

# **(PP) STAKEHOLDERS AND TEAM MANAGEMENT FOR SPORT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: THE BARCELONA FC CASE**

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## **Introduction**

While sport clubs have usually been focused on the ‘on field’ performance, recently they have started to reflect on a more integrated vision, which takes into account also the ‘off field’ performance. Accordingly, sport clubs have started to re-think their relationships with the local socio-economic environment, aiming at developing, in particular, new and tighter relationships with the local stakeholders (e.g. local community, local public authorities, no-profit organizations, etc.). According to stakeholders’ management literature (i.e. Agle, Mitchell and Sonnenfeld, 1999; Shulman and Bowen, 2001; Wolfe and Putler, 2002), in fact, creating compatibility between a sport organization, the local community and other stakeholders’ priorities produces a good fit between the organization and its environment, increasing, thus, the probability of the organization’s success. Developing stable and long-lasting relationships with partners in the local no-profit, private and public sectors could be a key factor in order to create social and economic values relating to sport and culture promotion. These partnerships between different environmental components (Sport, Culture, Tourism, Leisure etc) need to be managed through systematic and planned processes aimed at encouraging and allowing participation both for individuals of a society or the members of individual team or clubs (Collins, 1995, 2003). Therefore, an important challenge sport management has to face is the strengthening of the connections with the local socio-economic environment.

Furthermore, as ‘on field’ performance is an important condition for developing the ‘off field’ one, it is critical to understand the potential determinants affecting the former. Among these factors, previous studies (for a review, see Akgün and Lynn, 2002) have highlighted the relevance of team stability, which could have a positive effect on team performance because it facilitates the creation of shared values, common languages and trust within the group (e.g. Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven, 1990).

In this context, Barcelona Football Club represents a relevant example of a soccer club that has spent a great effort in effectively managing its team and its relationships with the local environment and stakeholders (e.g. local Governments, local communities, citizens, etc.). For example, in order to increase both intra-team stability (and thus team performance) and the possibility to enforce the sense of identity between the club and its community, Barcelona F.C. has many players who are natives (Puyol, Iniesta, Valdes, Xavi) and has made strategic investments in the youth and sport sector (e.g. huge facilities like “Ciudad sportiva”). Moreover, the *governance* of Barcelona FC is managed through Fundació FC Barcelona whose goal is to enrich the community promoting social projects on a large scale. Accordingly, Barcelona has built, for example, a Museum and a Centre for Documentation and Studies devoted to the history of the Club and its connections with the history of the region and the cultural heritage. Furthermore, the numerous sporting activities and centres (not only soccer, also American football, basketball, roller hockey, and handball plus many other sports for amateurs), cultural (funding studies, grants etc) and social activities (solidarity and charities funds also through associates and citizens involvement) carried out by the Club reflect an advanced sport club model that fosters everybody to participate in the development of such initiatives. The Foundation has 130.000 associates and 1.600 clubs in Catalunya and all around the world. Its decisional vertex and managerial structure is based on

the commitment on the main local community's needs. Finally, following a democratic process each officially affiliated-citizen can participate to the President and Delegates' Assembly election, and also the club sponsorship policies are affected by the maintenance of its traditional values (no sponsor on the official blau-grana *camisetas*).

Therefore, the aim of this case-study is to analyze a meaningful reality in consistency with the above considerations: 1) Soccer is the *most* popular sport in Spain, 2) its team performances on field have always been *extremely high*, now more than ever, 3) the urban socio-economic growth since 1992 (Olympic Games) has been *incredible* (growth of attractivity level, sport infrastructure creation, transportation improvement, tourism and cultural activities development etc. etc.) and 4) the *strong identification* of the club with its region, Catalunya, is worldwide known. Barcelona FC, on its path to excellence, developed a systematic and co-ordinated approach to the promotion of its image, of its performing team and team members (internally) and to partnership policies (externally) with its main stakeholders (citizens, no-profit organizations, other sport organizations, club people, governments, cultural centres, media, sponsors, tourism companies etc.). In particular, the main questions the case-investigation wants to address are the following: How are the relations with other stakeholders and specifically with the club people and the local community managed? Which is the socio-economic relevance of Barcellona F.C. participation model? Why Barcelona FC is "mas que un club"?

### **Methods and Measures**

It has been adopted a case study methodology (Yin, 1984; Eisenhardt, 1989) combining different data collection methods: archives' analysis, interviews, questionnaires, secondary sources and direct observation. The human resources that have been interviewed are both from the sport and the managerial dimensions of the club. The case study approach involved the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data and valuations through a set of indicators regarding team performances on and off the field, team relational intensity and stability, stakeholders' relationships and partnerships management, socio-economic impact of partnership management.

### **Results**

The results indicate that Barcelona FC, following human resources and community oriented strategies and following partnership policies on a medium-long term, has obtained, is obtaining and is oriented to obtain, in the next future 1) a positive socio-economic impact, 2) excellent sport performances on and off the field and 3) an increasing sport and social participation.

### **Discussion**

According to the main results, we can assert that through the Barcelona FC investigation:

- it can be identified a virtuous cycle for which team (and club) cohesion, socio-economic development and sport values diffusion are positively correlated to each other;
- the above positive correlation is a result of both club people and external stakeholders (e.g community) management;
- Barcelona FC strategy is oriented to improve team group cohesion (and stability) creating and enforcing long-lasting ties between the club as well as team individuals with their living environment, also in order to improve sport team results;

- Democratic decisional processes, community involvement, partnership policies, responsibility management, real and potential stakeholders relationships are the key-factors of the club participation model success in order to win on and off the field.

### **References**

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