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This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the program chair, has been presented to and accepted by the Department of Communication and Media Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. An electronic copy of the original signature page is kept on file with the Archbishop Alemany Library.

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**Corporate Social Responsibility and Minor League Baseball:
The Pacific Association and Community Engagement**

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Communications and Media
Studies and the Honors Program

Dominican University of California

2019

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Abstract

Attendance at all levels of baseball is the lowest it has been in 15 years (Kessler, 2018). And with decreasing levels of and social capital, communities are losing trust and civic engagement (Putnam, 2000). Sports teams foster higher levels of trust within their communities (Walker & Kent, 2009). Corporate Social Responsibility provides a way to foster this trust through activities led by sports teams in a community. This includes players visiting schools, libraries, or hosting camps and clinics. This makes Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) much more effective with the inclusion of sports teams (Walker & Kent, 2009). Previous studies addressed the different strategies of CSR related to sport (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009) and how factors besides CSR can influence attendance at sporting events (Horowitz, 2007). This thesis examined to what extent employing CSR helps minor-league baseball teams attract support. The research employed a case study of three unaffiliated minor league baseball teams within the Pacific Association and how they used CSR in their communities. Content analysis was conducted on local newspapers and each team's Instagram account. The research showed that while the number of CSR Instagram posts does not have a direct effect on attendance there is a relationship. The team with the highest level of CSR engagement had the highest attendance levels and the team with the lowest CSR engagement had the lowest attendance levels.

Introduction

Baseball is America's pastime. It's the sport Americans turn to from March to October for entertainment in their home and at ballparks across the country. From little league to the major leagues, baseball is a part of the fabric of America. Fans have flocked to ballparks for hundreds of years. It's a place to cheer for your favorite team, find camaraderie with other fans, meet new people, and enjoy the game of baseball.

At one time Major League Baseball (MLB) attendance was at its highest, with over 79.5 million fans attending games throughout the 2007 season (Brown, 2018). Millions of fans across the country came to games, bringing their families and friends. In recent years this has changed. Attendance has dropped throughout the MLB and even in the minors. In 2018, attendance levels across baseball suffered alarming drops with just over 69.6 million fans. Major League baseball hit a 15-year low and affiliated minor league baseball hit a 14-year low (Kessler, 2018; Cooper, 2018). It even trickles to the independent unaffiliated minor league or "Indy ball" level, the focus of this study. The Pacific Association's attendance levels were the lowest they had even been in its 2018 season. This is lowest its seven seasons of existence (Pointstreak, 2018).

Something has changed in society. People aren't coming out to baseball games spending time with likeminded people, enjoying time face to face, and watching baseball. Instead, they are staying home or enjoying other entertainment. This creates a dilemma for sports teams and viewers. Sports teams need income, generated through ticket sales, and communities benefit from engaging their citizens (Putnam, 2000).

Sports teams play a unique role in their communities, unlike other agencies or organized groups. Sports teams foster higher levels of trust within their communities (Walker & Kent, 2009). This creates an avenue for sports teams to have a positive impact

on their local community. Communities' benefit when local organizations engage, unite, and empower the citizens who live in the area. Communities are provided with opportunities they otherwise would not have to engage with their fellow citizens. Having support in the community provides opportunities for teams as well. Sports teams provide better social support than other institutions like employers (Nicholson, Brown, Hoye, 2014). Sports teams are distinctive parts of a community that can create positive impacts on society through education, camaraderie, and support. This situation is a win-win. There are opportunities for teams as well. They are able to use the community for support through host families, word of mouth, and of course ticket sales (Pacifics, 2018). With attendance levels dropping across the sport of baseball teams need to get creative about how they engage fans and get them into the park (Kessler, 2018).

This study looks at Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and how it can be used as a tool to combat the trend of lower attendance across the sport of baseball. Corporate Social Responsibility is defined in this study as; a form of corporate Public Relations (PR) (Peters, 2005) that are actions undertaken to better local society using a company's specific toolset. If there is a link between CSR and increased attendance, teams have an opportunity to adapt in ways to better use CSR in their community and increase their attendance as well as profits.

This study looks to answer the question; to what extent does employing CSR help minor-league baseball teams attract support? This thesis will begin with a look at the current literature surrounding CSR, attendance, and Social Capital, examining the gap in the relationship between CSR and attendance. Secondly, the case study of three minor league baseball teams in the Pacific Association, The San Rafael Pacifics, Sonoma

Stompers, and Pittsburg Diamonds (formerly Pittsburg Mettle) will be discussed. The study has two parts, examining the presence of CSR in stories by local newspapers for each team and CSR's presence in the teams Instagram accounts for each season over four years (2014-2018).

Background

Minor League Baseball is part of the fabric of many small towns across America. It's where the future stars of the big leagues are developed. It's professional baseball on a small scale where many players are playing because they love the game. Since 1901 Minor League Baseball has been present in America (MLB, 2019). Minor League Baseball teams are known in the industry as teams willing to try anything to get a crowd or give back to their community. Their "weirdness" is a long-standing American tradition (Landers, 2014). Each year Approximately 10,000 Minor League Baseball games are played, spread out over 14 leagues and six levels of play in the US (Hill, 2011). That means there are opportunities for many promotions to get people to attend games.

These promotions not only get people in the seats but they also help the local communities. The promotions range from building multiple local youth sports fields in 24 hours to hosting Awful Night, where the game itself is actually supposed to be awful (Hill, 2011). The creator of the Pacific Association and the Pacifics former Owner and President was famous for asking, "Will it get butts in the seats?" when anyone came to him with an idea. Minor league teams will do anything to get a "butt in a seat".

The teams in this study are no strangers to crazy promotions. The San Rafael Pacifics had their players wear dresses in a game to support breast cancer awareness and the Sonoma Stompers hosted "Fathers Day Remix" where they read dad jokes throughout the game and encouraged kids to dress as their dad. Kids got in free every Sunday with a special pass in San Rafael and every Little League player in Marin County (where the Pacifics are located) received a free ticket. Kids who completed summer reading programs got a free ticket. By getting creative with promotions that benefit themselves and their communities, they become an active participant in their local communities.

The creation of the Pacific Association in Northern California stemmed from many leagues before it. Independent baseball on the west coast started with the Golden State League (1995), the Western League (1995-2002), the Golden League (2004-2010) and the North American Baseball League (2011-2012) (Pacifics, 2019). In 2013 the Pacific Association was born. It was and is the only independent Minor League Baseball league on the west coast (History, 2019). Independent Minor League Baseball differs from other Minor League Baseball in that it is not affiliated with a major league team. It does not automatically feed into a higher level of play that players advance to, although some do. The Pacific Association has no connection to any MLB team. They are made up of only “Indy” ball teams.

The first season in 2013 included three teams from the North American Baseball League, which had ended the year before (Pacifics, 2019). The teams playing in 2013 were two Hawaiian based teams, the San Rafael Pacifics, East Bay Lumberjacks and Vallejo Admirals (Pacifics, 2019). By 2014 only the Pacifics and Admirals remained. The Sonoma Stompers and Pittsburg Mettle, who would later become the Pittsburg Diamonds, joined them. These are the “core four” of the Pacific Association. Until 2018 they were the only four teams in the league. In 2018 two additional teams were added, the Napa Silverados and the Martinez Clippers (Pacifics, 2019).

Each season consists of 80 games, 40 played on the road and 40 played at home. The games are played Tuesday to Sunday, with Mondays as the league off day. The previous championship format had the first half of the season winners play the second half winner for the championship. In 2018 a new format was introduced with playoff games at the end of their regular season to decide the championship game. The league

now consists of six professional teams who, like all other minor league teams, will do anything to get a butt in a seat.

Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a topic that spans decades and still remains relatively undefined. It relates to many areas of study throughout business and communication literature. There is still debate about how it is used in these areas. It is best understood when defined through the lens of the company engaging it. This study looks at sports teams, specifically at the independent minor league level, and how CSR can impact the community and gather support for the teams. The literature around CSR, attendance, and community are best examined by looking at the evolution of their definitions and relationships.

Corporate Social Responsibility Eras

The field of CSR has evolved over time. In each piece of work, CSR is defined in a slightly different way. The definitions stem from previous work, but each is uniquely its own. The story of CSR began at the end of the 19th century and has evolved into something quite different over the years (Carroll, 2008).

During each decade CSR evolved and adapted to the times. *A History of Corporate Social Responsibility* divides CSR into eras, looking at its roots and evolution through time (Carroll, 2008). Up until the 1950s, CSR was in the ‘philanthropic’ era; this consisted of businesses donating money to charities (Carroll, 2008; Frederick, 2008). Engaging in CSR was simply a monetary donation, and nothing more. The ‘awareness’ era in CSR followed this, beginning in 1953 and lasting until 1968. This was the time period in which companies recognized their unique responsibility to society and their need to be involved in the community (Carroll, 2008). Spanning a shorter time was the ‘issue’ era, from 1968-1973. At this time in history, companies chose specific issues to

tackle that affected society, these included issues such as pollution or discrimination (Carroll, 2008).

These eras are generally agreed upon throughout the CSR research; however, in *Corporate Social Responsibility Deep Roots, Flourishing Growth, Promising Future* Frederick (2008) disagrees on the timeline. In his work, he combines the 'issue' era with the 'awareness' era. His timeline of CSR slightly differs, but the same major theme applies; CSR is a response to the social demands of the time (Frederick, 2008). Modern decades, from 1974- 2008, are in the responsiveness era. This era consists of making management decisions and organizational choices based on CSR (Carroll, 2008). This means the business has a greater involvement in CSR. This is the trend Carroll says continues today in businesses (2008). The eras of CSR provide an overview of the ways it has changed throughout the decades. It remains an ever-changing idea, which continues to adapt to the times.

The Threes of CSR

CSR has many parts. The categories, components, and drivers are the main pieces of CSR engagement and functionality in businesses. The three categories are economic, legal and ethical. The components are ethical, altruistic, and strategic. The three drivers are consumers, managers, and government.

Schwartz and Carroll's (2003) work on CSR, explains the three categories of CSR: economic, legal, and ethical. He presented them in a Venn diagram, where the categories overlap in some areas. This provides a useful tool for companies to analyze their CSR engagement (Carroll, 2008). Each category of CSR created "organizational characteristics" (40) that would assist firms in analyzing their CSR initiatives.

The three components of CSR, first developed by Santos in 2001, according to Peters were ethical, altruistic, and strategic (2004). He argues that all businesses have an ethical responsibility to not harm society, but that certain businesses should not engage in altruistic CSR without being strategic. While CSR is important for society, it must be done strategically to avoid creating a debt or burden on the company. It must be “good works which are also good for business”(Peters, 2004, p. 207).

The final “three” of CSR are the drivers. Three main groups drive CSR’s existence. These consist of the consumer, managers, and the government (Crane, McWilliams, Matten, Moon, Siegel, 2008). The consumer is able to reward businesses engaged in CSR by supporting them with their dollars. They also have the ability to punish those who ignore CSR, by spending their money elsewhere (Crane, et al, 2008). Consumers are vastly different across the world so their ability to drive CSR varies with their unique qualities.

Managers make the decisions in companies; so naturally, they play a large role in CSR. They are able to make decisions on how resources are spent and how initiatives are implemented (Crane, et al, 2008). Managers, including CEOs, therefore have a responsibility to lead the company in the correct direction regarding CSR and can have an influence on CSR. There is some conflict in CSR literature, where opponents believe that the managers engaging in CSR are an "inefficient use of corporate resources" (p.573). These opponents of CSR would rather time be spent elsewhere and managers not waste company resources.

The final driver of CSR is the government. In countries where the government is lacking in infrastructure or regulations, it often falls to companies to lead the way

regarding societal issues (Crane, et al, 2008). Businesses can create sustainable environments and stable economies; they are able to fill the void left by the government. The authors argue that a social need not addressed by the government creates a relationship between citizens and companies where the business benefits along with the citizens (Crane, et al, 2008).

In countries with more stable and prominent governments, companies can be influenced to engage in CSR by these governments. The government can create laws and standards companies must follow or they may offer incentives (Crane, et al, 2008). Either way, they are encouraging CSR in companies.

The Best Practices of CSR

There are six major types of social initiatives in CSR (Crane, et al, 2008). The first is Cause Promotion, which consists of bringing awareness to a specific issue in society. Cause-related marketing, when a company pledges to donate part of sales income to a certain cause is the second type. The third and fourth relate to the corporate side. The third, and first Corporate based is Corporate Social Marketing that creates a “behavior change initiative,” similar to campaigns launched to get people to quit smoking. The fourth and second corporate-based type is corporate philanthropy. This is a direct donation to a cause. The National Football League (NFL) frequently does this with charities that focus on keeping children active. Community volunteering is the fifth type that puts employees, athletes, or other representatives of the organization directly into the community to donate their time. The sixth type is socially responsible business practices. The government can regulate this as Crane, et al (2008) suggests or it can be driven from inside the company.

“The” Definition

Although CSR has many uniting aspects, as addressed above, it still lacks a unified definition. From the 1950s to today one clear definition has not been determined, and the definition of the CSR will likely continue to be adapted in the future. In 1953, Howard Bowen (The Father of CSR) coined the original definition of CSR, although he referred to it as Social Responsibility (SR). “(SR) refers to the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of objectives and values of our society” (Carroll, 2008, p. 25). It was the first definition in which the responsibility of businessmen was clearly stated and

expectations set. From this general definition, many new ones arose. In 1991 CSR was defined as “The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll, 1991, p. 28). This definition anchored the idea in time, meaning it would develop, as needs change over time. The details of CSR would depend on the time and society’s needs.

Crowther and Rayman- Bacchus (2004) looked at the many variations of CSR and take it back to the basics, defining it as having a concern for the relationship between a corporation and its local society. During the early 2000s, CSR was in a growth period (Vogel, 2005). There was a focus on “doing well” and “doing good” in the world (Vogel, 2005). Companies should do well in regards to their bottom line, while also doing good in their local and global communities. There was also the development of corporate PR, which is using CSR as a tool for public relations (Peters, 2005). This benefits both the community and the business as they receive recognition for their acts (Peters, 2005). Porter & Kramer (2006) argue that CSR should consist of each company choosing one social problem to address that will benefit them and their community. There is no blanket definition or one way to use CSR. In that vein, it is said that CSR engagement also depends on a company’s motivations (Crane, McWilliams, Matten, Moon, Siegel, 2008).

Some agreement was found between definitions in their flexibility. Like Porter & Kramer (2006) and Crane (et al) (2008), Frederick (2008) agreed the CSR must vary by each company. But Frederick (2008) adds that they must be deliberate acts to enhance the social well-being of those affected by companies’ choices. The next definition in time is voluntary actions taken by a firm that are designed to improve social or environmental

conditions (Mackey, Mackey, & Barney, 2008). Mackey, et al (2008) focuses on the idea of compensated altruism versus costly philanthropy, this helps both the business and society.

The most recent definition of CSR is by the scholars Tai & Chuang (2014) in their article, Corporate Social Responsibility. They define CSR as “a process with the aim to embrace responsibility for the company’s actions and encourage a positive impact through its activities on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and all other members of the public sphere who may also be considered stakeholders” (Tai & Chuang, 2014, p.118).

CSR & Sports

CSR in sports is different from CSR in other fields. This study will look at both CSR and attendance. The primary scholars in the field of CSR and sports are Babiak and Wolfe (2006; 2009; 2013). Through their varying research they found a variety of things including the relationship between a sports team and their local community is key, the four factors for CSR creation and implementation; passion, economics, transparency, and stakeholder management, and finally the “pillars in CSR”; labor relations, environmental management and sustainability, community relations, philanthropy, diversity and equity, and corporate governance. While they are the primary scholars in the field, plenty of other work has been done relating to CSR and sports.

Like CSR in all fields, CSR and sports had its boom in the early 2000s, when a majority of the field’s studies were published. It began with a focus on community relations and sports. These community relations consist of functions that allow the organizations to monitor and participate in the community (Mullin, Hardy and Sutton,

2000). There are four interrelated goals/ functions that sports team use: using speaker's bureaus to inform the community, creating clinics and player appearances, having a mascot, cheerleader and band appearances, and correspondence with the community (Mullin, Hardy and Sutton, 2000). These serve to generate a higher awareness, more visibility, and publicity for teams, create goodwill in the community, create new programs, and support existing ones (Mullin, Hardy and Sutton, 2000, p. 337). There is a focus on the importance of the player in CSR. The player's presence is key for the success of programs and initiatives. Players can attract the media, sponsors, participants, and benefactors of the programs (Mullin, Hardy and Sutton, 2000).

Babiak & Wolfe (2006) found in their 2006 study on CSR that it is crucial to have a strong relationship with the organizations in a local community. They state that CSR is a necessary strategy and it cannot be ignored. CSR must be undertaken by sports teams as a tool to grow and thrive as an organization (Babiak & Wolfe, 2006). CSR could be done with a concern for the greater good (altruism) or for gaining money, as long as it is undertaken by the organization, the motivations don't matter.

Babiak & Wolfe (2009) followed their research on engaging in CSR with a more specific look at why sports differ from regular businesses when engaging in CSR. Sports organizations are different from other businesses so the drivers of CSR also differ. In the sports world, they say there are four factors for CSR creation and implementation: passion, economics, transparency, and stakeholder management (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). These four factors dictate how sports organizations undertake CSR. Building on their first study that CSR is necessary, this more in-depth research looks at how sports teams implement CSR.

Babiak and Sheth (2009) go further in a study regarding why CSR is a good business practice. Sports teams use CSR for "image enhancement" and as a public relations strategy. Those two ideas are mixed with the desire to "do the right thing" or altruism. Babiak and Sheth (2009) find that ethics and philanthropy appear to be the drivers of practicing CSR in sports. CSR is undertaken for the good of it, not for the image it presents. However, there are benefits to be had by the image it creates for sports organizations.

Studies have also been done on specific types of sports teams. A study done in the NFL showed that NFL teams are regarded highly in their communities (Walker & Kent, 2009). This relationship can be strengthened through the use of CSR. This advantage means that organizations should develop specific marketing strategies based on CSR that address societal issues.

CSR & sports is further developed by Babiak & Wolfe (2013) with their discussion and development of six new pillars. Babiak & Wolfe (2013) describe the pillars of CSR in sport, which are adapted from Carroll (2008) and Porter (2008). These pillars are; labor relations, environmental management and sustainability, community relations, philanthropy, diversity and equity, and corporate governance (Babiak & Wolfe, 2013, p. 21-22). These six pillars show the vast CSR options available to sports organizations.

Babiak & Wolfe (2013) turn back to the idea of community relations, defining this aspect as "leveraging organizational resources; the resources can include financial support, athletes, coaches, trainers, mascots, facilities, and logos" (Babiak & Wolfe, 2013, p. 24-25).

In a recent study looking at the implementation plans for CSR in sports, a clear winner was found. There are two defined ways to implement CSR in sports, the Foundation Model and The Community Department (Coburn & Frawley, 2017). It was determined that the Foundation Model creates better access than a Community Department (Coburn & Frawley, 2017). The Foundation Model engages the entire organization has better success.

Social Capital

In *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam, social capital is defined as "the connections among individuals' social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000, p.19). A community is formed using these social networks and this boosts trustworthiness and social capital. Putnam tells us social capital is declining and this is detrimental for society. Social capital "...has many features that help people translate aspirations into realities" (Putnam, 2000, p. 28). This decrease in social capital is caused by the lack of community interactions in social settings. There is an agreement in the field that social capital brings individuals positive benefits from belonging to social networks or structured groups (Portes, 2000).

Social capital causes an overall increase in social environments, trust, connectivity, individual health and happiness (Putnam, 2000). It creates a more united and healthy society. Society is better able to solve problems collectively, share information, create healthier and happier individuals, and understand how connected each individual is. With social capital lacking scholars say there must be a "...extraordinary burst of social inventiveness and political reform..." to restore it (Putnam, 2000, p. 368). Social capital is what helps to increase civic engagement and without it, there is less trust

in the government and involvement in things like voting (Putnam, 2000). A burst of “social inventiveness” is the solution to the decline of social capital. Sports teams can be a part of this through developments in communities. There is research into the unique aspect sports provide. It was found that sport and non-sport community activities had more success in creating social support than institutions similar to work (Nicholson, Brown, & Hoye, 2014). Sports have the ability to increase social capital in a unique way.

A study undertaken in 2002 looked at the community's levels of civic engagement and found that any involvement in civic participation is short and sporadic (Wuthnow, 2002). Wuthnow (2002) agreed with Putnam that traditional kinds of civic engagement are decreasing, but believes that there are new forms. They are made up of “loose connections” instead of the previous more formal institutions (Wuthnow, 2002). Sports teams involvement in CSR could potentially be one of these loose connections.

Social capital’s relationship with CSR is not widely studied. In 2015 one study looked at the effect social capital has on CSR. CSR activities were facilitated by social capital in a community (Hoi, Wu, Zhang, 2015). Their research found a relationship between CSR and social capital that has not been explored further.

Community & Attendance

Baseball attendance is driven by many factors, but the subject is not well studied. The factors that affect attendance levels are hard to isolate and study. Attendance at the level of minor league baseball is also not well understood or studied. There is a gap in the literature and its possible CSR could play a role in understanding attendance levels.

There is disagreement on whether winning has an effect or not on attendance in baseball. Horowitz (2007) says that winning has no effect on attendance in baseball. He found that there are possible effects on attendance stemming from ticket prices, free agency, the advent of television, and the creation of new stadiums. Each might be relevant to some teams more than others or completely irrelevant (Horowitz, 2007). There is a gap in looking at CSR as a factor on attendance levels. Another study found that winning has a small effect on attendance at lower levels of baseball; however, research is not certain about what else affects attendance levels (Gitter, Seth, and Rhoads, 2010).

The literature surrounding sports, attendance, community, and CSR has evolved over time, definitions have changed, ideas have been added and progress has been made. While the definitions vary, all agree that there is no concrete definition of CSR. It is not something that is one size fits all, there are no formal requirements, and it has been and will remain flexible. For the purposes of this study, CSR is defined using pieces of these previous definitions. The formal definition is: CSR is a form of corporate public relations (PR) (Peters, 2005) that consists of actions undertaken to better local society using a company's specific toolset. This is the kind of CSR that build social capital. The subject

of this study is the Pacific Association, an unaffiliated minor league baseball located in Marin County, CA. This strategy is what the Pacific Association focuses on.

From the NFL to MLB CSR is studied, but there is no literature on CSR and unaffiliated minor league baseball, the focus of this study. This thesis seeks to examine the relationship between CSR and attendance, to see to what extent attendance is increased by CSR engagement.

Theoretical Framework

Previous literature has examined the effect of CSR and sports in the areas of best practices, types of engagement, how to use CSR, and why CSR is a good business practice (Babiak and Wolfe, 2006; 2009; 2013; Babiak & Sheth, 2009). There are studies on how attendance is affected by factors besides CSR (Horowitz, 2007; Gitter, Seth, and Rhoads 2010). The majority of the research in this field looks at CSR and its importance in fostering relationships in the community (Peters, 2005; Carroll, 2008). Investigating the relationship could be helpful for both teams and communities. One of the most important factors for a minor league baseball team is their attendance level. The lack of studies on the relationship between sports organizations and their positive impacts on the community provides a starting point for the research undertaken in this study on the Pacific Association.

This study looks at CSR and its connection to attendance and its potential to build community. Putnam (2000) argues civic engagement can increase trust and foster higher levels of engagement in a community. CSR used in minor league baseball teams could do this through their use of CSR. Teams posts on Instagram documenting their use of CSR used similar language to Putnam's. For example, the teams use words like "community" and "support" in their posts (Instagram, 2019). By engaging in CSR they are engaging in community building. CSR benefits both the business and the community. Engaging in more CSR can increase attendance levels for teams. This also can increase social capital as citizens come out to enjoy games and interact with others. There is the potential for increased attendance alongside increased social capital. The use of CSR by a minor-league sports team could possibly increase attendance, which could foster higher levels of engagement and trust in local communities. This study examines this relationship.

Methodology

A case study was used to examine the relationship between CSR in Minor League Baseball and its connection with attendance. This case study was conducted using three Minor League Baseball teams from the Pacific Association in Northern California. These teams are unaffiliated with major league baseball and represent a kind of minor league team not previously studied in relation to CSR. The three teams chosen for the case study have been in existence since 2014 and all operate under the same league rules. These teams are the San Rafael Pacifics, the Sonoma Stompers, and the Pittsburg Diamonds. This case study will involve the collection of qualitative data from the three teams and then use content analysis to interpret it.

When collecting evidence in a case study there are two important points according to the author of *Case Study Research Methods*, Bill Gillham (2000). The first is that the evidence must be kept in a "case study database" (Gillham, 200, p20). Data must be organized and kept track of. In this research, the data was collected using content analysis through code sheets and tracked through excel spreadsheets and graphs. Gillham (2000, p20) seconds important point to evidence collection is the need for multiple sources. In this study, the teams Instagram and local newspapers are studied. The data comes from two sources. One provided to the public directly by the team, their personal Instagram account. The other from an outside source, a local newspaper

The content analysis conducted for each team is used to see the frequency in which teams are engaging in CSR. Internal records from teams were not available to gather data from. The code sheet for Instagram (see Appendix A) records the number of total posts along with CSR related posts per month by each team. The specific type of CSR engaged in is not recorded only its presence or absence. The types of CSR that were

looked for are Library visits, school visits, free tickets, autographs signing sessions, career days, player appearances, mascot appearances, staff appearance, camps & clinics, parade, Homerun Derby, monetary fundraising/donations, hospital visits, and other (see Appendix B). It lists the specific elements of CSR that could be employed. These were chosen because of the team's unique ability to provide them and the ability they have to better local society.

The other data necessary for this study is the attendance levels for the three teams from 2014 through 2018. Attendance levels are publicly available online. Attendance is recorded for each game. Each season the total attendance and average per game attendance are recorded for the teams (see Table 1).

In order to see the effect of CSR on attendance levels, the CSR must be public as attendance can only be affected when the public knows of the CSR. The two public platforms, Instagram and newspapers, provide a way to see the connection between CSR and attendance.

Data Collection

The data for this research was obtained from public sources available on the Internet. The first step in the data collection was choosing the teams to examine. The three teams that were chosen all had active, public Instagram accounts and local newspapers that covered them. They all recorded their attendance in Pointstreak, a league-wide system.

Code sheets were created to analyze the Instagram posts and newspaper articles (See appendices A & B). The numbers of posts or articles were recorded on a monthly basis starting from January 2014 and ending in December 2018. These were totaled each year and then totaled for the entire four years. The Pacifics had 63 total articles, none related to CSR. The Sonoma Stompers had 22 total articles, one related to CSR. The Pittsburg Diamonds had 14 total articles, one related to CSR. This data was then compared to attendance (See Figure 1). The newspaper articles were found through a monthly search using the teams name as a keyword ex. "Sonoma Stompers." The publications used were *The Marin Independent Journal* for the San Rafael Pacifics, *The Press Democrat* for the Sonoma Stompers, and *Mercury News* for the Pittsburg Diamonds.

The Instagram posts were analyzed by tallying the number of CSR posts and the total number of posts each month from 2014-2018. The Pacifics had a total of 511 Instagram posts, 87 related to CSR. The Sonoma Stompers had a total of 1,499 posts, 73 related to CSR. The Pittsburg Diamonds had 259 total posts, 9 related to CSR (See Figure 2). The code sheet listed the many examples of CSR that were looked for, but some fall outside, into the category of "other." Pointstreak recorded the total attendance levels for

each team, the number of games they played in, and the average attendance at each game.

These numbers were recorded for each season for all three teams.

Findings & Analysis

The study conducted on three teams in the Pacific Association yielded unanticipated results. After coding the Instagram of each team and their local newspaper some main things were clear. Newspapers do seem to be a dying medium for sports. Some teams really like Instagram with over 18 posts a day. And CSR does connect to attendance, but not how this study originally hypothesized.

The newspaper data was very limited. The three local newspapers reported very infrequently about their local teams. If they did it was usually a game summary or standings report. For the three teams, over four years there were only two CSR related articles. One each for the Sonoma Stompers and the Pittsburg Diamonds. The San Rafael Pacifics had 63 articles written about them, however, none related to CSR. The Pacifics had the highest article count by far; Sonoma had only 22 and Pittsburg only 14 (Figure 1).

The Instagram accounts proved to be much more useful. Each team consistently posted from 2014 to 2018. The number of posts varied greatly from team to team with Sonoma posting up to 713 times in a year (2016) and Pittsburg posting only 13 times in a year (2018). Figure 2 compares the number of yearly total and CSR posts for each team. The San Rafael Pacifics had the highest amount with 87 CSR related posts; this was out of a total of 511 posts. Sonoma had the second highest with 73 CSR posts out of 1,499 total. Pittsburg has the absolute lowest with only 9 CSR posts out of 259 total. This pattern of San Rafael with the most, Sonoma slightly behind and Pittsburg very far behind is also seen with the attendance levels.

The Instagram accounts showed examples of school visits, career day speeches, Little League visits, local parades, and appearances at community venues. When

conducting the content analysis on these Instagram accounts these were the type of things looked for. They were routinely photos of groups of kids with players or players speaking in front of classrooms. There were lots of photos with players sitting at farmers markets or local restaurants interacting with fans. The captions referenced the schools, libraries, or venues they visited and thanked them for allowing the team to be a part of the organization. There were also posts that advertised the special events each team led including Homerun Derby's, fundraisers, LGBTQ nights, and Breast Cancer Awareness nights.

The attendance data shows us that the Pacifics are always the attendance leaders, with Sonoma following closely behind. Pittsburg is dead last among the three teams with a fraction of the attendance. Figure 3 represents the yearly attendance, the number of games, and the average attendance for each team. The trend in attendance, for all three teams, was down from 2014 to 2018. There is a slight increase in 2016 for all teams, but it begins to decrease again in 2017. This trend is across the sport of baseball with MLB experiencing the same downturn in attendance (Kessler, 2018).

The two teams with the highest attendance also have the highest number of Instagram posts. This could indicate they are more active on social media with their fans to entice them to attend games. However, even when Sonoma consistently posted the most amounts of Instagram posts over four years they never had the highest attendance. This suggests that there is another factor at play, the content of the posts.

San Rafael has the highest number of CSR posts. They had over 100 CSR related posts in 2014, 2017, and 2018. In those same years, they also had spikes in CSR posts during their season, May-August. The data shows that the team with the higher number

of CSR posts also have the highest attendance. Pittsburg had drastically less total posts and CSR posts and that is reflected in their attendance levels (Figures 3 & 4). The CSR levels and attendance seem to correlate, however, there are many factors that are not studied in this research. Those include social media engagement, marketing budgets, team standing, ticket cost, team location, and more. This study only takes into account the CSR's effect.

The data collected shows that while the attendance levels have been decreasing over time the CSR posts have not (Figure 4). The number of CSR posts varies each season. Sometimes the number increased, or decreased, from the past season. There is no direct correlation between the number of CSR posts and attendance levels. For example, the Pacifics first season in 2014 when they had the highest attendance with an average of 640 per game they posted only 12 times about CSR. This could be attributed to it being a new and exciting activity. The 2017 season for the Pacifics had the most CSR posts with 39; however, it had an average attendance level of only 480. The Stompers data shows the same. In 2015 they had their highest attendance with an average of 390 per game. Their CSR posts were only at 15. In 2018 they also posted 15 times about CSR and their attendance was only 227 per game. It seems that in relation to one another the teams with the most CSR have the best attendance. But the number of CSR posts does not have a direct effect on attendance levels. Yearly, the CSR did not affect attendance levels. Looking at over five years of data the team with the most CSR posts had the highest attendance. San Rafael had 87 CSR related posts, Sonoma had 73, and Pittsburg had 9 (Figure 6). This contradicts the hypothesis of this study that more CSR means higher attendance.

Conclusion

CSR has the power to engage local communities. When Minor League teams go to schools, host camps, and clinics, and do library visits the community has opportunities to come together. In *Bowling Alone* Robert Putnam (2000) addresses the decline of social capital and the benefits it offers. When a baseball team opens an otherwise closed door, a professional athlete at a school assembly, for example, they are creating a “burst of social inventiveness” which is what is needed to create social capital (Putnam, 2000, 368). Baseball games provide a unique place for people to come together with a common belief. People can socialize, learn, have fun, and make new connections in their community. One team in a community has the capacity to increase social capital. This is, of course, good for everyone. As Putnam (2000, p. 19) says, with higher levels of social capital society is better able to solve problems collectively, share information, create healthier and happier individuals, and understand how connected each individual is.

Many of the CSR acts engaged in by the three teams in the Pacific Association relate to children. The children are given many opportunities to engage with others, see role models, get out in their communities, and avoid “bowling alone.” This provides a chance for social capital to be increased not only for the current adults in the community but also for the next generations to experience the benefits of social capital.

The benefits of CSR range from increased attendance for teams, to shifts in communities thinking. The social capital increase that stems from a baseball teams engagement in CSR is good for everyone. There may not be a direct connection between attendance and CSR, but it appears that there is some correlation. Within one league the team with the most CSR consistently had the most attendance at their games, the team with the second most CSR had the second highest attendance, and so on. There is

something there. CSR has never-ending benefits for the local communities and its importance in sports should not be overlooked.

Previous literature supports the idea that CSR can be used as a tool to help sports teams (Babiak & Wolfe, 2006). The findings of this study support the literature. It shows that more CSR engagement by a team is somehow connected to increased attendance. Previous literature also supports the idea that sports teams use CSR for "image enhancement" and as a public relations strategy (Babiak & Sheth, 2009). These teams may not be actively using CSR to directly enhance their image, or as public relations strategy, but CSR may be helping them to do just that. This study supports previous studies that CSR is important for sports teams and there is a connection to the teams' success and it goes further than previous studies by looking at CSR's direct connection to attendance.

Social capital has societal effects on things like civic engagement (Putnam, 2000). Putnam explains that with declining social capital individuals are less likely to sign petitions, belong to organizations, know their neighbors, or spend time with family and friends (Putnam, 2000). Any organization that can increase civic engagement and encourages socialization is very important, and minor league baseball has that potential. With increased social capital there is more trust in the government and possibly more people voting in elections (Putnam, 2000). This study is about more than minor league baseball, there is a potential for increased trust and democratic participation, which is inarguably good for the democratic process as a whole.

There is room for many future studies on the subject of CSR and attendance at sports events. To further this study individual social media posts could be analyzed.

These individual posts engagement levels could be measured through the number of likes. With comparisons being made between the number of likes on CSR posts and non-CSR posts. If teams cooperate, individual game attendance levels spikes could be looked at throughout the season to see if there were attendance increases when the teams engaged in CSR. To understand the team's mentality in engaging in CSR and their strategy, interviews with staff and content analysis of internal documents could help shed light on CSR from their perspective and how they use it as a marketing tool.

This study showed the power one baseball team has. They are able to affect their local communities and increase social capital. They are able to increase their revenue and attendance levels. They are able to do all of this through one activity; CSR engagement. There is no one form of CSR a team can find the form that works best for them and for their community. They can develop that CSR into relationships that change the outcomes of communities and teams successful business operations. The use of CSR results by sports team results in a "win-win" for teams and communities.

Appendix A Code Sheet for Instagram

Sample Code Sheet for Instagram

Team: _____

Type of Social Media: _____

Month & Year: _____

Total posts:

CSR posts:

Notes:

Appendix B Code Sheet for Newspapers

Sample Code Sheet for Newspapers

Team: _____
Newspaper Title: _____
Date of Publication: _____
Title of Article: _____
Length of Article in Paragraphs: _____

Article Content/Focus:

Elements of CSR Mentioned:

<input type="checkbox"/> Library	<input type="checkbox"/> Free Tickets
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> Autographs Signing
<input type="checkbox"/> Career Day	<input type="checkbox"/> Player appearance
<input type="checkbox"/> Camp/Clinic	<input type="checkbox"/> Mascot Appearance
<input type="checkbox"/> Parade	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Appearance
<input type="checkbox"/> Homerun Derby	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital	

Of Sentences:

Notes:

Table 1 Team attendance 2014 - 2018

2014

Team	Total	Games	Average
San Rafael Pacifics	25,368	42	640
Sonoma Stompers	10,230	42	320
Pittsburg Mettle	3,819	42	91

2015

Team	Total	Games	Average
San Rafael Pacifics	20,610	38	542
Sonoma Stompers	14,808	38	390
Pittsburg Diamonds	3,938	39	101

2016

Team	Total	Games	Average
San Rafael Pacifics	17,025	39	437
Sonoma Stompers	13,370	39	343
Pittsburg Diamonds	2,608	38	69

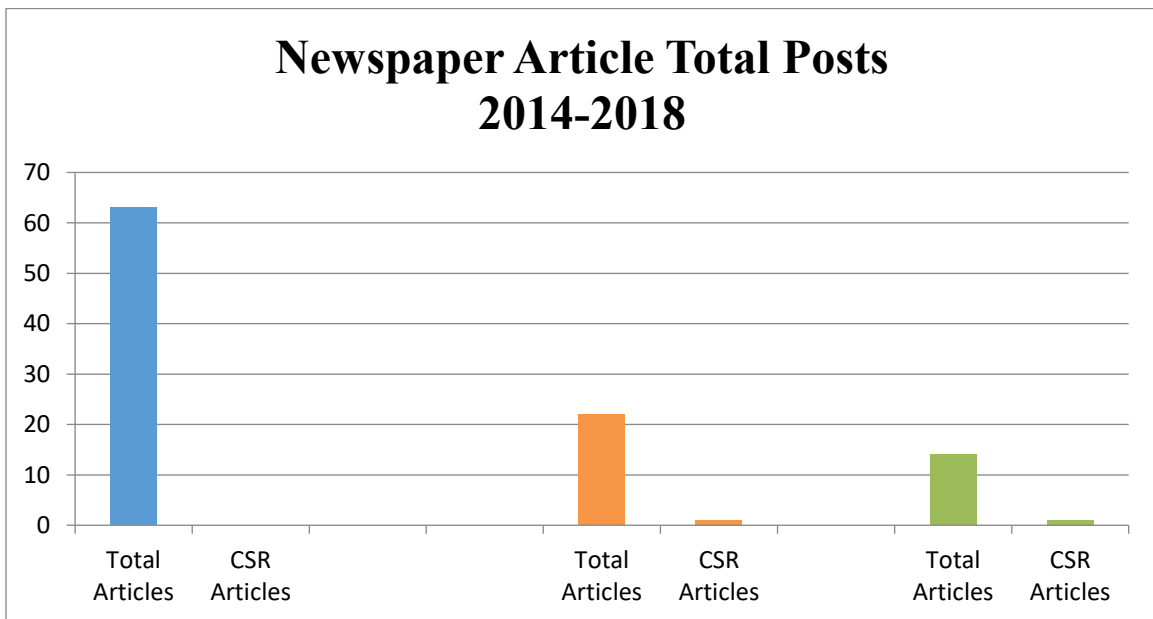
2017

Team	Total	Games	Average
San Rafael Pacifics	18,236	38	480
Sonoma Stompers	10,031	39	257
Pittsburg Diamonds	2,678	38	70

2018

Team	Total	Games	Average
San Rafael Pacifics	17,001	40	425
Sonoma Stompers	9,078	40	227
Pittsburg Diamonds	2,567	40	64

Figure 1 Newspaper article postings 2014-2018



Blue- San Rafael Pacifics

Orange- Sonoma Stompers

Green- Pittsburg Diamonds

Figure 2 Yearly Instagram posts 2014-2018

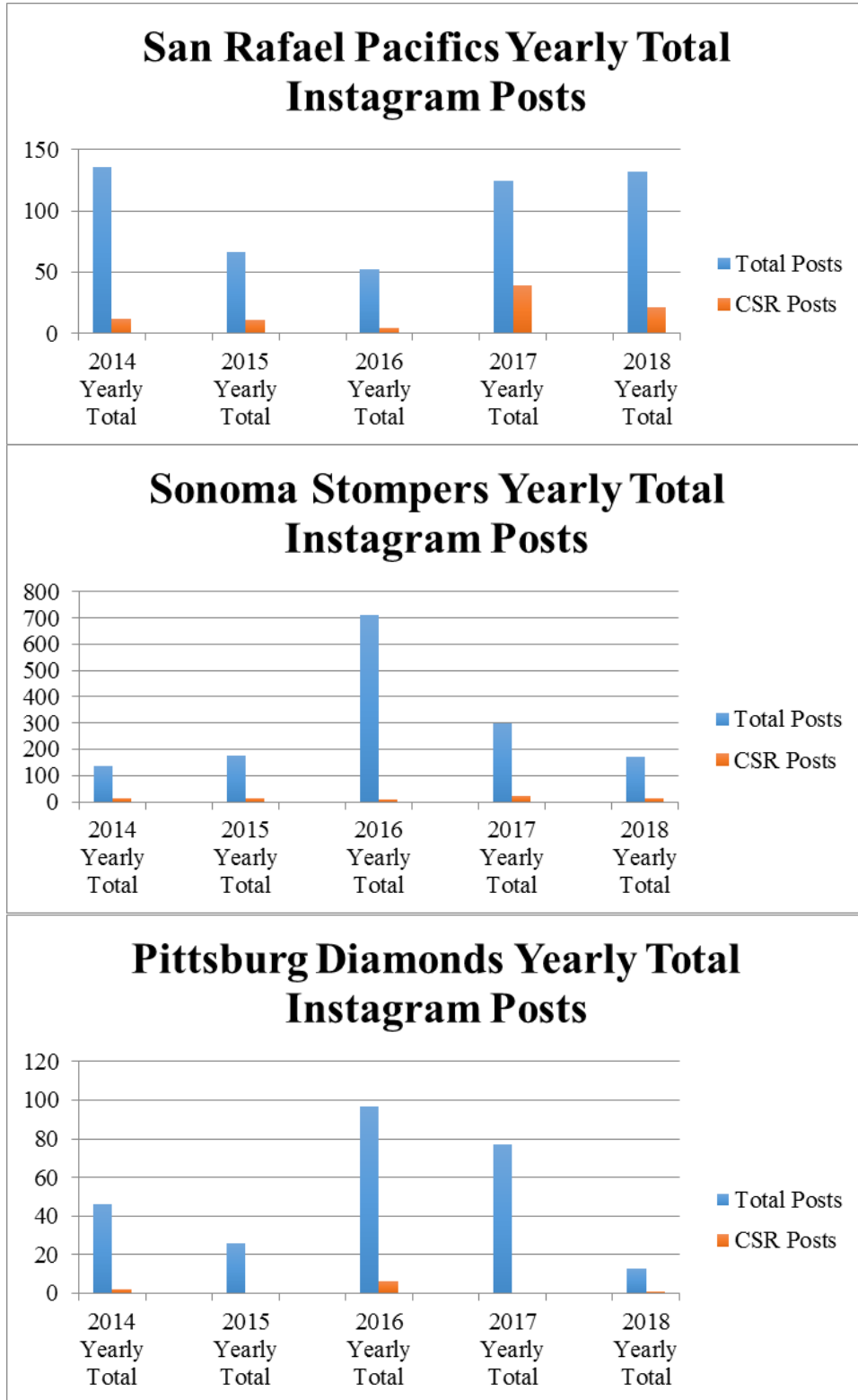


Figure 3 Average attendance compared to Instagram posts 2014-2018

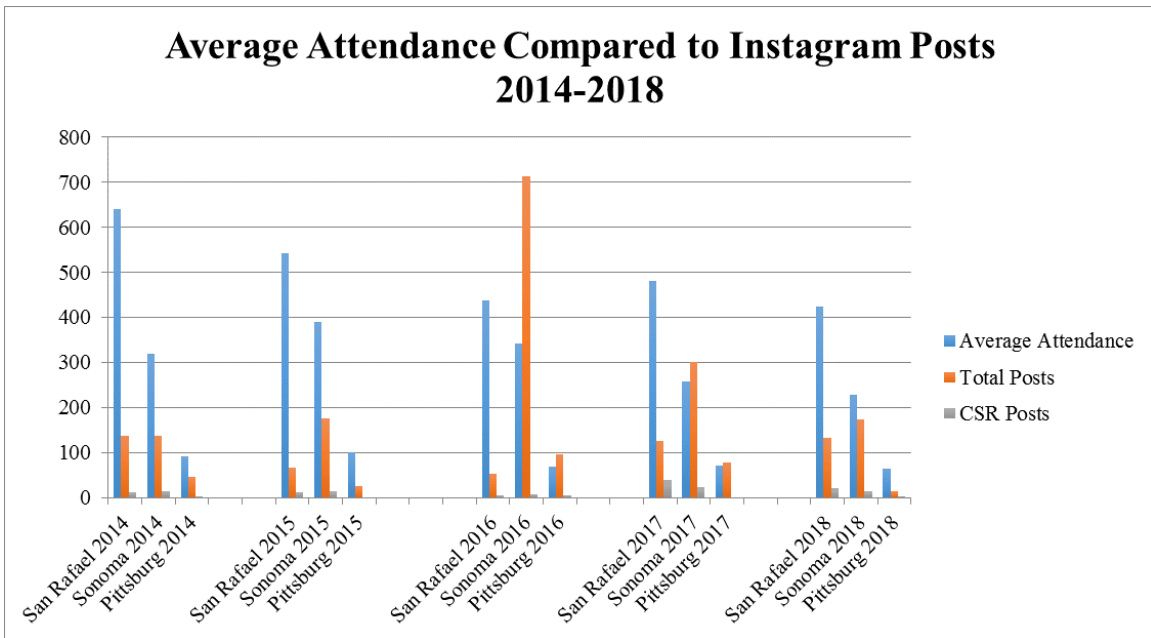


Figure 4 Average attendance and CSR posts 2014-2018

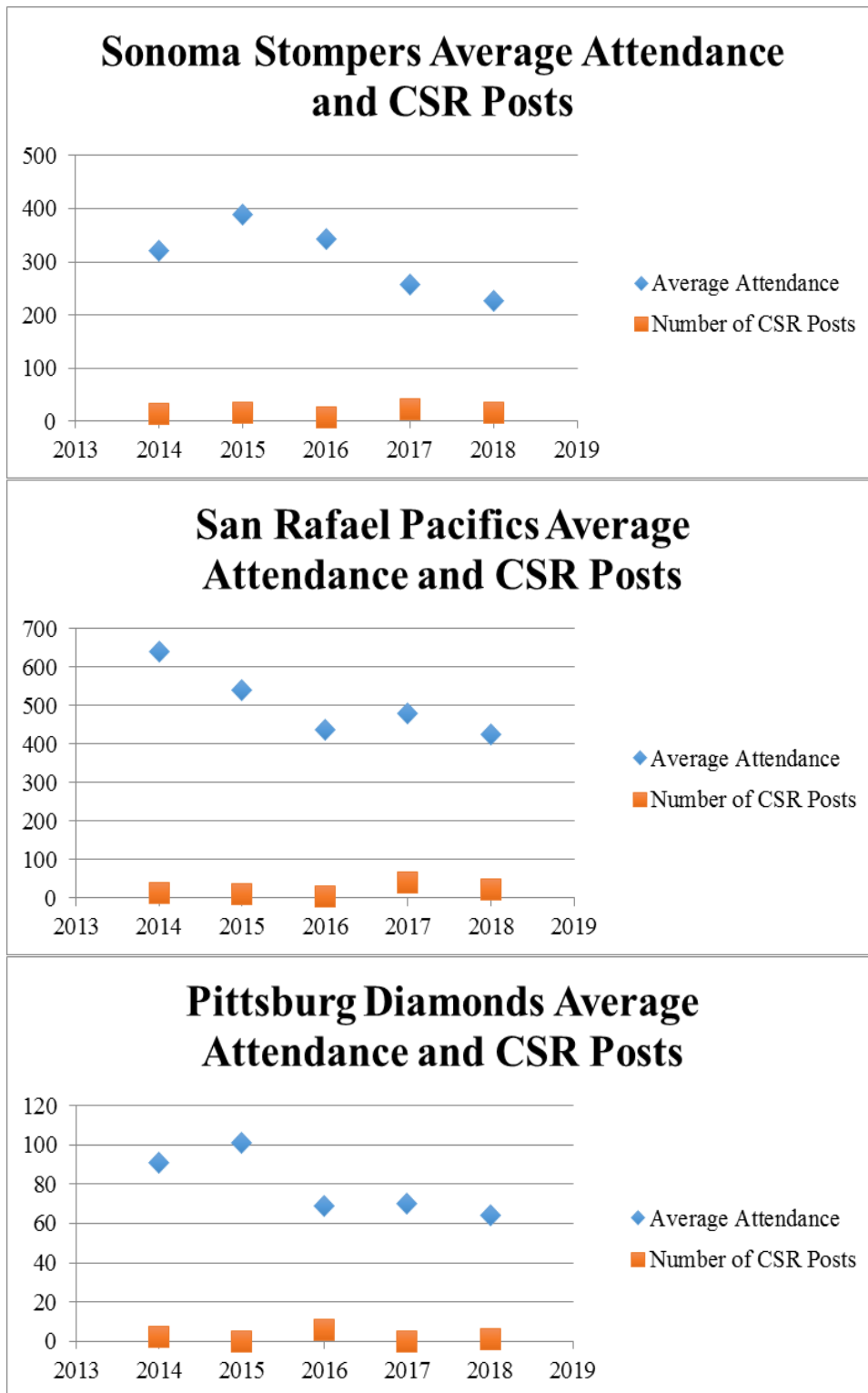
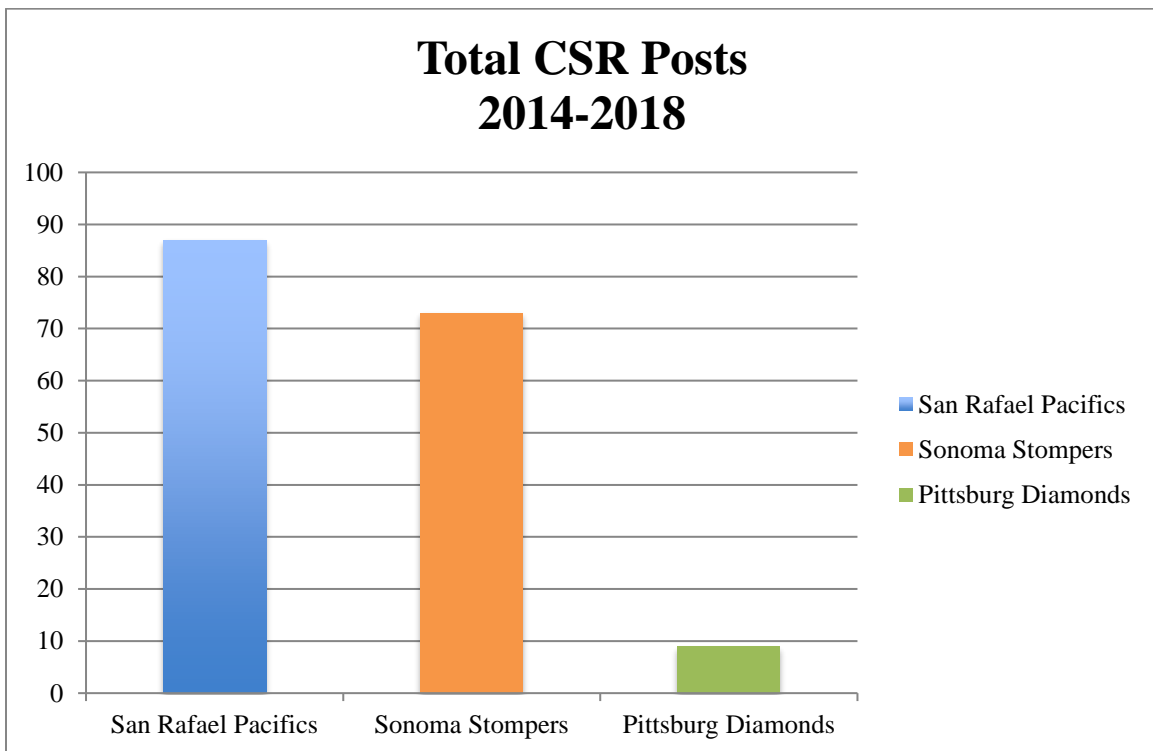


Figure 5 Total CSR Posts From 2014-2018



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