The Strategic Communication Management in Sports Teams: Comparing between European and Brazilian Football Clubs

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The Industry of Sport is experiencing dizzying economic growth. Thus, the growing importance of strategic planning in sports clubs is allowing its market position and its achievements in the sports field. The implementation and development of a strategic communications in enabling the development of an identity of the club that aggregates all its stakeholders is one such strategy. The purpose of this paper is to raise and analyze, in a comparative way, the communication management strategies of the leading clubs in European and Brazilian football. For this, we were analyzed eight major sporting clubs in Europe, by brand value, comparing with the eight most valued brands in the football market in Brazil. We believe, therefore, stimulate associations in Brazil to adopt communication strategies with greater focus on developing an organizational identity, as in Europe, rather than the current excessive investment in marketing tools.

Theoretical Background

The correct and proper development of the management of internal and external communications, within the concept of integrated communication, developed by Brazilian researcher Kunsch (2003), brings excellent reflexes in the economic and financial results of the business organizations. For the author, the strategic management of integrated communication in business organizations is essential to the process of identifying the companies with their various stakeholders. The integrated communication should be seen as a process directly related to the strategic management of organizations (Kunsch, 2003). The integrated communication allows us to understand organizational communication far beyond merely centered point of view in the transmission of information and the production of media. In addition, the "integrated organizational communication" sets the diverse ways that permeate its concept and its practices involving concomitant institutional communication, marketing, internal and administrative (Kunsch, 2003). Pedersen et al (2007), present an interesting strategic model for communication in the sport that integrates all aspects of communication proposed by the Brazilian researcher. The model proposed by Pedersen et al (2007) involves sports organization in its relationship with the market, sponsors, customers, fans, servants, athletes and with several other interest groups orbiting tone of the sports organizations. The authors divide the communication in the sports bodies of three components: personal and organizational communication in sport, sport and media and mass communication services and support sport (Pedersen et al, 2007). In early 2015, the European Club Association, ECA, organization that brings together more than 210 associations of the Old Continent, published a compilation of best management practices of European clubs, the ECA Club Management Guide. In this document, the Europe´s football clubs have taken as a basic premise, that their organizational strategies should be divided into three major groups: sport, business and community. The sports communication is an important role to build these bridges relationship with the community and society as a whole.

Method

For carry out this research with the achievement of the overall objective and proposed specific objectives, we conducted an extensive document analysis of the various print media of organizational communication produced by sixteen teams (eight European and eight Brazilian) studied in this project and also made available documents by these associations, such as statutes, financial reports, social responsibility reports, management reporting and strategic planning, among others. Also, and as the main source of information, we work with direct observation and a thorough and detailed analysis of official portals managed by sixteen associations. We understand, in the spectrum of this investigation, that the official websites of football clubs show, or at least should highlight the communication strategies adopted by each of these objects of our study organizations. The observation of the portals of the major clubs in Brazil and Europe was held from May 1 to July 31, 2015. For the choice of eight European associations, we were chosen based on Brand Finance Football 50 (2015), a report that lists the top 50 teams on the value of their brands in the football world. The clubs are: Manchester United (England), Bayern Munich (Germany), Real Madrid...
(Spain), Manchester City (England), Chelsea (England), FC Barcelona (Spain), Arsenal (England) and Paris Saint-Germain (France). Already eight soccer clubs in Brazil were chosen for the scope of this research, based on the study of BDO Brazil, published in early 2015 with the 30 most valuable brands among the sporting clubs in the country. The selected entities are as follows: Flamengo (RJ), Corinthians (SP), São Paulo (SP), Palmeiras (SP), Gremio (RS), Internacional (RS), Cruzeiro (MG) and Santos (SP). By a protocol of observation, previously designed, we conducted in each of the sixteen portals to the listed associations during the reporting period since the survey of information regarding management processes of integrated communication of the selected entities.

Results, Discussion and Implications

The understanding that a strong identity is now a financial asset of an organization, give the sport a strategic importance. Athletes and sports clubs start to contribute thereby to increasingly important way for the success of a company. The role of integrated organizational communication grows in importance within this universe. The communication planning with stakeholders becomes a key strategy for sports agents and for sports managers earned economic, political and sporting results. This whole scenario has been understood by the major football associations in Europe. In Brazil, however, the most important clubs in the country appear not yet to have understood this process. National associations still betting on more linked to marketing strategies, than to communication. Prevails in communication processes proposed by European clubs in their portals, a preoccupation with building a solid image, established by establishing solid relationships with key stakeholders, in particular its members, fans, consumers, investors, organ press, community and consumers. This process, built around communication, as in Europe, leads to strengthening and developing the brands of major European clubs in the football market. In Brazil, as noted, communication processes are grounded in isolated marketing actions without a proper strategic planning. It does not reflect, in essence, the concrete building and lasting relationships with its interest groups. Such actions show thus the lack of a strategic plan to use, in a correct and professional manner, communication as its most important strategic vector. We agree, with the conclusion of this study, to contribute to the improvement of communication management in Brazilian sport organizations and, therefore, in sport organizations management in general in Brazil.

References