

Olympics and FIFA world cup sponsors' social responsibility: relationship between corporate and sports environment

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Aim

This research aims to discuss the relationship of the sponsors for the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup with the social responsibility of all stakeholders: enterprises, IOC and FIFA, trying to understand whether there is synergy between FIFA, IOC and their sponsors and whether these companies communicate their social responsibility associated with the message of sport, football and olympism.

Theoretical background

There is a similarity of Olympic ideals with the issues of social responsibility because it evokes concepts like education, society and peace (Chappelet, 2009, p. 17). Sport offer a link with social and economic concepts. It is like an opportunity to improve life quality of people and a motivation for big companies to share a little bit of their profits (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Sport can be considered an important vehicle for companies to implement social responsibility for the community, facilitating and focusing its activities to cover more people, and provide significant visibility for its brands (Westerbeek & Smith, 2007; Godfrey, 2009; Walters, 2009).

To some extent, sport is an important powerful to better expose the actions of corporate social responsibility. When sports and social responsibility are together, the positive impact for businesses tends to be magnified.

In the corporate environment, one of the most important parameters used to measure the social responsibility performance is based on GRI Guidelines. The GRI Guidelines (2011) lends itself to guide and analyze the way in which organizations express their social responsibility through the Social Report and/or Company's Annual Report. A CSR report can be delivered in several formats: printed or displayed on the Internet, separate or combined with the Annual Report or Financial Report, featuring six dimensions linked to social responsibility: (1) Economic; (2) Environment;

(3) Social – linked with Labor Practices and Decent Work; (4) Human Rights; (5) Society; and (6) Product Responsibility.

The approach of the Corporate Social Responsibility with sport is related with the improvement of enterprises brand image (Walker & Kent, 2009). So, Westerbeek & Smith (2007) propose seven unique features of sport's social responsibility: (1) media distribution and power, (2) approach with young people, (3) positive impact on health, (4) social interaction, (5) awareness of sustainability, (6) integration and cultural awareness among people, (7) immediate gratification of their benefits.

These connections between sport and corporate social responsibility can bring positive benefits for both companies and for sport. Companies may be associated with a cultural manifestation of great appeal and, therefore, with great visibility for their brands. Sport's organizations may be able to develop and implement more broadly integrating its mission in society.

Methodology

The seven unique features of sport's social responsibility (Westerbeek & Smith, 2007) may be "the heart" of this study, that elaborated a cross comparative analysis of these interpretations upon the Social Report and/or Annual Report of the sponsors of these two mega-events in order to identify similarities and convergences between them. It means that the seven features of Westerbeek & Smith (2007) was the main reference to make a qualitative analysis of the actions and programs from sponsors before their investment on Olympic Games and/or World Cup FIFA™, with a vision on sport behavior and, in a parallel review, "The GRI Guidelines", that is one of the most respected parameter from corporate social responsibility valuation, was used to interpret social actions and programs from companies.

So, the qualitative analysis take the issues of Westerbeek & Smith seven unique features associated with GRI Guidelines, creating five categories of review: (1) economic and sport issue – the interest of companies to position themselves through sports market; (2) environment and sport issue – relationship of companies with actions or projects of FIFA or the IOC linked to concerns about the environment; (3) social and sport issue – related with labor practices and encouragement to employees to have an approach to the sport; (4) human rights and sport issue – social actions to benefit society with sport message; (5) products development and sport issue – to develop products and services that meet sustainability criteria and contribute to the practice and/or promotion of sport.

Results

The large majority of the investigated companies not detail or present clear projects on their Annual Report and/or Social Report that show the relationship between social responsibility with sport. When they present, the companies do not exploit the fullest understanding of the potential that sport has for social development linked to the FIFA World Cup or Olympics and their positive intrinsic message.

The human rights and sport issue was the most cited by companies in their reports. 68% of the companies mentioned projects or actions related to benefit the society through

sport. Despite this, only 18% of the companies signalized that have some projects or actions related with environment and sport issue, showing a significant gap to explore in the relation between corporative world and sport's organizations.

The other issues analyzed feature the low affinity of FIFA World Cup and Olympics sponsors to the sport social responsibility: only 27% of enterprises mentioned some relation with economic and sport issue; 36% presented actions or projects related with social and sport issue; and just 32% of companies bring out worry about products development and sport issue.

There are therefore significant repercussions, not part of corporate strategy to communicate on the adoption of social responsibility. It is followed to some extent, the main initiatives promoted by FIFA or the IOC, followed by shy works of their own initiative. It was finally assumed that there is a lack of indicators able to address the two issues together, making it difficult to find differentiations from other actions of corporate social responsibility.

We suggest for others study in this line to conduct longitudinal studies on the bias on the social responsibility linked to the sport for the identification of changes and

different approaches over time, gradually forming indicators for measuring performance of organizations in this area of research.

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