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## **Analysis of corporate social responsibility on football: a comparison between Spanish, Portuguese and Brazilian clubs**

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### **Background**

It is acknowledged that a football club is unique; both for having a social dimension as well as make part of an economic paradigm. Supported into this double guidance we can integrate than on principles and practices of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) business (Sheth & Babiak, 2009; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). However, only in the last decade, the CSR has begun to receive attention from researchers and be worked within sport management theories (Breitbarth & Harris, 2008, Walker & Kent, 2009; Walker, Kent, & Rudd, 2007).

Furthermore, there are social responsibilities inherent to sport by its characteristics as elements of the Olympic spirit, fair play and moral aspects, among others. For this reason, CSR has become a strategic tool in the enhancement of business since the company started to require affirmative conduct to improve their quality of life with a view to the human and social development.

Daft (2008) says that “the organizational culture often has a profound influence on individual choices and can support and encourage ethical actions or promote unethical behavior and social irresponsibility”.

With the improvement of their corporate image, a significant percentage of investment is credited to companies that have a social concern rooted in their organizational culture.

Practices on sports marketing field must to: (1) be consistent with the mission and values of the organization and its stakeholders; and (2) be produced, promoted and delivered in a socially and ethically responsible (Blann and Armstrong, 2007).

So, clubs bet on social marketing to position itself in the evolution of interaction processes with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and public agents through new articulated responsibilities.

### **Objectives**

To present the true social role that makes the CSR management of football clubs from three relevant markets: Spain, Portugal and Brazil. The research will observe and analyze some key points:

1. To know the pragmatic reality of CSR management in sport and football in particular;
2. To observe and to compare CSR management in clubs used to promote their institutional image for their stakeholders;
3. To understand existing models of CSR among football clubs in these three markets and compare with other successful cases.

## **Methods**

Between March and April 2010, the web-sites of all members of Brazilian Championship 2009 (20 teams); Liga Sagres 2009/2010 (16 teams) and Liga BBVA 2009/2010 (20 teams) were evaluated to check information on activities of CSR and communication with their various stakeholders. In parallel with this analysis, the websites of professional football leagues and national governing bodies were also evaluated.

It was understood that the use of electronic media is an important tool for marketing relationship with the community, supporters and potential investors and contributes considerably to the exposure of the club activities and thereby improving the corporate image, in addition to spreading the concepts of CSR in case of existing it.

Websites are designed with the purpose to present different identities for different audiences and stakeholders, as evidenced in previous studies of CSR (Esrock & Leichthy, 1998; Maignan & Ralston, 2002; Pollachi, 2005). Thus, these media are convenient to bring the definition of an organization, to understand and recognize the importance of CSR and to percept how it applies within the club and its associated activities.

The criteria were based on a complete investigation of all channels and links exposed on the official website to identify social actions, researching key-words as social responsibility, sustainability, transparence, ethics, values, human development, environment, among others directly related with principles and issues of CSR.

## **Results**

In order to get a return on their investment, clubs center attention on social marketing to position itself in the evolution of interaction processes with NGOs, private actors and public through new responsibilities articulated.

A great percentage of surveyed clubs don't show in their official web-sites the actions related with CSR. Only the top teams have good strategies of disclosure actions on CSR, as Real Madrid and Barcelona, through their own foundations of social assistance; Sporting from Portugal, by its athletes training programs; Internacional from Porto Alegre, Brazil, through special programs to

attend the community; Corinthians, because of its transparency and balance publication of all activities; in Spain, 12 of 20 clubs adopt the foundation model – Málaga can be a detach on projects aggregated with education programs.

We realize that investigated clubs show us many evidences on good practices as a great social agent acting in its region-wide, comparing with some projects applied by Chelsea in England and Boca Juniors in Argentina as recognized references.

### **Conclusion/Application to practice**

We see that some managers have not added the sports concept of CSR as part of your business. Football cannot leave out strategic management in its role as an agent for social change and must use this function to the growth and development of the game.

The clubs that have some attention on CSR aspects act as social agent related with the culture and behavior of the organization before their stakeholders. This means that strategies of CSR investigated are related to a greater purpose of market or ideology. This format is a key point to success in direct relationship with the community and areas of coverage, leading clubs to respond to growing demand from their various stakeholders.

It is possible to note this statement by observing changes in the CSR management in football clubs with a major concern of what is now called “Football Business” to “Off field Business”.

We hope that this research serve as a basis for further investigations, observing the gradual development to most clubs start to adopt social responsibility strategies.

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