

Support for sport as an element of banks' corporate social responsibility policy

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Abstract:

Sport is one of the fundamental areas of human activity that engages people of all ages, evokes positive associations and has a good effect on health and well-being. Due to the fact that sport is nowadays associated with very high financial investments, as well as becomes a source of significant profits, it attracts attention of local, national or even global business. In particular, a relatively frequent phenomenon is the involvement of banks in sport activities as capital providers or sponsors in order to promote own brand, improve the image or attract new customers on sport. Because both material and non-material support for sport fits strongly in the social context, therefore it can be truly considered as an element of the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) concept by banks. This paper aims to develop the conceptual framework and debate concern in supporting sports by banks as an element of their CSR policy. The paper presents the concept of bank's CSR, the reasons of banks interest in sports and justification for sport support, especially in form of sponsorship as well as expectations related due to the support. The work was prepared on the basis of literature studies as well as the evaluation of the involvement of banks in Poland in supporting sports activities. The investigation carried out for the purposes of the paper proves that banks in Poland are commonly involved in financial support for sport, they do it through sponsorship, patronage or voluntary work. The reason of support is primarily the will to use massive character and positive receiving of sport to create relations with customers.

Key Words: Sport, CSR, banks, sponsoring

Introduction

Sport is an important element of the economic, social, cultural and even political sphere. It is closely related to business, both in terms of providing the necessary financing and in terms of financial benefits generated from it. Sport requires substantial funds for infrastructure, development of disciplines, financing of sport clubs, athletes and their training, improvement of the achieved results, as well as searching for new talents. To maintain and develop in qualitative as well as quantitative sphere it requires constant interaction with business including financial institutions. On the one hand, sport requires external financing, especially for the modern infrastructure, on the other hand, it is an area that brings significant revenues, very often incomparable with other sectors. Sport events are often prestigious and/or massive what makes them attractive spots to promote brand, image, product or even country. In the case of passive sports participants, i.e. mainly fans, the benefit provided by sport is primarily intangible (positive emotions, sense of community, joy), but for other groups sport brings direct or indirect financial revenues. Moreover, it is considered that sport more than any other area of human activity, contains qualities that make it a powerful force in effecting positive social contributions (Smith, Westerbeek, 2007).

As sport becomes an area of life in which millions of people actively or passively participate from a childhood to an old age, it becomes an important area of business activity. It is a multidimensional structure developed in various institutional forms (Grzybowska, 2011) and often becomes an object of financial involvement and an element of marketing of various companies, including banks. Banks constitute a group of entities which, due to their function and legal requirements, often have large financial resources, what means, they can engage in sponsoring or other marketing activities in a local, regional, national, international or even global scale. On the one hand the willingness of banks to engage in broadly understood area of sports marketing, which should be understood as all ways and forms of support for sport and its development in exchange for brand exposure, product promotion or building relations, comes from the banks' business goals, which should lead to increase of the value of equity, on the other hand, it results from implementation of the idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Corporate social responsibility is a kind of operating philosophy that appeared in companies at the end of the 20th century and which was aimed at showing the involvement of commercial entities in the areas that are generally non-commercial, i.e. environmental protection, society, corporate governance (IBLF, 2003). Despite in the public as well as scientific debate CSR is considered as a necessary business function, there is no clear

understanding how the term is characterized and what is its role as well as how it should be developed (Sheth, Babiak, 2010). The concept has been investigated inter alia as a part of functional responsibility (Carroll, 1979), ethics (Joyner and Payne, 2002), marketing function (Chahal and Sharma, 2006), way of value creation (Servaes, Tamayo 2013; Cheung et al., 2020; Buszko 2014).

Among the research in CSR one can find the works devoted to banking industry (Branco, Rodrigues, 2006; Perez and Rodrigues del Bosco, 2012; Jizi et al., 2014, Simpson, Kohers, 2002; Scholtens, 2008), however still there is virtually very little output presenting relations between CSR, banks and sports.

Today's common involvement of banks in CSR activities is related to their willingness to "unfreeze" the image of institutions exclusively dealing with cash or oriented for profit and to present themselves as organizations that care about the environment in which they operate. Banks by links with sport, which as a rule is associated with acting, keeping good health, positive emotions and joy, want to emerge as trustworthy and friendly entities. Such thing is of great importance as they conduct relatively homogeneous activities and of a standardized nature. Showing to customers or potential future customers the engagement in sports, especially during very important events, helps to distinguish them, attract massive attention, create their image and trust, which is often eroded due to negatively perceived financial operations or crises. Due to the strong involvement of banks in socially responsible activities, including very often aimed at supporting sport through the implementation of marketing activities, and lack of broad research in this field, the purpose of this paper is to develop the conceptual framework and support the debate concerning supporting sports by banks within their CSR policy. The article is in theoretical form with reference to the practice of supporting sport in various forms by banks operating in Poland.

Material & methods

The analysis of the phenomenon considered in the paper was based on the review of literature and evaluation of form and range of involvement of banks in supporting sport in Poland. The literature studies constitute the framework for identification the support methods and their effects as well as set up the platform for further discussion linking CSR, sport and banking operations.

1. The idea and scope of corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a philosophy that takes into account and include in the business interest of various stakeholders. The broad scope of the CSR concept makes it difficult to clearly define, where multiple interpretations make it an imprecise term (Jonker, Marberg, 2007). The analysis of various definitions of CSR points that the definitions are to large degree congruent and the confusion is not so much how CSR is defined but how CSR is constructed (Dahlsrud, 2008). The concept itself is based on the overall stakeholder approach of the company, where various groups of interest needs and expectations are meet, i.e. customers, communities, employees, owners/investors, government, suppliers and competitors (Khoury et al., 1999). Moreover, in many definitions environmental aspects is added (Jackson, Hawker, 2001; Van Marrewijk, 2003; Lea, 2002). CSR can be also defined as the concept of satisfying the needs of societal stakeholders that positively affects the social and physical environment as well as the owners in terms of return on capital (Marsden, Andriof 1998). CSR has become increasingly important for many organizations with integration of this concept into strategic management (Walters, 2009). The output of the CSR in business can be improvement of competitive advantage (Porter, Kramer, 2006) and financial performance (Dean, 2003; Buszko, 2014).

The concept or philosophy of CSR appeared in banking as a response to the need for improving an image of banks among the society. Banks have been often perceived as entities dealing with large amounts of money, generating high profits and enriching themselves at the cost of people. In addition, the high level of remuneration of banking staff combined with the lack of real responsibility for the decisions made due to the accompanying banking approaches "too big to fail" and "moral hazard" meant that their status of an institution of public trust began to be questioned. Due to the fact, that many groups of the society began to pay more and more attention to the non-economic aspects of business operations, especially social, environmental, educational, health and cultural, many entities previously associated only with commercial activities began to actively build their positive "non-economic" image through non-commercial involvement.

Banks began to follow this path, and thus began to exist in a new way in the minds of customers. In the case of banks, the principles of corporate social responsibility have become visible not only in relation to corporate governance, ensuring stable and prudent activities under special supervision, but they have become visible through supporting science, culture, art, music events, educational activities, promoting a healthy lifestyle or finally, environmental protection. The considered support took the form of introducing and offering specific financial products (e.g. stimulating the development of renewable energy) on terms better than the market ones, or finally involvement through sponsorship, patronage or charity actions. Sport turned out to be an area that was very well suited for implementation of CSR activities. In this framework one should insert sports marketing of banks, which is dominated by sponsorship activities. Within such structure there are combined promotional and image-related benefits of a non-economic nature with financial benefits and value creation achieved in the long-term. One has to remember that sport is not always an effective way of implementing CSR philosophy. Conflicting motives or lack of development substance may be factors that might undermine competitiveness at

the expense of being socially responsible, especially when the sport schemes are distant from the nature of the business or driven more by the needs of the sponsor than by the needs of the community (Levermore 2010).

2. Sport as an area particularly susceptible to the implementation of corporate social responsibility

Sport can be considered as one the highest forms of entertainment created for bodily and spiritual joy of human (Reznik, 2017). It is an activity focused on human's body, that is trained, disciplined, modified, displayed, evaluated and commodified. In fact, sport is commonly associated not only with the person who practices it but also with spectators, trainers and "owners" (Besnier, Brownell, 2012). It is an area of life that includes people regardless of age, sex, place of residence, social status, education or level of affluence. Frey and Eitzen (1991) claim that it is a product of social reality and no other institution, except e.g. religion, commands the mystique, the nostalgia, the romantic ideational cultural fixation that sport does. Participation in sport and recreational physical activity is found as fun, especially by joy of movement and pleasure of sociality but historically sport was also used as instrument of social control and self-improvement in terms of health, fitness, education and character (Donnelly, 2013). In the broader sense sport is associated with civil, social and political international development (Kidd, 2008). The institutionalisation of connections between sport and international development, as well as issues related with peace building are referred to as Sport for Development Peace (Darnell, Black, 2011).

Sport includes many types of disciplines and ways of getting involved. It can be individual- or team related, as well as universal or competitive. It can be considered as ritual (Birrell, 1981). Sport helps to decrease gender inequalities where policies of woman inclusion are developed (Safai 2013). It can be used also engage and integrate disabled people (Louw, 2010). Sport offers a special bridge across social and economic gaps, bringing opportunity to improve quality of life and may be considered as a vehicle that stimulate profitable companies to share the prosperity (Smith, Westerbeek, 2007). However, sport shouldn't be treated as a by-product of modern capitalism as its structures and forms co-evolved with the institutions of modern capitalism. The understanding of modern sporting institutions is then essential to understand development modern society (Szymanski, 2010). Taking into account the sizable fan base that potentially exists for many sports, marketing instruments can identify and target feasible market segments from the entire fan population that are desirable for the sport supporters (Grove et al., 2012). Sport is associated with a healthy lifestyle, well-being, willingness to be attractive and in good condition, and maintaining physical fitness even in the old age. Sport is also equated with competition, crossing barriers, striving to improve one's achievements. Sport is also about emotions and sensations, both among active participants and fans. Emotions in general cause faster associations, better remembering of the names of products, institutions and advertising slogans. For this reason, they make it easier to remember the brand, associate the entity or highlight its brand with sports success. Sport offers a special bridge across social and economic gaps, bringing opportunity to improve quality of life and may be considered as a vehicle that stimulate profitable companies to share the prosperity (Smith, Westerbeek, 2007). All this means that sport becomes a multidimensional space for reaching the range of people who are future or current customers desired e.g. by banks.

Banks, due to the implementation of the CSR policy, which becomes their distinguishing feature against other banks and financial institutions, frequently participate in various social initiatives, with strong interest in sponsoring of sports, teams or individual athletes. Such activity is very common in many developed countries however it is also becoming popular in other regions such as CEE, including Poland. Support for sport, understood here as sports marketing, is focused primarily on achieving long-term goals, so its effects should also be measured in such time frame. Bank engagement on sport as a rule has grown substantially with gentrification and changing quality of sport and sport infrastructure. E.g. as stadiums have become modern, comfortable and offering better quality of service they started to accommodate larger and a better-heeled audience (Finance & Economics, 2009). Moreover, interest of banks in sports is justified in increasing expenses for participation in sport and physical education, what can be seen e.g. in Poland after accessing the EU (Osińska, 2020).

3. Banks and CSR

Banks, which are by definition institutions of public trust, should take care of their image and positive associations with the brand and products. Due to the fact that banks operate in the service industry, providing products and solutions that are relatively homogeneous and similar to each other in terms of price, form, usefulness, ways of use, they by nature seek non-standard forms of appearing in minds of customers and building the image as institutions that listen to the needs of the society. Such activities are aimed at improving consciousness of the brand or consolidating the bank's image as a solid and trustworthy partner, not only involved in earning money, but caring for the social environment and being sensitive to people's needs. As "human" aspect of the bank operations has become more and more important in recent years, most banks implement or at least declare the implementation of CSR principles. This concept in banking arises from the desire to create the image of bank as not only reliable, safe and modern institution, but also as organization that cares about stakeholders and its environment. The application of the concept tends then to increase loyalty, bring satisfaction with being served by a responsible bank, acquire new customers, promote the brand, show itself as

an institution responsible for the development of sports. Another justification for the widespread implementation of the CSR concept among banks is the digital revolution, which significantly reduces direct contact of bank with customers via branches and results in the transferring of customers to remote channels. By implementing CSR banks can maintain more personalized communication with customers or establish new relations. The focus on new technologies, transaction security and compliance of the business with applicable legal regulations, which is today the key area of banks' operations, should not lower the customer's status. Banks' sponsorship activities are then indirectly aimed at keeping the customers satisfied and loyal.

Due to the fact that banks are entities of special importance in the economy and have the status of public trust institutions, as well as they maintain a relatively high level of confidence, except the periods of financial crisis (Piotrowski, 2020), their sports marketing, especially sponsorship, will stand out from other entities. Observing the activities of banks in Poland, it can be characterized as follows:

1. As banks are usually large institutions, often possessing much more assets and resources than other economic entities, they are able to sponsor infrastructure maintenance or events of continental or global importance.
2. Due to the fact that banks are public trust institutions, sponsorship concerns initiatives, teams, players or sports activities that will not damage the bank's reputation, and especially the image of a trustworthy institution.
3. Due to the fact that banks are subject to particularly strict control by financial supervision authorities, the central bank or the state, sponsorship activities must be conducted in a way that does not allow them to be used for money laundering or financing illegal activities.
4. The bank's sponsorship activities in sport may not violate the stable and prudent management of the bank.
5. Conducting sponsorship activities in sport by state-owned banks may promote historical events or events important from the point of view of the country's identity.
6. Sponsorship activities can be successfully combined with financial education or advisory support for participants of the sponsored event.
7. Sponsorship may be for mass events or regional / local events, depending on the nature of the bank or the purpose of the sponsorship, but typically not individuals.

Results

When banks engage in supporting sports, they can do it through traditional commercial (credit) services for clubs, sports-related entities or individual players (e.g. in terms of keeping accounts, accepting deposits, granting loans or conducting settlements). From the point of view of this study, only engagement falling within the concept of sport marketing, which is related to corporate social responsibility, will be considered.

The selection of activities under the aforementioned marketing is made depending on the assumed strategic goals and often in one bank it is possible to find combination of several solutions. In practice, the actions toward supporting sports may have internal or external character. Internal support is to promote sport among own employees and to achieve goals of socially responsible corporate governance. The external support means promoting sport among external stakeholders, especially current and potential future customers in form of involving volunteering, patronage or sponsorship of sports. This form will be taken into account in the further analysis.

Banks' support for sport in the form of volunteering commonly relies on involvement in local, e.g. school sports teams, purchase of sports equipment or financing sports infrastructure for local communities (e.g. schoolchildren), organization of sports events in which employees of banks participate, including fundraising for charity. The volunteering activity of banks in sports is strictly related to the concept of CSR and its main feature is lack of required or expected return. It usually has very local character and focuses on limited group of interest. Such support has non-profit character and the main benefit for the bank is the satisfaction of the employees engaged. The volunteering activities can be also promoting bank as the institution consisted of people who are sensitive to the needs of others and willing to help those in difficult situation.

Another solution for supporting sport within CSR is a patronage. Patronage mainly concerns single projects or events and assumes no expected or required return by the bank. Similar to volunteering, patronage in sport is not intended to reach as many people as it's possible in the advertising message. Its task is rather to support sport without specially negotiated terms. Patronage can function in a similar way as sponsorship, but it can be differentiated by the lack of direct market or financial benefits from funds spent by the patron. That means, when the sponsored entity gets more funds than the potential benefits to obtain by the sponsor, such financing can be evaluated as patronage.

The most common element of sports marketing is sponsorship, which is assumed to generate required and expected return, i.e. financial profits in the short-, and medium term and finally to create value in the long-term. Due to the last argument, the inclusion of sponsorship of sports in the CSR concept of banks may be considered as controversial. This approach can be additionally supported by the necessity for the bank to achieve a certain effectiveness of sponsorship, and not just the association of the bank with the idea of sport or a general improvement of the image. From the bank's point of view, the long-term effectiveness of the sponsorship program remains one of the fundamental conditions for its implementation. A high importance of sponsorship effectiveness can be confirmed by the terms, which are taken into account by banks before starting support for sports. Based on the analysis of the sponsorship policy of commercial banks in Poland, the most common terms

determining the sponsorship of sport organizations, events or individuals are as follows: a) the rank of the sports project or organization, b) the scope of sports events, c) number of participants, d) patrons and other sponsors co-participating, e) equivalence of benefits for the bank's involvement, f) image creation potential, g) business growth and sales potential, h) credibility of the organizer of sports events, i) sports events organizers' experience, j) sponsorship and social environment. Moreover, Smith and Westerbeek (2007) claim that sponsorship is a business investment through application of marketing-mix and therefore it should not be confused or equated with CSR, which returns benefits of successful business to the community. On the other hand, some authors find sport sponsorship as one of the CSR initiative (Sudolska, Łapińska 2020). The arguments in favor of treating sports sponsorship as CSR activities include the fact, that sponsorship cannot be directly linked to predetermined financial profit achieved by banks in contrary to profits from banking activities, and that it brings direct financial support for an important, popular and socially desirable sphere of life. For the sponsorship policy of banks, motivation is commercial, but positioning and funding is pro-social. The banks' commercial goal is then achieved by the social goal, e.g. direct impact on the improvement of infrastructure, increasing quality of sports activities or supporting teams with sport equipment. In many regions, local banks very often use sponsoring to demonstrate local orientation and attachment to the region.

Sponsorship is an alternative form of advertising and promoting banks to television, press, internet or mobile sites. In many sectors of the economy, in particular finance and banking, one can find increasing competition and decreasing customer loyalty due to new solutions, changing business models and appearance of very innovative and customer friendly Fintech entities. Currently, it is becoming more and more difficult to reach and attract new customers in a traditional way. Sponsoring for sports allows then to present business as the entity being close to the customer, participating in his life and taking care about his social needs. Sponsorship gets bank recognized and noticed, especially in a new market (Finance & Economics, 2009). However, it should be always viewed as partnership but not the transaction (Bartlett Piland, 2020). Ultimately, such partnership and social performance is often positively influencing the financial performance, where companies relying on CSR outperform those not highly engaged in CSR (Blackburn et al., 1994) what is also found among investments in shares of banks (Buszko, 2014).

Apart from the forms of sports support described above banks may offer financial products linked with sporting activities, e.g. fan cards integrated with payment cards, products giving discounts when buying sport equipment or services as well as giving sport benefits, such as tickets for games which attracts customers that are fans of sport, however those products will not be evaluated in this paper.

Based on the analysis of the forms and instruments of support for sport by banks in Poland, it is possible to present the most characteristic features of such support. It is worth to mention that most of the banks in Poland provide sport supporting. In most cases it has a form of sponsorship, but other forms also can be found. Examples of support for sport by the largest banks in Poland are presented in the Table 1.

Tab. 1. Support for sport from major banks in Poland

| Bank | Type of support for sport | Features and goals |
|------------------------|--|--|
| PKO Bank Polski | The bank has been supporting and promoting a healthy lifestyle and sport for many years. The bank created its proprietary program "Run together", popularizing amateur and professional running, and created its own running group, which was to promote sport also among its employees. The bank is the patron of many running events in Poland, including charity marathons. The bank also supports cycling, which is a widely practiced, popular and liked sport. Supporting cycling competitions has a similar task to marketing for running. The bank also sponsors the top football league it gave its name to. | Running is one of the most popular sports in Poland, which shapes fitness, character, endurance and humility. Runners are people characterized by calmness, enthusiasm, but energy and enthusiasm. These values are also desirable in the bank's work, which is consistent with its image. The support for football serves to popularize the bank's brand. |
| Bank Pekao SA | Bank Pekao SA is a sponsor of tennis tournaments. Bank Pekao SA is primarily a corporate bank, hence the adopted sponsorship policy is in line with its concept of operation. The sponsored event is the Pekao Szczecin Open, which is the largest and most important men's tennis tournament in Poland with a 25-year tradition and the highest rank in the ATP Challenger Series. The bank is committed to supporting unusual sports or athletes practicing unique disciplines. For example, the Bank became one of the key sponsors of the project "Sunt Leones K2 Ski Challenge" and the participation of Andrzej Bargiel, who was the first man in the world to ski from the second highest peak of the earth, K2. Another project was the support of Sebastian Kawa, fifteen-time world champion in gliding and the most successful glider pilot in history, winner of 32 medals in the most important gliding events in the world. Kawa is the first man to fly a glider over the Himalayas and Mount Elbrus. Milka Raulin, the youngest, at the age of 34, also reached 9 highest mountain peaks on all continents in the | Building the image of elitism and elegance Building a strong banking brand on the Polish market - emphasizing the Polish identity of the bank on the one hand, and high aspirations on the other, undertaking original, cross-border, ambitious and international undertakings. In this way, the bank communicates the appreciation of ambitious, extraordinary ideas and interesting projects. It promotes perseverance, courage and being the first to others. The bank's motto is: To grab the life by its horns, which it names to the bank's |

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| | <p>bank's advertisement and promotional campaign regarding the implementation of bold and ambitious plans.</p> <p>Through a charity foundation, the bank is also involved in promoting physical culture and sport. The Bank engages in sports activities carried out by small school clubs or clubs operating at cultural centers.</p> | <p>logo with the graphics of a bison, i.e. an animal traditionally associated in Poland. It promotes Poles who achieve above-average success.</p> <p>Activities in this area focus primarily on supporting children and adolescents as well as people who need support for accidental or health reasons.</p> |
| Santander Bank Polska | <p>Through the foundation and grant program "Bank MłodychMistrzówSportu", the bank supports the promotion of sports activities and the principles of fair play in sports. The program supports sports activities for people aged 5 to 26, especially physical development. The Bank is involved in team sports competitions, Olympics and Paralympics, with particular emphasis on the promotion of fair-play rules in sports. At the same time, the bank does not participate in the purchase of equipment and fittings for gyms or clubs.</p> | <p>Emphasizing fair-play rules emphasizing the bank's operating philosophy</p> |
| ING Bank Śląski | <p>The bank supports sport financially, organizationally and in communication by refunding employees' starts in sports tournaments or providing sports clothes. The bank organizes cyclical tournaments of tennis, beach volleyball and football. Bank employees take part in running events, including charity events. The bank is also involved in supporting the team from the volleyball league.</p> | <p>Emphasizing the importance of a healthy lifestyle, disseminating the brand among people actively or passively with sports.</p> |
| mBank | <p>Support for sailing regattas and the team competing on Micro class yachts.</p> | <p>Emphasizing the bank's prestige by supporting a special, beautiful sports discipline.</p> |
| Bank BNP Paribas Bank Polska | <p>The Bank has been supporting tennis for over 40 years, treating the discipline as the leading one in sports marketing. The slogan "We are Tennis" is used. The Bank sponsors the Polish Davis Cup, juniors, disabled people, professional (Roland Garros) and amateur tournaments.</p> | <p>The bank builds its image in a non-standard (prestigious) way.</p> |
| Bank Millennium | <p>The bank's support in the area of sport is visible especially among the needy and the disabled. The bank is involved in the purchase of special sports equipment, including for rehabilitation purposes and daily exercises that improve the physical fitness of disabled people. The bank is committed to increasing the effectiveness of training and sports outfits, which allow to proudly represent local clubs at tournaments.</p> | <p>Emphasizing care for local communities and helping the disabled, also through employee volunteering</p> |
| Alior Bank | <p>The bank sponsors football (it is the official representative of the Polish national team). He is also involved in projects for fans and can use the coat of arms of the Polish Football Association. The bank makes it possible to produce fan cards integrated with the payment function (pre-paid) through the network of branches. The bank was also involved in supporting the organization of the Alior Bank PGA Polska Tour 2018 golf tournaments.</p> | <p>The support for football serves to popularize the bank's brand. Involvement in financing golf tournaments serves to emphasize the bank's prestige.</p> |
| Getin Noble Bank | <p>Running promotion combined with charity campaigns involving employees and friends of the bank. Establishing a running team for the "GET RUN" bank. Support for football games among bank employees. Organization of volleyballtournaments for bank employees.</p> | <p>The goal is to present the attitude of fair play both in sports competition and in everyday work. Creating a community that transmits its enthusiasm and commitment to sport to others. The goal is also to implement the key assumptions of the internal communication strategy, integrate employees at all levels and support grassroots initiatives.</p> |
| Bank Handlowy w Warszawie | <p>Bank offers financial products (payment cards) which gives access to discounts, special offers or other benefits (vouchers, tickets for sport events) when buying sport equipment or paying for sport.</p> <p>Preparing materials for customers that promote sport and healthy life, including instructions how to properly practice some sport disciplines.</p> | <p>Bank gives inspiration and convince people to practice sport as well as prompt how to practice it in a healthy and proper way.</p> |
| Idea Bank | <p>Additional benefits for employees related to financing access to sport programs. Bank promotes an active lifestyle by encouraging employees to participate in sports sections of various disciplines and supports employees in tournaments and competitions. Bank organizes campaigns such as Health Week.</p> <p>Supporting of meetings of employees meet after work for joint training in football, volleyball, basketball or MMA. In 2018 Idea Bank supported the sports interests of employees by organizing the Sports Olympics with several disciplines to choose and numerous attractions such as yoga workshops.</p> | <p>Bank tends to have employees more integrated and increased involvement of their teams. Promoting of bank as a desirable employer.</p> |

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|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Credit Agricole Bank Polska SA | Due to its French origin, the bank promotes the pétanque discipline in Poland. It is a discipline that can be practiced by people of all ages, regardless of gender, condition or place of residence. The bank's activity in this area is associated with sponsoring the open championships of the city of Wrocław, i.e. open to everyone. The bank is also a sponsor of a sports club in Wrocław promoting pétanque in primary and middle schools. The bank also supported the organization of the Polish junior and youth championships in this discipline. | Promotion of tradition (French social game with arcade elements, including sports and recreation) |
| Deutsche Bank Polska | The bank sponsors golf tournaments. Deutsche Bank Polska pursues a policy of supporting golf, similar to its parent bank Deutsche Bank, which supports the world's most important golf tournaments (eg Deutsche Bank Championship in Boston). | The bank promotes golf because this discipline is based on the values that it represents itself, treating it as a kind of communication with the environment and building relationships with customers. The Bank translates positive emotions and fair rules of golf into the image of the Deutsche Bank brand and understanding of its business philosophy. |

Source: own work based on data delivered by the banks

Discussion

The activities of CSR banks in the field of sports support mean support for sports clubs, specific players or sports events. The choice of a specific field of the sport by the bank is based on matching with its image and aims to emphasize, for example, tradition, dynamism, speed, lightness, aesthetics, health promotion and a healthy lifestyle. The evaluation of banks operating in Poland indicates that practically all banks are implementing CSR policies, in which they support science, culture, sport, education, environment protection, renewable energy or other spheres of human's activity. Due to the importance of sport in social life, the majority of biggest banks in Poland are engaged in support for sport, mostly in form of sponsoring but also, by facilitating sport activities for own employees. In both cases, the goals intended to achieve are different, i.e. external promotion in the first and internal promotion (as the responsible employer) in the second case.

The banking practice shows very diversified ways of sport support including individual athletes, team games in all age categories, participating in various sports competitions conducted at various levels (central, regional and district competitions).

As in Poland the common type of banks are universal units that are not narrowly specialized, the most commonly met form of support for sport is through financing massive sport disciplines or programs popularizing sports among young people including those disabled (PKO BP, Santander Bank Polska, ING Bank Śląski, Bank Millennium, Alior Bank). Banks with foreign ownership often engage in disciplines characterizing the country of their origins or disciplines found as important from the perspective of their foreign headquarters (Credit Agricole Bank Polska, BNP Paribas Bank Polska, Deutsche Bank Polska). Corporate banks or banks focused on some special group of customers (Pekao, mBank, Deutsche Bank Polska) promote themselves by engagement in prestigious or extreme sports to emphasize their uniqueness. Banks owned by the state also engage in the sport events that commemorate facts from Polish history, e.g. Independence Day, Warsaw Uprising of 1944 or 3rd May Day of Constitution (PKO BP).

Activities in the field of sports support may have the form of individual and unrelated activities or a long-term strategy. The later model is generally preferred as it assumes a permanent association of a team, discipline or sports initiative with a given bank. Nonetheless, the condition of long-term engagement is the return in form acceptable sport results and positive social feedback obtained from the athlete, team or sport event.

The Bank's promotion within the support is carried out mainly by displaying advertising banners during sports games, the bank's logo on promotional and advertising materials, opening bank stands providing information or bank services, opening patronage stande providing non-banking services, informing during the event about the Bank's support for a given team or athlete. Participation in the sport events as athlete or in much broader scope as a fan that physically attends sport or just views or listens via broadcast brings a very good occasion for sport marketers (Grove et al., 2012; Murrell, Dietz 1992; Gantz, Wenner 1995; Wenner and Gantz 1998).

As a rule, banks are involved in sponsoring the football league teams in Poland to a very limited extent. Volleyball and handball are willingly sponsored, i.e. team sports not associated with aggression or hooligans. Poor results most often reduce the interest in sponsorship and the involvement of banks.

Conclusions

This research proposes a conceptual framework for evaluation of support of sports by banks as the element of their CSR policy. The paper explores the conditions of engagement of banks into sport and summarizes characteristics as well as forms of sports support used by banks in Poland. The study finds that banks in Poland increasingly use sports support as part of their marketing, treating it as an element of the CSR policy. Such commitment is reflected in the actual values and mission that define the selection of appropriate support projects (sponsorship, patronage, volunteering). The fundamental condition of banks' involvement in any type of the support is its consistency with the desired image of and the fit with the philosophy of banking

operations. A very common approach is to support sport both internally and externally, i.e. enhancing employees in developing pro-sports attitudes and practicing sport disciplines as well as supporting selected sport clubs, events or athletes. Based on the observation of banks' activities in Poland, one can find diversified type of activities in the area under consideration. The forms of involvement as well as sport disciplines chosen as target of support as a rule depends on the character of the bank, scope of its operation and the type of the owner. Banks prefer to participate in the long-term partnerships with specially selected partners or repetitive projects enjoying public recognition and trust, which are in line with the principles of banks' operation. There is less interest in the approach to one-off activities.

The selection of partners for support is strict and must take into consideration broad range of factors, that will not harm bank's image in the short or long period of time. The fundamental aspect of supporting sports is to obtain better access to both current as well as future customers in a way differentiating from traditional marketing channels. Sports support is as a rule treated as multifunctional platform, not only for promoting own brand and creating positive image but also for starting new business relationships and proposing new or differentiated financial products and solutions. Associations with sports disciplines and the sponsorship environment determine the types of sports where banks appear as sponsors. As the fashion for sport is not going away, one can expect that banks will continue to treat sport as a field of interest to look for new opportunities.

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