/Organization Member (6)

○ Others (7) _____

Q23 If the image shows others, who are they?

☐ No others shown in picture (6)

☐ Business partners/sponsors (1)

☐ Community leaders (2)

☐ Benefactors of CSR efforts (3)

☐ Celebrities (4)

☐ Other: please specify (5)

_____

Q31 Is the tone of this report mostly neutral, positive, or negative? Pay particular attention to the headline and first paragraph. The default answer to this item is neutral; stories that objectively report facts matter-of-factly are neutral. Stories that use words such as success, win, celebrate are positive. Stories that use words such as loss or frame issues as negative are negative.

○ Negative (1)

○ Neutral (4)

○ Postiive (2)

Q24 If there is any interesting, substantive content in this article that is not captured in the above coding, please note it here.

_____

Q8 DO NOT CODE FOR NEWS ARTICLES: If the press release includes a link at the end that takes you to the original press release posted online, go to that original press release to answer the rest of these questions. Also, indicate whether this press release includes a link to the original online press release source and copy and paste that link below. For example, at the end of some press releases, you will see text like this: To view the original version on PR Newswire, visit:*http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/**houston-dash**-forward-kealia-ohai-and-bbva-compass-aim-to-create-opportunities-in-new-brand-ambassador-agreement-300455407.html*

○ No link to original, online press release source provided (1)

○ Yes, link to original, online press release source is provided: (cut-and-paste in text box) (2) _____

Q20 DO NOT CODE FOR NEWS ARTICLES: If the report includes a link to the original press release, is there an image?

○ No working link to original content (1)

○ Yes, there is an image (2)

○ No, there is no image (3)

End of Block: Default Question Block