

Evidence Document for Football Club Directors:

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, word-of-mouth and related outcomes:

Why This Matters to the Club

Supporter advocacy — what fans say about the club online and offline — directly influences:

- Reputation and brand strength
- Matchday attendance
- Merchandise sales
- Sponsor attractiveness
- Inclusivity scores and NPS
- Overall commercial performance

CSR is a proven driver of these behaviours. As the document states, “when supporters believe a club is acting responsibly, they are more likely to speak positively about the club, recommend it to others, trust it, stay loyal, and show stronger purchase intentions.”

For a football club, this makes CSR a commercial lever, not a peripheral activity.

What the Evidence Shows

Across multiple large-scale meta-analyses:

CSR reliably increases supporter advocacy

- Meta-analytic evidence shows a positive link between CSR and word-of-mouth.
- CSR also increases “*advocacy, recommendation, and word-of-mouth*” — all core to NPS and supporter growth.

CSR strengthens the foundations of supporter behaviour

Consistent positive effects are found on:

- Trust
- Loyalty
- Corporate credibility
- Brand preference
- Purchase intention
- Reputation

These are the same variables clubs track in fan engagement, commercial strategy, and sponsor reporting.

CSR aimed at core stakeholders is most effective

One meta-analysis covering 43 countries found that CSR activities focused on customers, employees, and local communities generate the strongest behavioural responses. For clubs, this means CSR is most powerful when supporters can clearly see the club acting responsibly toward:

- Fans
- Staff
- Players
- Local communities

CSR communication online matters

Social media amplifies CSR effects. CSR-related content drives engagement through likes, shares, comments, and online advocacy — which in turn shapes reputation.

Cause-related marketing works — if done well

Linking club activity to a social cause has positive effects on attitudes and behaviour, but poor execution can weaken or reverse the effect. The principle: CSR must be sincere, visible, and relevant to supporters.

Implications for the Club

CSR activities can directly support the outcomes the Club has prioritised:

Outcome	Evidence-Based Impact
Positive word-of-mouth	Supporters speak more positively about responsible organisations.
Recommendation / NPS	CSR increases advocacy and recommendation.
Trust	CSR is positively linked to trust.
Loyalty	CSR strengthens supporter loyalty.
Credibility	CSR improves perceived credibility.
Purchase intention	CSR increases future buying behaviour.
Reputation	CSR improves overall organisational evaluation.

These are the same metrics used in commercial strategy, sponsorship, and supporter engagement.

Practical Takeaway for Directors

Responsible action on online hate should be treated as a measurable CSR activity.

It allows the club to demonstrate that it is:

- Protecting supporters
- Creating a safer, more inclusive environment
- Acting responsibly toward its core stakeholders
- Strengthening its brand and reputation
- Supporting commercial outcomes linked to trust, loyalty, and advocacy

As the document notes, “visible, credible CSR activity can improve word-of-mouth, trust, loyalty, recommendation, and related commercial outcomes.”

This positions online hate reduction not as moderation, but as:

- Brand protection
- Supporter experience enhancement
- Commercial value creation

Director-Level Summary

- CSR has strong, consistent, evidence-backed effects on supporter behaviour.
- These effects directly align with the Club's commercial priorities.
- CSR focused on fans, staff, players, and community is most powerful.
- Online hate reduction is a credible, high-impact CSR activity.
- Investing in responsible digital environments supports trust, advocacy, and revenue.

Bibliography

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