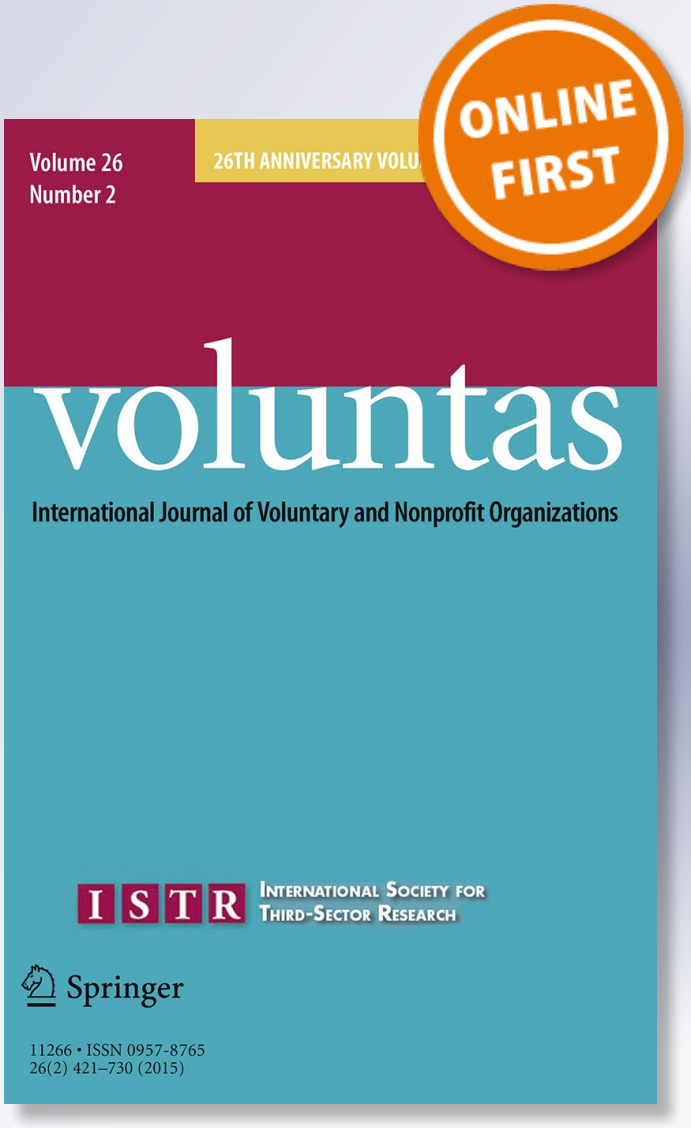
Open Innovation in Nonprofit Sports Clubs

Felix Wemmer & Joerg Koenigstorfer

VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations
Official journal of the International Society for Third-Sector Research

ISSN 0957-8765

Voluntas
DOI 10.1007/s11266-015-9571-5



Springer

Voluntas
DOI 10.1007/s11266-015-9571-5

ORIGINAL PAPER

Open Innovation in Nonprofit Sports Clubs

Felix Wemmer[1] · **Joerg Koenigstorfer**[1]

Abstract This research paper investigates open innovation—that is, the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge in order to innovate—in the context of nonprofit sports clubs, and is based on the content analysis of semi-structured interviews held with representatives of eleven sports clubs. The study develops a framework that describes open innovation activities in nonprofit sports clubs as facets of four superordinate dimensions, namely permeability of the club's boundary, application and implementation of open innovation practices, managerial competencies, and the environmental and organizational surroundings in which the club operates. Within these dimensions, subordinate facets such as commitment of the club's president and the strategic use of coopetitive environments explain how and why sports clubs are successful at implementing innovations and how their nonprofit status (e.g., volunteer work) contributes to (or is in conflict with) innovation. The findings provide implications for nonprofit organizations inside and outside the sports sector.

Résumé Ce document de recherche étudie l'innovation ouverte – l'utilisation intentionnelle d'entrées et de sorties de connaissances pour innover – dans le cadre de clubs de sport à but non lucratif, et repose sur l'analyse du contenu d'entretiens semi-directifs réalisés avec des représentants de onze clubs de sport. L'étude élabore un cadre qui décrit les activités d'innovation ouverte dans les clubs sportifs sans but lucratif comme les facettes de quatre dimensions ultra-ordonnées, à savoir la perméabilité de la limite du club, l'application et la mise en œuvre de pratiques

✉ Joerg Koenigstorfer
joerg.koenigstorfer@tum.de

Felix Wemmer
felix.wemmer@tum.de

[1] Department of Sport and Health Management, Technische Universität München, Uptown Munich – Campus D, Georg-Brauchle-Ring 60/62, 80992 Munich, Germany

Published online: 15 April 2015

d'innovation ouverte, des compétences managériales et le cadre général et organisationnel dans lequel fonctionne le club. Entre ces dimensions, les facettes secondaires comme l'engagement pris par le président du club et l'utilisation stratégique des environnements compétitifs expliquent comment et pourquoi les clubs sportifs réussissent à mettre en œuvre des innovations et comment leur statut à but non lucratif (p. ex., le travail bénévole) contribue à cette innovation ou se concilie mal avec elle. Les résultats fournissent les conséquences pour les organisations à but non lucratif, à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur du secteur sportif.

Zusammenfassung Diese Forschungsarbeit untersucht das Open Innovation Konzept - d. h. die Nutzung zweckbestimmten ein- und ausströmenden Wissens, um Innovationen einzuführen - in gemeinnützigen Sportvereinen und beruht dabei auf der Inhaltsanalyse leitfadengestützter Interviews von Vertretern elf gemeinnütziger Sportvereine. Die Studie entwickelt ein Rahmenwerk, das Open Innovation Aktivitäten in gemeinnützigen Sportvereinen als Facetten von vier übergeordneten Dimensionen beschreibt, nämlich die Durchlässigkeit der Vereinsgrenze, die Anwendung und Implementierung von Open-Innovation-Praktiken, Managementkompetenzen und das allgemeine und organisatorische Vereinsumfeld. Innerhalb dieser Dimensionen erklären untergeordnete Facetten, z. B. das Engagement des Vereinsvorsitzenden und die strategische Nutzung des Wettbewerbsumfelds, wie und warum Sportvereine bei der Implementierung von Innovationen erfolgreich sind und wie ihr gemeinnütziger Status (z. B. ehrenamtliche Arbeit) zur Innovation beiträgt (oder ihr entgegensteht). Die Ergebnisse liefern Implikationen für gemeinnützige Organisationen innerhalb und außerhalb des Sportsektors.

Resumen El presente documento de investigación trata de la innovación abierta - es decir, del uso de flujos intencionales de entrada y salida de conocimiento con el fin de innovar - en el contexto de los clubes deportivos sin ánimo de lucro, y se basa en el análisis de contenido de entrevistas semiestructuradas mantenidas con representantes de once clubes deportivos. El estudio desarrolla un marco que describe las actividades de innovación abiertas en clubes deportivos sin ánimo de lucro como facetas de cuatro dimensiones superordenadas, a saber, permeabilidad de los límites del club, aplicación e implementación de prácticas de innovación abiertas, competencias gerenciales y los entornos organizativos en el que el club opera. Dentro de estas dimensiones, facetas subordinadas como el compromiso del presidente del club y el uso estratégico de entornos competitivos explican cómo y por qué los clubes deportivos tienen éxito en la implementación de innovaciones y cómo su estatus sin ánimo de lucro (p.ej.: trabajo voluntario) contribuye a (o está en conflicto con) la innovación. Los hallazgos proporcionan implicaciones para las organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro dentro y fuera del sector deportivo.

Keywords Sports clubs · Open innovation · Innovation management · Knowledge generation

Introduction

Although a growing number of people are interested in physical activity and sports, nonprofit sports clubs have failed to increase their customer base, as revealed by the recent TNS Opinion & Social (2014) survey that assessed the changes in membership during the past five years. Today, nonprofit sports clubs more than ever face high competition with for-profit providers that have entered the market and that have attracted more and more customers (Smith and Stewart 2010). To state an example, fitness centers have increased their customer base in Germany by 35.5 percent between 2009 and 2013, whereas the nonprofit sports clubs' customer base grew only by 1.5 percent in the German market during this four-year period (Deloitte et al. 2014; DOSB 2010, 2013).

To remain competitive with for-profit organizations such as fitness centers, nonprofit sports clubs have to adapt their strategy and meet the needs of potential and existing customers in a better way. The degree of innovativeness of an organization is one important characteristic that is inherently connected to an organization's willingness to change. Yet, when asked about the main goals for their clubs, being innovative and creating new products and services is typically low on the agenda of nonprofit sports clubs' representatives. For example, Nagel's (2008) survey of club representatives showed that, out of 28 possible strategic goals for sports clubs, "new developments" and "broadening the club's activities" were ranked 19th and 26th, respectively, in importance. This is in contrast to successful for-profit organizations; such entities have realized that the more innovative they are, the more profit they make (Leiponen 2000), the easier it is for them to attract shareholders (Sood and Tellis 2009), and the more loyal their customers are (Wu 2014).

The aim of this study is to investigate innovative activities of nonprofit sports clubs using the concept of open innovation. Open innovation, as a conceptual framework, is "the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation, and expand the markets for external use of innovation, respectively" (Chesbrough et al. 2006, p. 1). Open innovation may help nonprofit sports clubs remain competitive. The customers of sports clubs are members at the same time, and they typically have a broad variety of professional backgrounds and expertise. Since these members are inherently interested in the club's activities (because they tend to consider the sport or the club as their hobby), they often volunteer for certain activities (e.g., when hosting sporting events for children), they meet members of other clubs (e.g., at sporting competitions), and they—particularly board members—collaborate with representatives of other stakeholders, such as companies (e.g., when recruiting sponsors) and community institutions (e.g., when renting sports facilities). Hence, the members themselves can act as innovation intermediaries by using their own expertise and bridging gaps to third parties (Burt 2004). These examples demonstrate that sports clubs have ample opportunity to develop and embrace innovations as part of their organizational strategy. However, to our knowledge, there has been no research to date on open innovation in the sports service sector in general and in nonprofit sports clubs in particular. This paper aims to fill this research gap in part by investigating when

and how nonprofit sports clubs utilize open innovation practices. The paper also takes into account how the nonprofit status of sports clubs contributes to (or is in conflict with) the concept of open innovation and the adoption of innovative products and services.

This study extends the literature on innovations in nonprofit organizations, which have been identified of having a lack as organizational capacity (Hall et al. 2003) and thus making an argument for an unfavorable innovation environment. The study makes a contribution in three ways: (1) it introduces a conceptual framework of open innovation in nonprofit sports clubs that may be applicable across sports (and other sectors); (2) it shows how nonprofit sports clubs can make use of their nonprofit nature (e.g., volunteer work, coopetitive [i.e., both cooperative and competitive market structure] settings) in order to innovate; and (3) it reveals club and membership management practices that foster open innovation and the adoption of innovations within nonprofit organizations. The findings provide a multidimensional open innovation framework for nonprofit sports clubs and should be of managerial interest, given that 12 % of the European population (TNS Opinion and Social 2014) participates in one of the 700,000 sports clubs across Europe (Commission of the European Communities 2007).

Theoretical Background

Open Innovation

Open innovation is the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge in order to innovate (Chesbrough et al. 2006). Open innovation therefore differs from what Chesbrough (2003) called "closed innovation," which is innovation management based solely on one's own resources and conducted behind closed doors. Open innovation research originates from a technological, product-oriented, and knowledge-intensive perspective, and its range has expanded across diverse industries and has taken on a multitude of different perspectives (Gassmann et al. 2010). Previous sports-related open innovation studies have looked at the sporting goods industry, focusing on lead user innovations, integration of lead users, and the innovativeness of lead user communities (e.g., Baldwin et al. 2006; Hyysalo 2009; Lüthje 2004; von Hippel 2001). Across both industries and perspectives, two different knowledge concepts are central to the open innovation framework: absorptive capacity and the knowledge-based view of the organization (the latter is also called knowledge-based view of the firm). In what follows, we will first describe the concept of absorptive capacity and then explain what the knowledge-based view of the organization implies.

Cohen and Levinthal (1990, p. 128) define absorptive capacity as the "ability to recognize the value of new information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends." In the context of nonprofit organizations, serving societal goals (which is stated in the mission of the organization) is more important than striving for commercial goals. Here, the knowledge generated may help the sports clubs serve the needs of their members, such as providing the opportunity to exercise, competing in certain sports, and engaging in preventive healthcare activities. The concept of

absorptive capacity stresses the importance of both gaining external knowledge for innovative activities, and building upon prior related knowledge within an organization in order to absorb this outside knowledge successfully. For individually absorbed knowledge to be transferred within an organization and thus to be absorbed on an organizational level, a certain knowledge overlap between members of the organization is necessary. This means, for example, that organizations have to compromise between having people with diverse knowledge backgrounds and having people with knowledge overlap work for the organization. Furthermore, an organization's own research activities help absorb innovation-related knowledge on the basis of prior related knowledge (Cohen and Levinthal 1990).

According to the knowledge-based view of the organization, an organization's existence can be explained by the integration of the specialized knowledge of individuals, "because such integration cannot be performed efficiently across markets" (Grant 1996, p. 119). Grant (1996) argues that knowledge is an essential element for achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage. Therefore, it is recommended that an organization installs a system for integrating knowledge into the organization and transferring knowledge within it. This coordination is necessary in order for the decision-making entity and the relevant knowledge to be co-located, so that sound choices are ensured.

Open Innovation Dimensions in Nonprofit Sports Clubs

This study develops an open innovation framework for nonprofit sports clubs by building upon previous open innovation research (e.g., Elmquist et al. 2009) and taking into account the peculiarities of nonprofit organizations in sports (e.g., Wicker and Breuer 2013). The framework consists of four dimensions: (1) boundary permeability, (2) application and implementation of open innovation practices, (3) managerial competencies, and (4) environmental and organizational factors. The first three dimensions are central to our framework as they represent the core dimensions (see Fig. 1). In each dimension, both high absorptive capacity and the knowledge-based view of the organization increase the likelihood of the successful implementation of innovations from the perspective of the nonprofit sports club. Environmental and organizational factors determine the setting in which such practices take place, and are therefore depicted as an outer circle in Fig. 1.

The notion of product and service innovation adoption (Boyne et al. 2005) plays a crucial role in the nonprofit setting. A product or service may not be fundamentally new to either the sports market or a certain nonprofit organization per se, but it can still be new to the organization itself and therefore be perceived as an innovation within the organization (i.e., from the perspective of the stakeholder). As for the innovations considered in our study, we draw upon a broad definition of innovation, including both incremental and radical innovations.

Boundary Permeability

The concept of the permeability of organizational boundaries describes why and to what degree organizations should open up their boundaries in order to innovate.

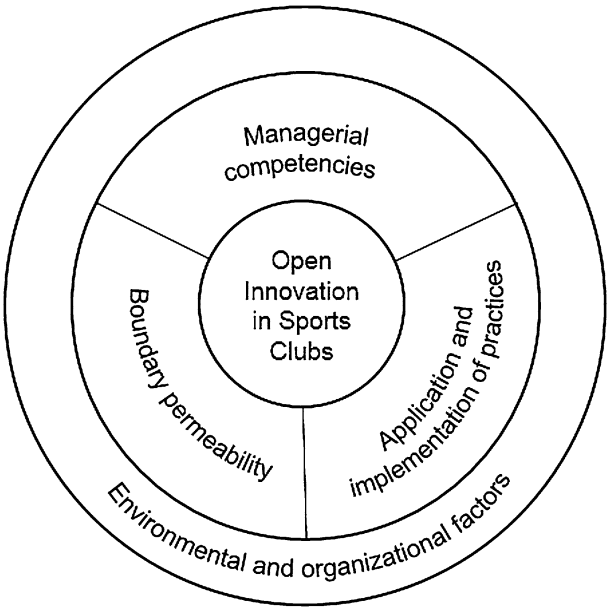


Fig. 1 Open innovation framework in nonprofit sports clubs

Today, it is widely accepted that the concept of openness is better understood by considering a continuum of the bipolar structure of openness as opposed to the binary distinction provided by the open versus closed innovation approaches (Dahlander and Gann 2010). In nonprofit sports clubs, there are two unique features regarding permeability. One is that coaches and department heads are simultaneously both members and "employees" (often volunteers), meaning that the club's boundary is, to a certain extent, open by construction. Additionally, the structure of organized sports connects sports clubs to sports associations, their umbrella organizations (Smith and Stewart 2010). These associations serve their clubs not only as knowledge contributors but also as knowledge-initiating organizations that create and manage knowledge pools (see Alexy and Henkel 2010, for the distinction between knowledge sourcing, contribution, and initiation). The open innovation framework that will be developed in this study aims to describe such knowledge-generating processes in nonprofit sports clubs that successfully adopt (or fail to adopt) innovations.

Application and Implementation of Open Innovation Practices

The application and implementation of open innovation practices are concerned with assessing what type of open innovation practice is best, and when it should be used. Previous studies evaluated the types of external sources of knowledge that can be integrated into an organization, and how to integrate them. The sporting goods industry has frequently been used to study application and implementation practices regarding lead user innovations and integration (Baldwin et al. 2006; von Hippel

2001). While these studies focused on the products of the outdoor sporting goods industry, there is one central aspect that connects them to studies on nonprofit sports clubs: high levels of customer involvement. For highly involved sportspeople, sports products become an essential part of life. High member involvement should also positively influence sports service innovations, particularly when we consider the fact that members typically share their service experience with others (Breuer 2012). Piller and Walcher (2006), for example, examined the integration of lead users via idea competitions through an online platform, while Wagner (2013) analyzed the influence of different outside sources of innovation in service companies. Wagner's results showed that suppliers, customers, and competitors influence service improvements, yet only customers had a significant positive influence on services that were new to the company. In the nonprofit sports sector, clubs often collaborate with partners (Breuer 2012). However, the relevance of collaborations with regard to service innovations in nonprofit sports clubs has not yet been revealed. This study aims to fill this gap and identify the facets of innovation practices that help sports clubs innovate.

Managerial Competencies

Previous studies examining competencies in the context of open innovation investigated the managerial capabilities that are needed to implement open innovation strategies and practices successfully. These capabilities can be used for the initiation and management of open innovation communities (Chesbrough 2012); open innovation teams within an organization help embrace the concept of open innovation. Teams of this kind should have abilities that increase the likelihood of the success of open innovation, such as social competence and skills to broker solutions among the team members (Chatenier et al. 2010). In a case study, da Mota Pedrosa et al. (2013) examined knowledge-related managerial characteristics and practices, using Cohen and Levinthal's (1990) definition of absorptive capacity as a conceptual basis. Most importantly, to explore knowledge, decision-makers in organizations need to be open minded and self motivated. To transform knowledge, formal and informal meetings are needed (to counter resistance and uncertainty among members), and finally, to exploit knowledge, decision-makers should label external knowledge as already internalized (da Mota Pedrosa et al. 2013).

Managerial competencies related to innovation needed in nonprofit sports clubs have been the subject of research in different contexts. Caza (2000) analyzed two innovations of the Canadian amateur boxing association, using Pettigrew et al.'s (1992) concept of context receptivity as a conceptual basis. Of the eight features that Pettigrew et al. (1992) identified as being relevant for strategic change, clarity and simplicity of goals, priorities and policies, and the mere presence of leadership are the factors that increased the likelihood of a positive outcome for an innovation most positively. Hoeber and Hoeber (2012) analyzed the determinants of an innovation in a Canadian community sports organization, and identified high leadership commitment, pro-innovation attitudes (e.g., readiness to assume risk), as well as visionary and strategic thinking, as the most important factors. These factors

are best realized within a supportive organizational environment, which we will describe next.

Environmental and Organizational Factors

Besides the three core dimensions, this study considers the environmental and organizational circumstances of nonprofit sports clubs as part of the open innovation framework. Simple organizational design, a sufficient fundament of organizational capacity, and the involvement of key innovation partners can play a crucial role for innovative activities in sports clubs (Hoeber and Hoeber 2012). Wicker and Breuer (2013) evaluated the importance of different factors for the organizational capacity of sports clubs. With lower organizational capacity, caused, for example, by reduced governmental subsidies or fewer volunteers, it might seem logical to suggest that innovation can merely be a side issue and should not be actively pursued by a sports club. From the open innovation perspective, however, the efficient use of outside sources of knowledge may be central to solving these capacity problems. Since nonprofit sports organizations are organized democratically, von Hippel's (2005) notion of democratizing innovation may be a fruitful idea for enhancing innovativeness and success in sports clubs. This means that sports clubs should enable and encourage members and other outside sources to search for and come up with ideas and improvements.

These four dimensions set the conceptual frame for open innovation activities to take place within nonprofit sports organizations. The study aims to identify facets, which may help nonprofit organizations, in general, and sports clubs, in particular, find ways to develop and make use of innovations in order to retain current members and attract new members.

Methods

Design and Sample

The study is based on primary qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews in order to develop a theoretical framework for open innovation in nonprofit sports clubs. The development of the questionnaire, as well as the sampling of the sports clubs, was conducted according to Mayer (2008). We conducted interviews with representatives from eleven sports clubs. The database ensuring a purposeful selection was provided by a municipal sports agency in Bavaria (Germany). The study was approved by the institutional review board.

Among the eleven sports clubs under consideration, there were five uni-sport clubs (i.e., clubs that provide only one sport to their members) and six multiple-sports clubs (offering various sports to their members). Each of the sports clubs was a registered club ("eingetragener Verein"), a legal entity that, according to German law, is not allowed to make profit from its products and services (as a primary goal). Three of the sports clubs were located in a fairly rural area, whereas the others were located in an urban environment. There were three clubs with fewer than 400

members, three clubs with a membership base of 400–1000, three clubs with a membership base of 1000–2100, and two clubs with more than 2100 members. Ten of the interviews were conducted with one board member each, while one interview was held with two board members, one being the president and the other being the sports delegate of the club; this guaranteed both club-level and sports-level expertise of the interview partners (due to the large size of the club and the delegation of tasks among decision-makers). Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the interview partners (who were given fictitious names in order to allow the reader of the paper to connect interview quotes with the interview partners).

Procedure and Interview Categories

We researched the clubs' websites and print materials before the interviews in order to obtain some general information about the organization (e.g., sports that are offered to the members, number and names of board members, functions of board members). In the interviews, we asked open questions and used closed follow-up questions allowing ambiguous answer possibilities. The interviews lasted between 40 and 90 min. They were audio recorded and transcribed, and the subsequent content analysis was conducted according to Mayring's (2000) category application. The data were then reduced and solidified in a four-step process consisting of (1)

Table 1 Interview partners (starting with largest club, ending with the smallest club)

Club	Name of representative	Representative's club position	Professional background of representative	Club sport portfolio	Club location
1	Chris	General manager	Sports diploma, expertise in sport marketing/ sponsorship	Multiple sports	Urban
2	Julia	Delegate for media and communication	House wife	Multiple sports	Urban
3	Carsten	President	Pensioner; prior: marketing and sales	Uni-sport: Mountain-eering	Urban
4	Oliver	Vice-president	Bank clerk	Multiple sports	Rural
5	Frida	Vice-president	IT consultant for financial services	Uni-sport: Equestrian sport	Rural
6	Tina	President	Self-employed electrical engineer	Multiple sports	Urban
7	Dave	President	Self-employed physical therapist	Multiple sports	Rural
8	Phil	President	Pensioner, prior: electrical engineer	Multiple sports	Urban
9	Lars	President	Psychotherapist	Uni-sport: Soccer	Urban
10	Sebastian/ Tom	President/sports delegate	Civil engineer/self-employed, construction work	Uni-sport: Alpine skiing	Urban
11	Wolfgang	President	Accountant	Uni-sport: Soccer	Urban

Table 2 Overview of interview categories

Interview category	Category description
Competition	Competition was assessed by asking the club representatives how they judge the competitive sphere in which their club operates
Cooperation	We asked club representatives what they personally think about cooperation, what kind of cooperation activities they pursue in their club, and to what extent they pursue these activities
Customer integration	We assessed the possibilities of the club's members being part of the service delivery and co-creating value in the club, from the perspective of the club representatives
Distribution of tasks	Both the focus and the distribution of work between the members of the board were assessed in the survey
Qualifications	The competencies of the interviewees that were asked for included their academic and professional backgrounds, as well as their experience in both sports clubs and the sports market in general
Commitment	Commitment was taken into account by asking their degree of involvement, and the activities that go along with it (e.g., number of meetings of the board; meetings of board members with other members and with third parties). We also asked about the frequency and type of appearances of the club in public
Organizational structure	The organizational structure was evaluated via documents (e.g., organization chart, homepages) and via descriptions from the club representatives. We also assessed the decision-making entities in the club (e.g., whether the board of directors is the sole entity in the club or not) in the survey
Infrastructure	The infrastructure of a club may explain particular drivers/barriers and motives for how rigorously innovations are pursued in the club. This was assessed by asking the club representatives about their infrastructure and how it may influence innovation creation and implementation
Financial situation	The financial situation may affect innovation activities in sports clubs, depending on the kind of innovation. We therefore asked the club representatives to make a statement about their past, current, and future financial situation

paraphrasing the relevant material, (2) coding the paraphrases, (3) generalizing the paraphrases, and (4) integrating, deleting, and bundling coextensive generalized paraphrases (Mayring 2008). The categories of the content analysis and their definitions are shown in Table 2.

Results

We first describe how the facets of the four dimensions presented in Fig. 1—that is, (1) boundary permeability, (2) application and implementation of open innovation practices, (3) managerial competencies, and (4) environmental and organizational factors—describe an open innovation infrastructure in nonprofit sports clubs, and what drivers and barriers for innovation management were mentioned in the interviews. Subsequently, we give examples of innovations that were implemented in the nonprofit sports clubs under consideration.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the facets categorized according to the four dimensions. The tendency to implement innovations according to the open innovation concept, in our study, is reflected in the range and depth of innovative

service and organizational activity development. This variable appeared as its own dimension in the content analysis and included the development of various new services and processes around the existing portfolio of services. The clubs had implemented services and processes that could be classified into the following categories: (1) new business models, (2) new organizational structures and new organizational processes within existing structures, respectively, and (3) increased diversity via the addition of new target groups (i.e., people with needs that had not been taken into account by the club before). However, the nonprofit sports clubs in our sample (apart from one club) were having trouble with introducing trend sports, attributable to high-risk aversion among the decision-makers. Only one club was able to introduce trend sports, and this was because of its unique target group and membership base (i.e., the non-competitive physical education of children; see the right-hand column in Table 2).

In what follows next, we will identify and define relevant facets of each of the core dimensions, drawn from the interviews. Environmental and

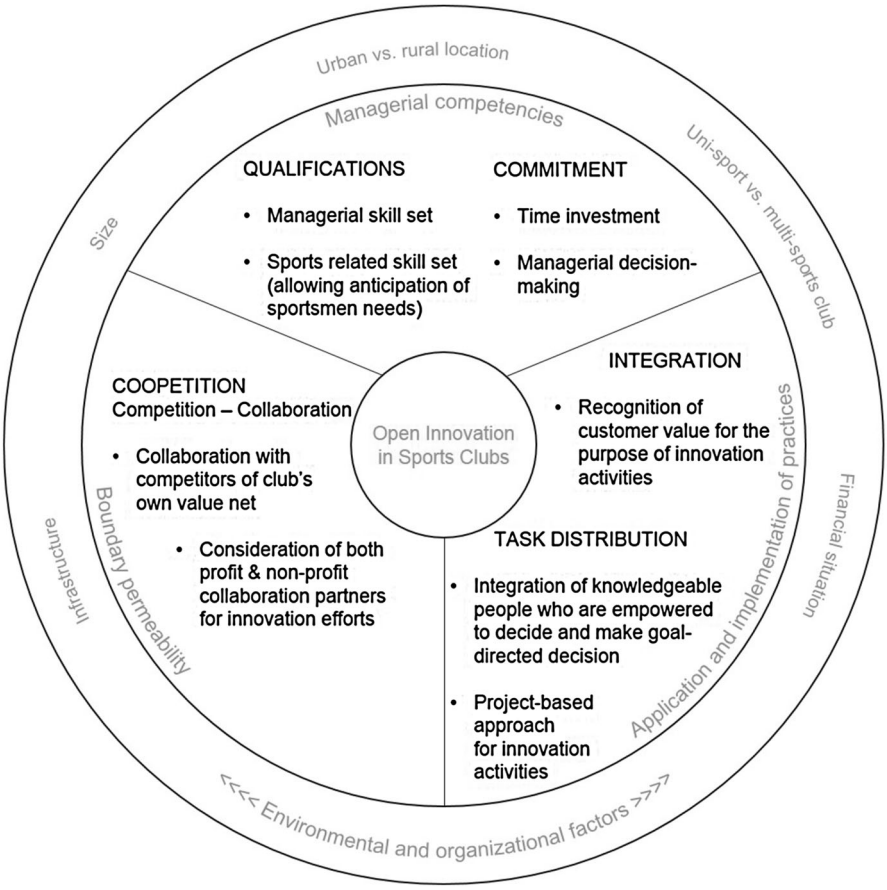


Fig. 2 Facets of the dimensions of the open innovation framework

organizational factors, depicted as the outer circle in Fig. 2, influence the three core dimensions.

Facets of Boundary Permeability

Competition

The representatives of the sports clubs considered other nonprofit sports clubs to be their main competitors, and some representatives also perceived for-profit organizations as main competitors regarding the retention and attraction of customers. However, competition has a different meaning for the sports clubs, depending on their size, location (rural vs. urban), and sport service portfolio (uni-sport clubs vs. multiple-sports clubs). The representatives of large clubs and clubs located in urban areas perceived higher competition than representatives of smaller clubs and clubs located in rural areas. In addition to other sports clubs, the former clubs' representatives perceived commercial sports providers (e.g., private fitness clubs) and other recreational service providers that are not affiliated with sports (e.g., theaters) as strong competitors. This can be seen in the following statements: "There is fierce competition—fitness and health clubs and even adult education centers [are our competitors]" (Chris; representative of club no. 1) and "The temptation [for potential members] to follow cultural and other leisure time activities [other than sports] is very big in our metropolitan area. That's something we also notice" (Carsten; representative of club no. 3). Clubs that were smaller in size and located in rural areas perceived less competition. This can be seen in Dave's (representative of club no. 7) statement, highlighting that "fitness and health clubs and other sports service providers pose rather no competition to us" and Frida's (representative of club no. 5) assessment that "Locally, we don't have any competition. We rather concentrate on working together." This concept of coopetition (i.e., the collaboration with competitors) will be explored in the discussion of the results.

Uni-sport club representatives, compared to multi-sports clubs representatives, perceived higher competition with uni-sport clubs that provide the same sport. For example, Sebastian (representative of club no. 10) mentioned that competitors are those "that are other uni-sports clubs. There are two sports clubs that work on the same high level as we do. [They are our competitors]" Wolfgang (representative of club no. 11) also said that "there is competition, between the three uni-sport clubs [in our area] that use the same facility."

Cooperation

Collaborators of the sports clubs in the study were other sports clubs, schools, and municipal agencies. Only two club representatives mentioned collaborations with for-profit service providers, and only two club representatives stated that parents of sports club members are important partners for service creation. "If parents […] have certain connections, for example to a kindergarten, or if they can provide the club access to an additional gymnasium that we may need, then it [the initiation of

the collaboration] is carried out by them" (Tina; representative of club no. 6). The clubs' rationales for cooperation were diverse, ranging from financial troubles and a lack of coaches to coincidences. One club, as indicated by Dave, pursued collaborations strategically in order to host large sporting events. The club uses these events in an effort to identify customer demand in the sports market and to evaluate whether or not a new sport that is presented during the event should be offered by the club.

One main reason why collaborations that enable offering new services and activities have not been realized by sports clubs is the lack of commitment and the low effort of the board of directors with respect to implementing innovations. Innovations that are introduced by collaborations are welcome from their perspective, but only if no additional work is required of the club's decision-makers. This is a barrier to open innovation, which will also be described under the commitment facet (belonging to the competence orientation dimension). This statement made by Oliver (representative of club no. 4) shows that efforts to recruit personnel (here: volunteers) also influences whether a collaboration takes place or not. "A cooperation with a coach for a cardiac rehabilitation group was planned. […] Unfortunately, the cooperation failed, because the [external] coach was not able to recruit the necessary personnel for such a service. [We did not want to put much more effort in here …] But, in general, we are open for such collaborations."

Facets of the Application and Implementation of Open Innovation Practices

Customer Integration

While most club representatives were aware that the quality of the sport services that they provide to their members positively influences their long-term success, only one of the clubs was attentive to the role of the customer as a service co-producer and was actively looking to engage members in creation processes. "We find people for project-based volunteer work. [They are engaged …] either for four weeks time or the project team meets every 14 days […], or they participate in a joint project with someone else" (Carsten). When asked about the opportunity for club members to introduce new ideas or actively co-create value, most interview partners had not previously considered this possibility. If a member would want to introduce a new idea, eight of the eleven club representatives stated that it would either be the member's responsibility to contact someone in the club with the idea, or that it is hard for members to actively integrate themselves at all. "The possibility to actively play a part is not really there. […] You would have to be on the board of directors to do that" (Frida). These clubs took up a passive position regarding the integration of their members, and this is a barrier to open innovation. Although most club representatives acknowledged the importance of new ideas (when this issue was raised during the interviews), some would only accept ideas that were finalized and tailored to fit the club, and thus could be implemented one-on-one without much further effort. "If someone has a good idea, then they should organize that and everything is fine" (Sebastian). This statement shows that Sebastian is not aware of the possibility to integrate the club's members into service development via several

means (e.g., project teams and open innovation communities) that help match qualifications that are available inside the club with qualifications of the member (or person from outside) that brings in new ideas; this hinders innovations.

Distribution of Tasks

Regarding the distribution of tasks among board members, some clubs compartmentalize tasks very strictly, while others distribute tasks according to ongoing projects and the individual motivation of each member with respect to a specific project. "We don't strictly differentiate them [tasks], but rather according to motivation, what somebody wants to do" (Dave). Some smaller clubs' representatives found it difficult to think of tasks that could be distributed, indicating that they gave little thought to allocating responsibilities and tasks to their members, while others were rather exhausted from having to find people they could actually delegate tasks to. "It is hard, no matter what the task, to find someone. […] It is very, very time consuming" (Lars; representative of club no. 9). However, some selected clubs brought in knowledgeable and skilled people when confronted with complex or unfamiliar tasks. "We are working on installing a free ride sports specialist […] He will start working for us now, and we will put together a new sports program" (Sebastian). This type of task distribution to experts (and rewarding them accordingly) appears to go hand in hand with certain managerial capabilities, such as being able to lead co-workers and volunteers, as well as being a role model regarding commitment (e.g., displayed by the president and other board members; see commitment facet below).

Facets of Competence Orientation

Commitment

Commitment of the board members that were interviewed in our study was high, as can be seen in their job activities. For example, all but one club had, on average, at least one official board meeting per month. Two clubs also had weekly unofficial meetings, while some clubs only held additional meetings if problems arose. Furthermore, three of the uni-sport clubs met regularly at competitions and events on weekends, something not mentioned by multiple-sports club representatives at all. With regard to promoting their clubs and their services via public appearances, such as conventions or conferences, the clubs followed different approaches. While six clubs (including all rural clubs) used different possibilities for public appearances to promote their clubs, two of the three biggest clubs were committed to engage new target groups (especially schools). For that, they built alliances and went to larger conferences that focus on sports clubs' needs.

We identified two underlying dimensions of where commitment takes place. While four of the club representatives were, to different degrees, dedicated to their everyday administrative tasks, they did not mention any aspect that would implicate any commitment to the strategic development of the clubs. Board members who were committed to strategy development (rather than administration) had a more

precise perception of their club's mission and goals. Dave's strategy for the club was, for example, for the board to "support everything concerning the competitive sports. The sports departments know that and are obligated to engage in and support competitive sporting activities. The international sporting events [we host] help to increase the significance of sports in the area. In doing so, we always have to make sure that the sports departments themselves organize, take part, and support this, which can be hard and tricky at times, but works after a certain point of time. This results in positive experiences for the departments and of course for the sport in the region. And for it to happen the board of directors has to be persistent and committed [to the strategy]." Additionally, they were willing to spend more time on their job within the club and were more likely to collaborate with external partners. "My life partner claims I would be married to the club" (Carsten). They attended conferences, met with representatives of associations, and interacted with their fellow board members to a great extent, in order to exchange knowledge and discuss their needs.

Qualifications

The most important qualifications for a club president and other board members are managerial (including social) skills and good knowledge about the sports that are provided by the clubs because it facilitates the anticipation and understanding of the needs of the members. The majority of sports clubs have at least one board member with relevant sports knowledge. Uni-sport clubs are more successful at having such board members, because the club's sports focus is narrower. Most board members of uni-sport clubs have been associated with the sport for many years, were highly experienced when it comes to organizing events and sporting competitions, and frequently took part in these events as a leisure activity. This can be seen in the following statements: "I used to be a coach […]. I have been working in different positions for the club for 25 years, six of those years as the sports delegate and for four years now as president" (Sebastian). Carsten stated, "Job-wise I was in sales and marketing, and organizing was always one of the central tasks of my job. I am very good at it. […] It is always good to have the will to do something, and many people have that will, as do I, but then you also need the skills to work within the structure [of nonprofit sports organizations] and be able to persistently motivate and delegate other people. These are skills that you acquire in executive job positions and which you need when you work on the board of a nonprofit sports club. […] I have been affiliated with the sport for 55 years now. […] I am still active as a coach and sometimes help out at a partner organization [with whom they share facilities]. […] The other board members are also still very, very active in the sport. Which I think is very important."

Furthermore, social skills play a vital part in the qualification profile of the board members. Almost all club representatives stated that representing the club to external stakeholders is one of the most important tasks for the board and is usually a task assigned to the presidents, even in bigger clubs: "Our president carries out the representative duties" (Julia; representative of club no. 2). This increased the possibility to create new services in most cases, because external stakeholders

brought in new ideas that were embraced by the decision-makers. Clubs that were not managed skillfully had problems with adopting services and keeping sustainable partnerships. This can be seen in the following statement: "I participated in some management seminars when I was still working in my full-time job, but they don't help you very much in the club. […] Normally, a club is managed unprofessionally anyway" (Phil; representative of club no. 8), meaning that Phil considered it to be normal that people in clubs behave unprofessionally. Phil's partnership with a municipal sports agency was broken off after he decided to increase the fees of the partner organization's members that participated in the club's sports program by 100 percent without conferring with the partner. "Then the other organization terminated the collaboration, and that was is" (Phil).

Path Dependency Effects

While we expect the facets described above to predict the successful (or unsuccessful) implementation of innovation, we note that path dependency effects (Thrane et al. 2010) may also occur. Those sports clubs that had developed new services and activities strategically (six of the eleven clubs) in the past and perceived this to be successful, were more likely to introduce new or improved services in the future. In what follows next, we will describe drivers and barriers with regard to three examples within the following implementation of service innovations: implementing a new business model, adopting a new organizational structure (or processes within a structure), and increasing diversity via new target groups.

Examples of Innovation Implementations

Implementing a New Business Model (Here: Course Registration System)

The largest sports club in our sample (no. 1; 7600 members; located in an urban area; multiple-sports club offering more than 20 sports; very good financial condition) introduced a new course registration system. The new system allows both members and non-members to sign up for the courses that were offered by the club. The courses were held over repeated sessions (8-12 sessions, one session per week), and both members and non-members had to pay a participation fee. The system attracted people from both inside and outside the club who had a higher willingness-to-pay for high-quality services, compared to "average" sport club members. The general manager explained that communication with representatives from other large sports clubs was the main driver for the innovation. He was able to learn from their experience in introducing new course registration systems. This can be seen in the following statement (representing one facet of the permeability orientation; see Fig. 2) made by Chris, "That's why other clubs are a source of information for us. […] We meet with managers of other clubs two to three times a year and talk about contemporary issues. There are also various conferences […], where large sports

clubs come together. This is the pool of information and ideas that interests us—we can implement this on a one-to-one basis."

Implementing New Processes Within the Organizational Structure (Here: IT Infrastructure)

The goal of this process innovation was to make life easier for board members, coaches, and club members. The club implemented a new IT infrastructure that allowed for course applications from PCs, laptops, and handheld devices. The sports club (no. 3; 2050 members; located in an urban area; uni-sport club; good financial condition) also hoped to reduce personnel costs in the long run via the new IT infrastructure. Without the commitment of the president of the sports club, several IT experts on the board, and the cooperation with an IT agency, the likelihood of the successful realization of the innovation would have been lower. The following statements made by Carsten highlight the success factors of this innovation, which can be assigned to both the competence and the application and implementation dimensions (see Fig. 2), and which highlights that the implementation facilitated the recruitment of volunteers (because some club members had qualifications that were previously unused, but matched perfectly to the project): "We try to use IT for data and information generation as much as possible. […] This is also due to the fact that we have a couple of IT experts on our board who are able to identify these possibilities. […] We always need people for projects. […] The current project is the relaunch of our website. […] It works. We find people for project-based volunteer work" (Carsten).

Increasing Diversity Via New Target Groups (Here: Sports for Individuals with a Disability)

The integration of sports for disabled children into the portfolio of the club (no. 6; 900 members; located in an urban area; multiple-sports club offering 11 sports; good financial condition) was initiated through networking processes. The vice-president and another board member of the sports club were invited to a sports conference held by municipal politicians. They got into a conversation with a member of the sports association for individuals with disabilities and, from then on, planned the integration of the new sports group together. The following statement made by Tina shows that all three core dimensions (see Fig. 2) are relevant in this context: "We got to know the most relevant people. […] We sometimes meet each other at conferences organized by politicians. We embrace these possibilities and a lot of information is being exchanged. That is how the project regarding the disabled sport group came about. We are now cooperating with the association and are part of a greater project supervised by the association."

Table 3 summarizes the findings with regard to the three examples. It describes the success factors that were identified in the interviews and that relate to the facets of the three core dimensions of the open innovation framework.

Table 3 Drivers and barriers of innovation implementation in nonprofit sports clubs: Three examples of adoption of service innovations

Status quo/facet	New business model (sports club no. 1)	New organizational structure: IT process (sports club no. 3)	Increasing diversity: Disabled sports (sports club no. 6)
Status quo: Range of services and new service development indicating path dependency effects	The club offers a wide range of services, providing sport for everyone. The focus is on mass/popular sports, but competitive sport is enabled as well. Besides the innovative course registration system, the club cooperates with schools, making use of the weaknesses of the German education system regarding physical education (i.e., factors indicating a positive path dependency)	The club offers a wide range of services that go beyond traditional offers, in order to satisfy its members; these include sports equipment rental and a sports library. The club cooperates with other clubs in order to get access to facilities and increase the service portfolio (i.e., factors that have positive effects)	The club serves a specific target group that lives in the city. The club only offers sports to young children who want to exercise on a non-competitive basis. The club's aim is to give children a broad education in physical activity. (The focus on this target group contributes to the innovation success)
Competition	Competition positively affected adoption of this innovative service, because similar registration services were offered for customers of for-profit fitness and health centers	Competition between other uni-sport clubs providing the same sport services was very high; this drove innovation	The service innovation targeted at diversity target groups was not driven by competition, because no other organization pursued this strategy (i.e., uniqueness in the club's positioning)
Cooperation	Cooperation with other large sports clubs positively affected the success of innovation implementation. Due to high-risk aversion, the club would not have introduced the system without feedback from other clubs	Cooperation with a for-profit IT agency was necessary and was an innovation driver	Cooperation with politicians and with a sport association was a driver of successful innovation implementation
Customer integration	The club did not integrate members, which can be considered as a barrier, because ease of use and usefulness, as well as enjoyment of technology use, are predictors of the adoption likelihood of the members	Member integration was one of the driving factors behind implementing the new IT infrastructure, which was a pro-innovation success factor	Customer integration was not part of the strategy, because of the uniqueness of the target group (i.e., children). However, parents were integrated and this affected the adoption positively

Table 3 continued

Status quo/facet	New business model (sports club no. 1)	New organizational structure: IT process (sports club no. 3)	Increasing diversity: Disabled sports (sports club no. 6)
Distribution of tasks	Several full-time employees execute the board's strategic decisions. The general manager functioned as communicator to the board, and the president functions as communicator for the board to the employees. The job compartmentalization had positive effects	The president was very active and carried out and delegated many different tasks. He took a project-oriented approach and successfully recruited volunteers with different backgrounds for the sports club. These factors drove innovation	The tasks were not distributed strategically, which may have hindered a more successful implementation of innovations and services
Commitment	There was a high commitment to the club's goals and to the new course registration system; the full-time employed general manager's commitment was extraordinary and this influenced others positively (role model function)	The president was highly committed to the club. His partner said that "he is married to the club," which, paired with his qualifications, increased the likelihood of success	There were many committed board members who collaborated closely with coaches and sports groups. This enabled high knowledge exploration, which drove success
Qualifications	The general manager has a university diploma in sports science and over 15 years of management and job experience, which was a positive factor	The president has several years of practical management and sports club experience. Many board members are IT specialists. All are active as coaches in the sport, which drove innovation	The members had very good networking competencies. There was high continuity on the board (in terms of years of membership), which—paired with job qualification—increased innovation success
Service portfolio of sports	Multiple-sports club. Due to the large size (and high membership fee income) it has multiple paid staff members concentrating on sport provision. This increased knowledge exchange between paid staff (and volunteers) and drove innovation	Uni-sport club. The focus on one sport in combination with the extensive sport knowledge made it easier for the club to identify their members' needs and respond to changes in needs adequately	Multiple-sports club. Due to its unique target group policy and membership base, the club can easily implement trend sports (and drop them again if not accepted). This drove innovation

Table 3 continued

Status quo/facet	New business model (sports club no. 1)	New organizational structure: IT process (sports club no. 3)	Increasing diversity: Disabled sports (sports club no. 6)
Infrastructure	The club owns several sports facilities, but was largely dependent on the facilities provided by the community	The club is co-owner of a sports facility and collaborated with other sports clubs to get access to more facilities	The club both owns sports facilities and uses community sports facilities
Financial situation	Very good (potential driver but also barrier, because the representatives may perceive no need to invest)	Good (potential driver but also barrier, because the representatives may perceive no need to invest)	Good (potential driver but also barrier, because the representatives may perceive no need to invest)

General Discussion

This study developed a multidimensional framework for open innovation in nonprofit sports clubs. To our knowledge, no research has been conducted in the area of open innovation in nonprofit organizations, one exception being the work of Holmes and Smart (2009) who evaluated the benefits of collaborating with nonprofit organizations for corporate social responsibility purposes from the perspective of for-profit organizations. Our study focused on the perspective of nonprofit organizations. Within the core dimensions of our open innovation framework—namely boundary permeability, application and implementation of open innovation practices, and managerial competencies—we identified facets that either increase or decrease the chances of success in using both outside knowledge for innovative services and implementing innovations and activities in sports clubs. In what follows, we will discuss the findings of the results section, referring to current literature in open innovation against the background of the peculiarities of nonprofit organizations.

Boundary Permeability

The question of the degree to which a nonprofit sports club should open up its boundaries in order to collaborate with for-profit or nonprofit organizations goes hand in hand with the club's tendency to adopt an open innovation framework. Gupta et al. (2007) raised the question of whether competition *or* cooperation is the stronger driver for innovation. We propose that, at least in the sports context, *coopetition*—meaning that competitors can be collaborators at the same time (Gnyawali and Madhavan 2001)—may be the driver for innovation. The coopetitive environment is inherent to sports leagues, because clubs need to cooperate in order to produce a service (e.g., they need to exchange information with respect to location of games, referees, and logistics). This coopetitive environment also holds true for the nonprofit sports market, as collaborations with other organizations that

can also be competitors (e.g., other sports clubs, schools, and even commercial fitness centers), are often vital partners for service creation. Nonprofit organizations should use this contextual factor to foster innovations by collaborating with each other and using external knowledge.

While Letaifa and Rabeau (2012) addressed the importance of coopetition relationships for open innovation ecosystems, our framework connects coopetition with the domain-specific knowledge of the organization's managing and decision-making entities, and it illustrates the potential impact of environmental and organizational factors (e.g., the structure of the organization) on the perception of an entity's coopetition efforts. Coopetition for innovation management may thus be understood as a dynamic concept whose effects depend on contextual factors of the club. This extends previous work on coopetition among sports clubs (Robert et al. 2009). An interesting theoretical aspect relating to the coopetition construct is the relevance of sport-specific knowledge of the board members for the perception of coopetition possibilities within nonprofit organizations in sports. Our study indicates that the boards of uni-sport clubs may have better sport-specific knowledge than boards of multiple-sports clubs, as their board members have been affiliated with one and the same sport for many years, and that this might in turn increase the likelihood of coopetition attitudes and practices with respect to the core services. The effect is driven by the willingness to be good at what one is doing in a specific area, which is the hobby of the member and therefore goes along with high involvement levels of the persons, and with the fact that the specialized knowledge enables to better scan markets for viable cooperation partners (e.g., with respect to one specific sports discipline or sporting event).

Application and Implementation of Open Innovation Practices

Customers are the most efficient outside innovation source for services that are provided by companies (Wagner 2013). Our study indicates that this is especially true for nonprofit sports clubs, because the services cannot be provided without active engagement of the members who are customers at the same time. Therefore, the members themselves may become part of the development and implementation of service innovations. The passive stand of the majority of club representatives that were interviewed in our study regarding member integration suggests that nonprofit sports clubs should change their attitude and address members outside of the board and make use of high member involvement levels. As one club (no. 3) showed, it is possible to find people for innovation volunteer work who are willing to integrate, delegate tasks, and take leadership responsibility, especially if clubs employ a project-oriented approach to the innovation process that allows volunteers to remain flexible. This insight extends Bygstad and Lanestedt's (2009) findings on the relevance of project management approaches for successful technological innovations to services provided by nonprofit organizations.

Nonprofit organizations, in general, and sports clubs, in particular, aim to recruit volunteers for long-term engagements (Lamprecht et al. 2011). Research on volunteering at an individual level has focused on the role of commitment, satisfaction, and motivation of volunteers (e.g., Garner and Garner 2011;

Schlesinger et al. 2013). However, the literature has largely neglected the relevance of time restrictions as a barrier for volunteer engagements, with some notable exceptions. Kinsbergen et al. (2013), for example, analyzed the different factors that affect time commitment of volunteers. Our findings indicate that delegating tasks and fulfilling them are easier for volunteers when they have clear (and limited) time frames and an exact goal for their task in mind. This makes open innovation practices more likely to take place.

Managerial Competencies

The relevance of commitment for the successful implementation of open innovation has been shown before by Caza (2000) and Hoeber and Hoeber (2012). Our study supports these findings, considering the peculiarities of nonprofit organizations. In nonprofit sports clubs, the board member's commitment can relate to different factors, such as their role as a volunteer (devoting time, identifying places to meet potential collaborators), their role as a leader and strategy developer (shaping the future with own ideas), and as an administrator (ensuring correctness in processes). All these factors potentially influence the innovativeness of sports clubs. While previous studies focused on affective commitment of voluntary board members and the positive effect on performance (e.g., Preston and Brown 2004, for social service nonprofit organizations; Hoye 2007, for sports organizations), adopting a broad definition of performance (Hoye and Doherty 2011), the extent to which innovation in nonprofit organizations can be influenced by the distinct commitment dimensions still needs to be investigated in the context of nonprofit sports clubs. Distinctive dimensions may include the ones proposed above or derived from classifications that have been proposed by the literature, such as affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Allen and Meyer 1990). There is some evidence, however, with respect to the qualifications that decision-makers should possess in order to foster innovation in nonprofit sports clubs. They will be discussed as part of the managerial implications, which will be presented next.

Implications for the Management of Nonprofit Sports Clubs

The results of our study provide important implications for open innovation management practices in nonprofit sports clubs. Sports clubs are more likely to develop and adopt innovations via the combination of outside knowledge and inside knowledge if (1) they make use of the coopetitive environment that is inherent to the sports market; (2) they integrate members using open innovation tools and delegate tasks according to qualifications as well as time and need preferences of their members; (3) they are successful at increasing commitment of their members and matching qualifications with the club's strategic goals. These implications were derived from the facets of the open innovation framework (see Fig. 2). In practice, the facets must not be considered independently from each other. Additionally, volunteers in a club likely do not score high on all these aspects. Nevertheless, the framework should help decision-makers in sports clubs identify areas that can be

improved to foster innovation and decide which persons best match with the requirement of each activity.

First, we refer to the use of coopetitive environments. Nonprofit sports clubs are recommended to evaluate possibilities for cooperation with competitors by analyzing their entire value net (Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1996). This likely increases their innovation-related knowledge, enhances relevant knowledge exchange with outside sources, and enables clubs to search for innovation volunteers. In the interviews, a variety of potential collaborators were identified. Clubs should also take greater advantage of non-profit-private partnerships; if clubs do not seek such relationships, companies themselves may recruit volunteers (Grant 2012) and undermine the club's membership relationship management of volunteers. From the perspective of for-profit organizations, the benefit of non-profit-private partnerships is that they may increase the perception of the company's corporate social responsibility.

Second, we refer to member integration and task delegation. As the managers of most volunteer-led nonprofit organizations are inherently subject to time constraints, the integration of both external and internal sources seems to be a beneficial and necessary step in order to create value through innovations. To develop and install new services and activities in clubs, managers of multiple-sports clubs (in particular) are recommended to delegate responsibility to individuals that have close connection to the member base, such as committed and qualified active athletes (who may also function as department heads), because this is where sport-specific knowledge is located. An alternative would be to integrate them into the decision-making processes. This helps sports clubs address the needs of members in a better way, such as when they leave competitive sports teams because of injuries, age, or lack of time. Member integration may prevent drop-out from all sporting activities (and, hence, club membership) and increase the likelihood that the member is still active in recreational sports, for example.

The results of our study do not support the claim that a compartmentalized or more ad hoc task distribution approach would lead to more innovative behaviors in sports clubs. However, clubs should make sure that tasks are distributed to knowledgeable people, or people who act as intermediaries to others with good knowledge (given they possess managerial skills as well; see below). Establishing club policies that allow the co-location of knowledge and the identification of qualified decision-makers are one possibility to increase the likelihood that members are integrated and willing to volunteer according to the open innovation philosophy. Open innovation online platforms and the creation of communities (this may also be called project teams) are good examples of how this can be realized in practice (Piller and Walcher 2006).

Third, we refer to the commitment and the qualifications of the members of sports clubs. Assuming a lower level of sport-specific knowledge in the management board of multiple-sports clubs as compared to the board of uni-sport clubs, the former sports clubs should make sure that both managerial and sport-specific competencies complement each other. Different board members may have different qualifications and contribute to the strategic composition of the board. This practice has been identified to be successful for top management teams in the for-profit sector (Knockaert et al. 2011) and likely applies to sports clubs. Since there is an inherent relationship between risk-taking and innovative activities (Merton 2013),

more sport-specific and market-specific knowledge may reduce the negative impact of risk aversion on innovative activities in sports clubs. If sports knowledge is not sufficiently available, the board should stimulate the inflow of such knowledge by, for example, establishing working groups with highly involved members. Some club practices that fulfill this goal include hosting events and competitions in order to evaluate market demand, integrating external specialists that co-develop sports programs (see above), and utilizing lead users or certain sports groups to identify and evaluate trends that may lead to innovation.

Limitations and Outlook on Future Research

As is true for most qualitative studies, one limitation of our study is the sample's composition. All interview partners were representatives of nonprofit sports clubs located in southern Germany. Therefore, we cannot rule out cultural effects on the collaboration and innovation practices of the sports clubs. Also, southern Germany is an area that offers high living standards and can be characterized by high employment rates, high education levels, and high income (compared to the rest of Germany and other European countries) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2013). To validate our findings in these regards, research in areas with different backgrounds and cross-cultural research would be beneficial.

The study focused on nonprofit organizations in sports, and the findings may not transfer to nonprofit organizations in other areas, such as culture, health care, or religion. While organizations in these sectors have similar features (e.g., high member involvement, volunteers, and potential positive health and well-being effects of the leisure time activities), sports may be unique in regards to the competitive spheres (i.e., there is both a competition for members and sporting competition) and the strong positive emotions that are produced by the activities, such as winning or losing a sports game (Steptoe and Butler 1996). One particular question of interest is whether the outcome of the sporting competition affects the likelihood to collaborate with competitors negatively (because of cutting-off-reflected-failure tendencies; Snyder et al. 1986). If this was true, sports clubs would need to take into account the sporting success when fostering open innovation in the club. Future studies may therefore assess the applicability of the four-dimensional framework, including the facets, in different contexts (e.g., culture, health care, religion, community development, and education).

Another area of future research is the evaluation of the extent to which sports clubs should implement more project management initiatives in order to recruit volunteers and, ultimately, be at the forefront of service provision through open innovation activities, as opposed to continuing "business as usual." Although the latter may profit the club via standardization effects, the project-based approach may attract and retain volunteers and foster innovations. However, it implies that sports clubs might have to rethink formal job distribution policies, and provide detailed job descriptions when looking to recruit new volunteers. The effects of such practices are under-researched in the volunteer management literature.

Conclusions

To date, nonprofit organizations, in general, and sports clubs, in particular, have not been researched as thoroughly as for-profit organizations with regard to open innovation behavior. Open innovation is a key concept in innovation management, and it likely increases the success of sports clubs at attracting members and volunteers. If clubs provide permeability, implement open innovation practices, and attract volunteers with managerial competencies, then the likelihood to innovate by combining external with internal knowledge should increase. With this conceptual framework, we hope to contribute to this lively field of research and aim to help these organizations increase new service creation and adoption.

References

Alexy, O., & Henkel, J. (2010). *Promoting the penguin? Permeable firm boundaries and their intraorganizational implications*. Munich: Technische Universität München.

Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 63*(1), 1–18.

Baldwin, C., Hienerth, C., & von Hippel, E. (2006). How user innovations become commercial products: A theoretical investigation and case study. *Research Policy, 35*(9), 1291–1313.

Boyne, G. A., Gould-Williams, J. S., Law, J., & Walker, R. M. (2005). Explaining the adoption of innovation: An empirical analysis of public management reform. *Environment and Planning: Government and Policy, 23*(3), 419–435.

Brandenburger, A. M., & Nalebuff, B. J. (1996). *Co-opetition*. New York: Currency Doubleday.

Breuer, C. (2012). *Sportentwicklungsbericht 2011/2012 [Sport development report 2011/2012. Analysis of the situation of sports clubs in Germany]*. Cologne: Sportverlag Strauß.

Burt, R. S. (2004). Structural holes and good ideas. *American Journal of Sociology, 110*(2), 349–399.

Bygstad, B., & Lanestedt, G. (2009). ICT based service innovation: A challenge for project management. *International Journal of Project Management, 27*(3), 234–242.

Caza, A. (2000). Context receptivity: Innovation in an amateur sport organization. *Journal of Sport Management, 14*(3), 227–242.

Chatenier, E. D., Verstegen, J. A., Biemans, H. J., Mulder, M., & Omta, O. S. (2010). Identification of competencies for professionals in open innovation teams. *R&D Management, 40*(3), 271–280.

Chesbrough, H. (2003). *Open innovation: The new imperative for creating and profiting from technology*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.

Chesbrough, H. (2012). Open innovation: Where we've been and where we're going. *Research-Technology Management, 55*(4), 20–27.

Chesbrough, H., Vanhaverbeke, W., & West, J. (2006). *Open innovation: Researching a new paradigm*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohen, W. M., & Levinthal, D. A. (1990). Absorptive capacity: A new perspective on learning and innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 35*(1), 128–152.

Commission of the European Communities. (2007). *White paper on sport* {SEC(2007) 932} {SEC(2007) 934} {SEC(2007) 935} {SEC(2007) 936}. Brussels.

da Mota Pedrosa, A., Välling, M., & Boyd, B. (2013). Knowledge related activities in open innovation: Managers' characteristics and practices. *International Journal of Technology Management, 61*(3), 254–273.

Dahlander, L., & Gann, D. M. (2010). How open is innovation? *Research Policy, 39*(6), 699–709.

Deloitte, DSSV, & DHfPG (2014). *DSSV Eckdaten 2014 [DSSV Data Report 2014]*. Hamburg: SSV-Verlag.

DOSB (2010). *Bestandserhebung 2009 [Survery 2009]*. Frankfurt: German Olympic Sports Confederation. Retrieved from http://www.dosb.de/de/service/download-center/statistiken/.

DOSB (2013). *Bestandserhebung 2013 [Survey 2013]*. Frankfurt: German Olympic Sports Confederation. Retrieved from http://www.dosb.de/de/service/download-center/statistiken/.

Elmquist, M., Fredberg, T., & Ollila, S. (2009). Exploring the field of open innovation. *European Journal of Innovation Management, 12*(3), 326–345.

Garner, J. T., & Garner, L. T. (2011). Volunteering an opinion: Organizational voice and volunteer retention in nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 40*(5), 813–828.

Gassmann, O., Enkel, E., & Chesbrough, H. (2010). The future of open innovation. *R&D Management, 40*(3), 213–221.

Gnyawali, D. R., & Madhavan, R. (2001). Cooperative networks and competitive dynamics: A structural embeddedness perspective. *Academy of Management Review, 26*(3), 431–445.

Grant, R. M. (1996). Toward a knowledge-based theory of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal, 17*(S2), 109–122.

Grant, A. M. (2012). Giving time, time after time: Work design and sustained employee participation in corporate volunteering. *Academy of Management Review, 37*(4), 589–615.

Gupta, A. K., Tesluk, P. E., & Taylor, M. S. (2007). Innovation at and across multiple levels of analysis. *Organization Science*, *18*(6), 885–897.

Hall, M., Andrukow, A., Barr, C., Brock, K., de Wit, M., & Embuldeniya, D. … Vaillancourt, Y. (2003). *The capacity to serve: A qualitative study of the challenges facing Canada's nonprofit and voluntary organizations*. Toronto: Canadian Cantre for Philanthropy.

Hoeber, L., & Hoeber, O. (2012). Determinants of an innovation process: A case study of technological innovation in a community sport organization. *Journal of Sport Management, 26*(3), 213–223.

Holmes, S., & Smart, P. (2009). Exploring open innovation practice in firm-nonprofit engagements: A corporate social responsibility perspective. *R&D Management, 39*(4), 394–409.

Hoye, R. (2007). Commitment, involvement and performance of voluntary sport organization board members. *European Sport Management Quarterly, 7*(1), 109–121.

Hoye, R., & Doherty, A. (2011). Nonprofit sport board performance: A review and directions for future research. *Journal of Sport Management, 25*(3), 272–285.

Hyysalo, S. (2009). User innovation and everyday practices: Micro-innovation in sports industry development. *R&D Management, 39*(3), 247–258.

Kinsbergen, S., Tolsma, J., & Ruiter, S. (2013). Bringing the beneficiary closer: Explanations for volunteering time in Dutch private development initiatives. *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 42*(1), 59–83.

Knockaert, M., Ucbasaran, D., Wright, M., & Clarysse, B. (2011). The relationship between knowledge transfer, top management team composition, and performance: The case of science-based entrepreneurial firms. *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice, 35*(4), 777–803.

Lamprecht, M., Fischer, A., & Stamm, H.-P. (2011). *Sports clubs in Switzerland*. Magglingen: BASPO.

Leiponen, A. (2000). Competencies, innovation and profitability of firms. *Economics of Innovation and New Technology, 9*(1), 1–24.

Letaifa, S. B., & Rabeau, Y. (2012). Évolution des relations coopétitives et rationalités des acteurs dans les écosystèmes d'innovation [Evolution of coopetition relationships and rationalities of actors in the innovation ecosystem]. *Management International/International Management/Gestión Internacional, 16*(2), 57–84.

Lüthje, C. (2004). Characteristics of innovating users in a consumer goods field: An empirical study of sport-related product consumers. *Technovation, 24*(9), 683–695.

Mayer, H. O. (2008). *Interview und schriftliche Befragung [Interview and written surveys]* (Vol. 4). Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag.

Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative content analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *1*(2), Art. 20.

Mayring, P. (2008). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse [Qualitative content analysis]* (Vol. 10). Weinheim: Belz Verlag.

Merton, R. C. (2013). Innovation risk. *Harvard Business Review, 91*(4), 48–56.

Nagel, S. (2008). Goals of sports clubs. *European Journal for Sport and Society, 5*(2), 121–141.

Pettigrew, A., Ferlie, E., & McKee, L. (1992). Shaping strategic change—The case of the NHS in the 1980s. *Public Money & Management, 12*(3), 27–31.

Piller, F. T., & Walcher, D. (2006). Toolkits for idea competitions: A novel method to integrate users in new product development. *R&D Management, 36*(3), 307–318.

Preston, J. B., & Brown, W. A. (2004). Commitment and performance of nonprofit board members. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 15*(2), 221–238.

Robert, F., Marques, P., & Le Roy, F. (2009). Coopetition between SMEs: An empirical study of French professional football. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business, 8*(1), 23–43.

Schlesinger, T., Egli, B., & Nagel, S. (2013). 'Continue or terminate?' Determinants of long-term volunteering in sports clubs. *European Sport Management Quarterly, 13*(1), 32–53.

Smith, A. C. T., & Stewart, B. (2010). The special features of sport: A critical revisit. *Sport Management Review, 13*(1), 1–13.

Snyder, C. R., Lassegard, M. A., & Ford, C. E. (1986). Distancing after group success and failure: Basking in reflected glory and cutting off reflected failure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*(2), 382–388.

Sood, A., & Tellis, G. J. (2009). Do innovations really pay off? Total stock market returns to innovation. *Marketing Science, 28*(3), 442–456.

Statistisches Bundesamt (2013). *Datenreport 2013 [Data report 2013]*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

Steptoe, A. S., & Butler, N. (1996). Sports participation and emotional wellbeing in adolescents. *The Lancet, 347*(9018), 1789–1792.

Thrane, S., Blaabjerg, S., & Møller, R. H. (2010). Innovative path dependence: Making sense of product and service innovation in path dependent innovation processes. *Research Policy, 39*(7), 932–944.

TNS Opinion & Social (2014). *Sport and physical activity*. Special Eurobarometer, 412/Wave EB80.2. Brussels: European Commission.

von Hippel, E. (2001). Innovation by user communities: Learning from open-source software. *MIT Sloan Management Review, 42*(4), 82–86.

von Hippel, E. (2005). *Democratizing innovation*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Wagner, S. M. (2013). Partners for business-to-business service innovation. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, 60*(1), 113–123.

Wicker, P., & Breuer, C. (2013). Understanding the importance of organizational resources to explain organizational problems: Evidence from nonprofit sport clubs in Germany. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 24*(2), 461–484.

Wu, C. (2014). The study of service innovation for digiservice on loyalty. *Journal of Business Research, 67*(5), 819–824.