



## How do CSR dimensions shape ethical perceptions and loyalty? Insights from recreational tennis

*Cómo influyen las dimensiones de la RSE en las percepciones éticas y la lealtad.  
Perspectivas desde el tenis recreativo*

### Authors

Georgia Lagoudaki <sup>1</sup>  
Efi Tsitskari <sup>1</sup>  
Nikolaos Vernadakis <sup>1</sup>  
Katerina Paschalidou <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Democritus University of Thrace  
(Greece)

<sup>2</sup> Employee in the Municipality of  
Komotini (Greece)

Corresponding author:  
Georgia Lagoudaki  
[glagouda@affil.duth.gr](mailto:glagouda@affil.duth.gr)

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Although the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the development and sustainability of sports organizations has been proven time and again, there is no empirical data on how its distinct dimensions influence ethical evaluations and loyalty to participatory sports.

**Objective:** This research aims to study the relationships between CSR dimensions, Consumer Perceived Ethicality (CPE) and member loyalty in a tennis club.

**Methodology:** Data were collected from 250 tennis club members through validated questionnaires measuring perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR), consumer perceived ethicality and members' loyalty. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was then employed to test the measurement and structural models.

**Results:** The results revealed that the various dimensions of CSR have different effects on ethical evaluations. Environmental responsibility emerged as a strong positive predictor of perceived ethics, whereas social responsibility was found to have a significant negative impact. Economic responsibility was found to have no significant effect on perceived ethics. However, consumers' perceived ethics were found to be the main predictor of member loyalty, surpassing the direct effects of the individual CSR dimensions.

**Discussion:** The results of the research must be compared with those of other research found in the literature.

**Conclusions:** These findings highlight that CSR initiatives do not always lead to the same ethical evaluations or customer loyalty. Rather, it is members' ethical evaluations that act as a key mechanism linking social responsibility to loyalty. By integrating CSR and CPE into a participatory sports context, the study offers important research insights and practical information for marketing managers of sports organizations seeking to design credible, ethically sound social responsibility strategies to promote long-term member loyalty.

### Keywords

Tennis club; CSR; perceived ethicality; sport participant.

### Resumen

**Introducción:** Aunque el papel de la responsabilidad social corporativa (RSC) en el desarrollo y la sostenibilidad de las organizaciones deportivas se ha demostrado una y otra vez, no hay datos empíricos sobre cómo sus distintas dimensiones influyen en las evaluaciones éticas y la lealtad hacia los deportes participativos.

**Objetivo:** Esta investigación tiene como objetivo estudiar las relaciones entre las dimensiones de la RSC, la ética percibida por el consumidor (CPE) y la lealtad de los socios en un club de tenis.

**Metodología:** Se recopilaron datos de 250 socios del club de tenis mediante cuestionarios validados que medían la percepción de la responsabilidad social corporativa (RSC), la ética percibida por el consumidor y la lealtad de los socios. A continuación, se empleó el modelo de ecuaciones estructurales (SEM) para comprobar los modelos de medición y estructurales.

**Resultados:** Los resultados revelaron que las diversas dimensiones de la RSE tienen diferentes efectos en las evaluaciones éticas. La responsabilidad medioambiental se reveló como un fuerte predictor positivo de la ética percibida, mientras que se observó que la responsabilidad social tenía un impacto negativo significativo. Se observó que la responsabilidad económica no tenía un efecto significativo en la ética percibida. Sin embargo, se observó que la ética percibida por los consumidores era el principal predictor de la lealtad de los socios, superando los efectos directos de las dimensiones individuales de la RSE.

**Discusión:** los resultados de la investigación deben compararse con los de otras investigaciones que se encuentran en la bibliografía.

**Conclusiones:** Estos hallazgos ponen de relieve que las iniciativas de RSE no siempre dan lugar a las mismas evaluaciones éticas o a la misma fidelidad de los clientes. Más bien, son las evaluaciones éticas de los miembros las que actúan como mecanismo clave para vincular la responsabilidad social con la fidelidad. Al integrar la RSE y la CPE en un contexto deportivo participativo, el estudio ofrece importantes conocimientos de investigación e información práctica para los directores de marketing de las organizaciones deportivas que buscan diseñar estrategias de responsabilidad social creíbles y éticamente sólidas para promover la fidelidad a largo plazo de los miembros.

### Palabras clave

Club de tenis; RSC; percepción de la ética; participante deportivo.

## Introduction

In recent years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has received considerable attention in sports management literature, as sports organizations are increasingly expected to contribute to societal well-being, environmental sustainability, and responsible economic activity (Rowe et al., 2019; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). One of the most influential frameworks for understanding CSR is Carroll's (1991) pyramid model, which has proven particularly useful in sports management. This model conceptualizes CSR as consisting of four levels: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. According to this model, organizations are expected to operate not only profitably and within the law, but also ethically, voluntarily contributing to societal well-being. Carroll's pyramid and sport seem to be a perfect fit, as sports organizations have high social visibility and play an important symbolic role in local communities (Thormann & Wicker, 2021).

CSR in sport industry has expanded considerably, with initiatives ranging from community support and inclusive programming to environmentally conscious facility management and transparent financial practices (Klauck Beirith, Treter Gonçalves & Folle, 2025; Walzel et al., 2018). These developments reflect the growing recognition that sport organizations operate with highly visible social environments and can significantly shape public perceptions of ethical and responsible behavior (Inoue & Kent, 2013; Lagoudaki et al., 2024).

In addition to CSR ethics plays a fundamental role in the operations of sports organizations, providing a framework of fairness, respect and integrity within the sport environment (Hums & MacLean, 2017). The ethical climate of an organization is a key factor in determining ethical behavior in sport. This can be defined as the shared perceptions of what is considered morally appropriate (Viktor & Cullen, 1988). In the sports context stakeholders perceptions of organizational governance and ethical practices have been highlighted as key elements shaping their relationship with sport organizations (Furtado et al., 2024). Research has demonstrated that a positive ethical climate fosters trust, cooperation and prosocial behavior among members. Ethical leadership reinforces these outcomes by promoting ethical behavior and reinforcing ethical standards (Arnaud, 2010; Constandt et al., 2018; Paschalidou, Tsitskari, Alexandris, Karagiorgos & Filippou, 2024).

Organizations that act in a socially and environmentally responsible manner are considered not only to be aligned with ethical attitudes, but also to actively contribute to social and environmental well-being (Brunk, 2012). In today's business and sports environments, ethics are increasingly linked to sustainability. Those companies that are considered ethical by their customers, employees, and other stakeholders manage to enhance their reputation and financial performance (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). The importance of ethical practices for achieving sustainable success is increasingly recognized within the wider service industry (Ayadi et al., 2017), although customers are not yet targeted based on their perceived ethics. As corporate practices are becoming more visible to consumers, companies that prioritize social responsibility and ethical behavior are being favored (Leonidou et al., 2013).

Brunk (2010) argued that much academic research fails to capture a complete and comprehensive picture of ethics. She emphasized that the broad, generalized approach of stakeholders, where consumers are simply included as part of an overall framework, is not sufficient to fully cover the range of ethics as perceived by the public. To address this limitation, she introduced the term "Consumer-Perceived Ethicality" (CPE), which was defined as "consumers' holistic judgment of how ethical they consider a particular subject, such as a company, brand, product, or service" (Bluemelhuber & Brunk, 2011, p. 134). In an effort to clarify consumers' perceptions of ethics, Brunk (2012) further investigated how consumers describe, and evaluate ethicality, highlighting the importance of responsible market behavior, compliance with legislation and ethical principles, and assessment of both positive and negative consequences of organizational actions.

Tennis is a recreational sport that has seen a significant rise in participants in recent years. It has become a highly popular sport globally, with a growing number of players across all age groups (Crespo Dualde, Baviera-Puig, & Baviera, 2025; ITF, 2024). As stated by Le Noury, Buszard, Reid, and Farrow (2020), tennis is played by many people aged 7 to 70. The International Tennis Federation (2021) reported that over 87 million people across the globe participate in the sport. The sport's popularity has been further enhanced by media coverage, contributing to its widespread dissemination on a global scale (Fonseca Morales & Martínez-Gallego, 2021). In Greece, the number of tennis courts appears to have doubled



between 2018 and 2022. This indicates an increase in demand for facilities and, consequently, an increase in participants over the years (Statista, 2025). Despite its increasing popularity and widespread participation worldwide (Fonseca Morales & Martínez-Gallego, 2021) there are indications that the incorporation of CSR practices and the evaluation of its participants perceived ethicality is progressing slowly, both internationally and in Greece.

Customer loyalty reflects the psychological commitment and behavioral intention of individuals to maintain their relationship with a sports organization (Oliver, 1999; Inoue, Funk & McDonald, 2017; Tsitskari, Tzetzis & Konsoulas, 2017; among others). In service environments, such as tennis clubs, where interactions are continuous and based on relationship building, loyal customers provide stability. They remain less vulnerable to competitive offers. They also contribute to enhancing organizational performance (McDonald, Karg & Leckie, 2016). Empirical evidence shows that socially responsible and ethical behaviors enhance trust and perceived value, which in turn strengthen loyalty intentions (Ferrell et al., 2019; Lagoudaki et al., 2025; Pérez & Bosque, 2015).

CSR actions in sport appear to impact loyalty by positively influencing participants' behavior; the more social responsibility actions that are developed, the more individuals' loyalty increases, as expressed through their consumer behavior (Inoue et al., 2017). According to Emmanuel and Priscilla (2022), consumers are more likely to support companies that demonstrate ethical practices and to prefer products and services that align with their values and beliefs. Ethical considerations can influence consumer behavior in various ways. For example, products from companies that implement sustainable and environmentally friendly practices are more likely to be purchased by consumers who prioritize environmental responsibility (Paschalidou et al., 2023). Consequently, companies that use recycled materials, reduce waste, and take other similar actions may be more attractive to consumers (Arli, Grace, Palmer, & Pham, 2017). When members perceive an association to be acting responsibly towards the community, the environment, and stakeholders, they are more likely to view it as trustworthy, fair, and consistent with their personal values — key psychological mechanisms that reinforce loyalty (Inoue & Kent, 2013; Walters & Tacon, 2018). Therefore, in leisure and sports settings, corporate social responsibility and perceived ethics serve not only as measures of organizational virtue, but also as tactical elements for long-term member participation.

Although the literature recognizes that CSR and perceived ethicality are distinct but interrelated concepts (Geng, Cui, Nazir & Binh, 2022), empirical research into the relationship between the three dimensions of CSR and the moral evaluation of sports club members remains limited. Understanding how social, environmental, and economic responsibility actions influence members' perceptions of the organization's ethics can contribute to improving the administrative functioning, trust, and sustainability of clubs. For this reason, this study aims to examine how the three dimensions of CSR predict the perceived ethicality of members of a Greek tennis club and to explore how the CSR-CPE relationship may further influence their loyalty.

Based on the theoretical framework and previous research findings, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: The social, environmental and economic dimensions of CSR positively influences tennis club members' perceived ethicality.

H2: Members' Perceived ethicality positively predicts their loyalty to the tennis club.

H3: Members' perceived ethicality mediates the relationship between the three CSR dimensions and members' loyalty towards the tennis club.

## Method

A quantitative research approach was adopted for the purpose of this study, design with a convenience sample, which is a non-probability sampling method (Etikan et al., 2016). This approach was chosen primarily for practical reasons, as it allowed direct access to tennis club members and facilitated efficient data collection. The purpose of the study was to examine how the three dimensions of corporate social responsibility (social, environmental and economic initiatives) influence perceived ethical attitudes toward a tennis club, and whether these variables can predict tennis participants' loyalty.



## Participants

The tennis club under study has a total of 350 members, 250 of whom corresponded, leading to 71.4% of the total tennis club population. However, with regard to members aged 15 and over, these 250 members constitute the entire sample examined in this study. Participants were selected irrespective of their level of experience or duration of participation in the sport, provided they had been members of the club for a minimum of six months. Information about the demographics of the sample is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information on the sample (n = 250).

Gender	n	%
Male	149	59,6
Female	93	37,2
Membership Duration		
Less than 1 year	50	20
1-2 years	96	38,4
3-4 years	69	27,6
5 years and more	36	14,4

## Procedure

Data were collected using questionnaires, distributed to participants immediately after scheduled tennis training session. This method was selected to ensure natural participation conditions and enhance response reliability. Data collection was conducted during February 2024. Before completing the questionnaire, participants received an informed consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentially safeguards, and participants' rights. Only individuals who provided explicit consent were permitted to proceed with the survey. The research received ethical approval from Democritus University of Thrace, ensuring compliance with establishes ethical standards and the protection of participants' rights and well-being.

### Instrument

Although several instruments have been developed to measure corporate social responsibility (CSR) in various organizational contexts, one of the most recent CSR measurement tools is the three-dimensional model by Park et al. (2015). In our study, the model evaluated CSR through nine variables and three dimensions: a) economic initiatives (with three variables, e.g. strives to contribute to society and the economy by investing and generating profit), b) environmental initiatives (with three variables, e.g. strives to reduce energy and natural resource consumption) and c) social initiatives (with three variables, e.g. supports sporting and cultural events). Lagoudaki et al. (2024) translated and adapted the scale for a Greek population of sports club participants. Its structural validity and internal reliability have been tested on numerous occasions.

Perceived ethicality was measured using the Consumer Perceived Ethicality (CPE) scale Brunk (2012). The instrument provides a holistic evaluation of an organization's ethical behavior, capturing elements such as adherence to ethical norms, compliance with the law, social responsibility, avoidance of harmful practices, fair business behavior and responsible decision-making. In Greece, the CPE scale has been translated, and adapted to the Greek context and applied within the fitness sector by Paschalidou et al., (2023). Their study confirmed the instrument's structural validity and reliability, supporting its suitability for assessing the ethical perceptions in Greek sport organizations.

Finally, members' loyalty was assessed using Oliver's (1999) four-item scale, (e.g. would you recommend the club to someone who asked for your opinion?). This questionnaire has been repeatedly used in Greek participatory sports members (Tsitkari et al., 2017; Lagoudaki et al., 2024; 2025).

A 5-point Likert scale was used for all scales.

## Data analysis

Data verification procedures were performed using Jamovi (Version 2.6) to ensure the quality of the dataset and assess assumptions related to normality, linearity, and the presence of multivariate outliers. Missing values were handled through listwise deletion. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard

deviations, and ranges, were computed for all questionnaire items. Following preliminary data screening, a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach was conducted using the lavaan package in R, accessed through the jamovi environment. The SEM analysis was designed to simultaneously examine both the measurement model and the structural model, encompassing four latent variables: Social, Environment, Economic, and Ethical.

Model estimation was performed using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method, with optimization via the NLMINB algorithm. Model improvement decisions were guided by modification indices and theoretical considerations. Specifically, one indicator ("Ethical3") was removed based on high modification indices suggesting a negative impact on model fit. Furthermore, residual covariances were freely estimated between Ethical2 and Ethical4, and between Environment1 and Environment3, based on evidence from modification indices and theoretical plausibility.

The evaluation of goodness-of-fit was achieved using a combination of indices, following the recommendations by Hu and Bentler (1999): These were Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ), the Chi-Square/df ratio, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). In addition, we used information criteria to assess model parsimony. These criteria were the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), and the Sample-size Adjusted BIC (SABIC). A lower value indicates a better fit. The reliability and validity of the latent constructs were assessed using composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE), with convergent and discriminant validity evaluated according to the criteria established by Hair, Babin, Anderson and Black (2019).

## Results

### *Structural Equation Model Fit*

The proposed structural equation model was evaluated using Maximum Likelihood estimation. The initial specification of the structural equation model demonstrated an acceptable but not optimal fit to the data. Based on examination of the modification indices, one item ("Ethical3") was removed from the measurement model, as its inclusion was indicated to impair the overall model fit without strong theoretical justification.

Additionally, two residual covariances were freely estimated: between Ethical2 and Ethical4, and between Environment1 and Environment3. These modifications were implemented based on large modification indices and theoretical coherence, suggesting potential overlap or similarity between the corresponding measurement errors. Allowing these residual covariances to be freely estimated significantly improved model fit without compromising the theoretical integrity of the model.

Following these modifications, the model demonstrated an acceptable to good fit to the data, as indicated by the fit indices presented in Table 2. Although the chi-square statistic was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(126) = 312, p < .001$ ), such significance is commonly observed in large samples and does not necessarily indicate poor model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Instead, alternative fit indices provide a more reliable assessment.

The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ ) was 2.42, indicating an acceptable model fit (values less than 3 are typically considered good; Kline, 2016). The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was .956 and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) was .946, both exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of .90 and approaching the desirable .95 standard. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was .077, with a 90% confidence interval ranging from .067 to .089, suggesting a moderate fit; while slightly above the ideal .06 level, it remains within an acceptable range for social sciences. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was .044, comfortably below the .08 cut-off, further supporting model adequacy.

Additional indices, such as the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC = 7765.372) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC = 7995.369), provided evidence for model parsimony and comparative goodness-of-fit, although no alternative models were directly tested.

Table 2. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Proposed SEM Model

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold
$\chi^2$	298	Non-significant preferred
df	123	—
$\chi^2/df$	2.42	< 3 acceptable
CFI	.956	> .90 acceptable; > .95 excellent
TLI	.946	> .90 acceptable
RMSEA	.077 (90% CI [.066, .088])	< .08 acceptable; < .06 excellent
SRMR	.044	< .08 acceptable
AIC	7765.372	Lower is better
BIC	7995.369	Lower is better
SABIC	7786.163	Lower is better

In summary, the overall fit statistics support the conclusion that the proposed model provides an adequate representation of the underlying data structure.

### Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed by examining the standardized factor loadings, the amount of variance explained ( $R^2$ ), and the error variances for each observed indicator (see Table 3).

All observed variables exhibited statistically significant standardized loadings on their corresponding latent constructs ( $p < .001$ ). The loadings ranged from 0.736 to 0.944, exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019), and in most cases surpassing 0.70, indicating strong convergence between items and their respective constructs.

The  $R^2$  values (squared standardized loadings) ranged from 0.541 (Ethical1) to 0.890 (Economic2), suggesting that between 55% and 89% of the variance in each item was explained by the underlying latent variable. Items measuring Environment and Economic constructs exhibited particularly high  $R^2$  values ( $>0.80$ ), indicative of highly reliable indicators. Error variances were moderate and inversely related to the magnitude of  $R^2$ , as expected.

Table 3. Standardized Loadings,  $R^2$ , and Error Variances

Construct	Item	Standardized Loading ( $\beta$ )	$R^2$	Error Variance
Social	Social1	0.875	0.766	0.234
	Social2	0.823	0.678	0.322
	Social3	0.892	0.795	0.205
Environment	Environment1	0.918	0.843	0.157
	Environment2	0.865	0.749	0.251
	Environment3	0.918	0.843	0.157
Economic	Economic1	0.815	0.664	0.336
	Economic2	0.942	0.887	0.113
	Economic3	0.906	0.821	0.179
Ethical	Ethical1	0.736	0.541	0.459
	Ethical2	0.744	0.553	0.447
	Ethical4	0.771	0.594	0.406
	Ethical5	0.838	0.703	0.297
	Ethical6	0.777	0.603	0.397
	Loyalty	Loyalty 1	0.806	0.650
Loyalty 2		0.944	0.890	0.110
Loyalty 3		0.932	0.869	0.131
Loyalty 4		0.851	0.723	0.277

### Reliability and Validity Assessment

#### Composite Reliability

Composite Reliability (CR) values were calculated to assess the internal consistency of the latent constructs. As shown in Table 4, all CR values exceeded the recommended cut-off of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019), indicating that each set of observed indicators reliably measured its respective latent construct.



### Average Variance Extracted

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was also computed for each construct. All constructs surpassed the threshold of 0.50, supporting convergent validity. High AVE values, particularly for Environment (0.817) and Economic (0.797), suggest that the constructs account for a substantial proportion of variance in their indicators (Table 4).

Table 4. Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Construct	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Information
Social	0.894	Valid
Environment	0.798	Valid
Economic	0.936	Valid
Ethical	0.901	Valid

### Structural Model

Structural Model revealed differential effects of CSR dimensions on ethical attitudes. Environmental initiatives had a significant and positive effect on Ethical attitudes ( $p = .010$ ), suggesting that higher environmental concerns are associated with stronger ethical values. However, it did not significantly predict Loyalty ( $p = .557$ ), showing that environmental perceptions alone are not enough to influence loyalty. Social initiatives had a statistically significant negative effect on Ethical attitudes ( $p = .037$ ), implying that higher social engagement may not necessarily enhance ethical perceptions. An unexpected finding that warrants further investigation. Nevertheless, the findings indicated that social factors did not have a significant impact on Loyalty ( $p = .671$ ), suggesting that social perceptions do not exert a substantial influence on members' loyalty. Economic initiatives did not significantly predict Ethical attitudes ( $p = .723$ ), indicating that economic considerations may be relatively independent of ethical concerns in this sample. However, it was found that economic factors had a small but significant positive effect on Loyalty ( $p = .044$ ), meaning that improved economic perceptions can result in a small increase in loyalty. Ethical attitudes had a strong and statistically significant positive effect on Loyalty ( $p < .001$ ), demonstrating that higher perceived ethical attitudes within the club substantially increases members' loyalty intentions. Table 5 summarizes the structural path coefficients.

Table 5. Standardized Structural Path Coefficients

Path	Standardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	SE	z	p-value
Ethical $\leftarrow$ Environment	0.675	0.260	2.593	0.010
Ethical $\leftarrow$ Social	-0.515	0.247	-2.082	0.037
Ethical $\leftarrow$ Economic	0.036	0.102	0.355	0.723
Loyalty $\leftarrow$ Social	0.064	0.149	0.425	0.671
Loyalty $\leftarrow$ Environment	-0.092	0.152	-0.588	0.557
Loyalty $\leftarrow$ Economic	0.129	0.064	2.018	0.044
Loyalty $\leftarrow$ Ethical	0.413	0.073	5.848	<.001

### Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine how the three dimensions of corporate social responsibility – environmental, social, and economic – can shape consumers' ethical perceptions (CPE) and how this, in turn, can influence members' loyalty to a tennis club. Using a structural equation modelling approach, the findings revealed a multifaceted relationship between CSR initiatives, ethical evaluations and intentions to be loyal.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that the dimensions of CSR have a differential impact on consumer perceived ethical behavior, depending on the type of initiatives implemented by the sports organization. Essentially, CSR initiatives selectively influence ethical evaluations, depending on how members interpret the ethical relevance of each dimension of responsibility. The environmental, social

and economic dimensions do not contribute equally to the formation of the ethical evaluation, highlighting the complexity of the mechanisms through which members develop ethical attitudes.

Among the three dimensions, environmental initiatives are perceived by the sample's members as the most credible indicators of organizational integrity. This result is in full accordance with earlier and contemporary studies, which posit that environmental initiatives increase the perceived responsibility, credibility and ethical legitimacy of organizations (Inoue & Kent, 2013). In similar way, environmental sustainability has been identified as an essential component of the social legitimacy in sports (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). Furthermore, the implementation of explicit environmental policies has been found to result in heightened ethical evaluations by fans and members (McCullough & Cunningham, 2011). Further empirical evidence demonstrates that environmental actions, enhance the credibility and ethical attitude of participants in sport sector (Casper, Pfahl & McCullough, 2014), while they are the most consistent and positively evaluated dimension of corporate social responsibility (Walzel, Robertson & Anagnostopoulos, 2018). This view is further supported by a recent study, which also confirmed that environmental issues are considered to be most trustworthy and credible in participatory sports Lagoudaki et al., 2024).

In contrary, the social dimension of CSR has a negative impact on CPE suggesting that social initiatives are not always perceived as authentic or meaningful by members. According to Brunk (2012), theoretical approach to CPE social actions can be considered as superficial or incomplete when they do not respond to real social needs. Walker & Parent (2010), confirm that social corporate responsibility does not consistently produce positive ethical judgments when actions are not linked to the identity or mission of the organization. Furthermore, it has been noted that social actions are often treated as formal obligations rather than as a clear expression of morality (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2016). Finally, social action is evaluated positively only when it demonstrates duration, consistency, and authenticity (Walzel et al., 2018), characteristics that may not be sufficiently recognized by the members of the specific group. These findings underscore the significance of authenticity and consistency in the design of social responsibility initiatives within participatory sport organizations.

The economic dimension did not reveal a statistically significant relationship with CPE, a finding that confirms that economic initiatives are viewed more as functional condition rather than as an ethical attitude. This view is in line with the Carroll pyramid (1991), which posits that the economic dimension serves as a foundation for operations, rather than an indicator of ethical substance. Research consistently shows that economic practices do not have a significant impact on an organization's ethical evaluation. Instead, they are more closely linked to perceptions of effectiveness (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Inoue & Havard, 2014). Furthermore, consumers tend not to attribute moral value to economic initiatives, as they are considered to be expected and not indicative of responsibility (Kahle & Close, 2011).

Regarding the effect of CSR initiatives on the loyalty of tennis club members, the study's findings show that not all CSR dimensions influence loyalty in the same way. Firstly, environmental responsibility was found to have no direct influence on loyalty. This is consistent with existing research which suggests that consumer behavior is influenced more by the organization's overall ethical image than by individual CSR dimensions (Lagoudaki et al., 2024; Leonidou et al., 2013). Furthermore, social responsibility did not predict loyalty, which is consistent with existing literature positing that social actions only positively influence consumer attitudes when they align with personal values and are perceived as authentic (Emmanuel & Priscilla, 2022). In contrast, the economic responsibility dimension of CSR had a small but significant effect on loyalty. This suggests that economically responsible operations, transparency, and fair pricing policies influence members' intentions to remain with the club. These findings are reasonable when considering that developing loyalty among participants, fans and stakeholders is not an immediate process, but rather the outcome of a sustained commitment to CSR values and practices over the long term (Kim, 2020). Specifically, in participatory sports such as tennis, members pay subscriptions and renew them annually. They also compare what they receive in relation to the cost. Therefore, the financial behavior of the club (transparency, fair prices and proper management) directly influences whether members will stay, continue to pay and consider it 'worth it'.

Nevertheless, the results showed that CPE is the main factor influencing members' loyalty to the tennis club. This suggests that, while CSR actions may indirectly influence members' attitudes, the key factor in determining their impact is whether members perceive the club to be honest, consistent and responsible. The above findings are in line with those of previous studies, which suggest that the CPE can be

used to predict customer behavior, as it has been found to have a positive influence on critical consumer behaviors such as loyalty (Markovic et al., 2018; Singh et al., 2012). Many researchers argue that when an organization is perceived as ethical, this enhances trust, credibility and emotional connection, naturally leading to greater loyalty (Brunk, 2012; Pérez & Bosque, 2015). In other words, ethics act as the 'link' between CSR actions and member commitment. In the case of the tennis club, members appear to be more loyal when they feel that the club acts with fairness, transparency and respect. The organization's ethical reputation appears to be a key factor in fostering a sense of security, building trust and maintaining active membership. This confirms that perceived ethics are a decisive factor in forming long-term relationships within sports organizations.

Overall, the discussion shows that the environmental dimension of CSR acts as the strongest determinant of ethicality, while the social and economic dimensions require greater strategic coherence, transparency, and substance in order to enhance the ethical image of a participatory sports organization. At the same time, consumer loyalty to participatory sports environments, such as tennis clubs, is not solely built through CSR actions, but primarily through the ethical image they create among participants.

## Conclusions

This study examined how the three dimensions of corporate social responsibility (environmental, social and economic) influence consumers' perceived ethics (CPE) and loyalty to tennis clubs in Greece. Using a structural equation modelling approach, the findings showed that the three dimensions do not influence perceived ethics in the same way. Specifically, environmental responsibility was found to be the strongest and most consistent predictor of consumers' ethical perceptions. This suggests that environmental initiatives are perceived as clearer and more reliable indicators of organizational integrity and responsibility.

In contrast, social responsibility was found to have a negative relationship with perceived ethics. It seems that social initiatives not clearly linked to the association's core mission may be considered superficial or inconsistent with members' expectations. Finally, the economic dimension of CSR was found to have no significant impact on perceived ethics, possibly because the relevant initiatives of the association are inconsistent or non-existent.

At the same time, perceived ethics emerged as the main predictor of member loyalty, whereas CSR dimensions did not directly predict loyalty. These findings suggest that ethics are a key mechanism for retaining members and a main mediator between CSR actions and loyalty among participants. This result has significant practical implications for sports marketing managers, as CSR initiatives alone are insufficient for building long-term relationships with customers.

Firstly, environmental actions such as systematic recycling, energy saving and participation in environmental campaigns can enhance a club's ethical image, which can lead to member loyalty. The results also indicate that social initiatives, such as supporting social causes or institutions, or encouraging voluntary participation, should form part of a sports club's operations and philosophy. Otherwise, it may have a negative effect, causing consumers to view the club as unethical.

Finally, economic initiatives such as hiring staff and boosting the regional economy (e.g. by organizing events and attracting participants) can contribute to the club's ethical standing, particularly in participatory sports where participants regularly interact with the club financially. If members feel that their contributions are meaningful to their region and to themselves, they will certainly have a more positive perception of the club's ethics and, consequently, be more loyal to the organization. Based on the results, researchers generally suggest that each club should strengthen its ethical image, especially through visible, consistent actions integrated into daily activities (e.g. recycling, donations and collecting necessary items).

Ultimately, the ethics perceived by consumers should be a strategic goal of management, rather than an indirect result of CSR initiatives. Sports managers should systematically monitor members' ethical assessments and ensure that CSR actions are consistent, credible and in line with ethical principles. By promoting an ethical organizational image characterized by fairness, responsibility, and integrity, sports organizations can build long-lasting, resilient relationships with their members.



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### Authors' and translators' details:

Georgia Lagoudaki	<a href="mailto:glagouda@affil.duth.gr">glagouda@affil.duth.gr</a>	Author
Efi Tsitskari	<a href="mailto:etsitska@phyed.duth.gr">etsitska@phyed.duth.gr</a>	Author
Nikolaos Vernadakis	<a href="mailto:nvernada@phyed.duth.gr">nvernada@phyed.duth.gr</a>	Author
Katerina Paschalidou	<a href="mailto:katepascha@hotmail.com">katepascha@hotmail.com</a>	Author
Georgia Lagoudaki	<a href="mailto:glagouda@affil.duth.gr">glagouda@affil.duth.gr</a>	Translator