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Communication of Eco-Social Values and their Influence through Football. Analysis of the F.C. St. Pauli Case

La comunicación de valores ecosociales y su influencia a través del fútbol. Análisis del caso F.C. St. Pauli

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Abstract

This paper analyses the case of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) actions, pivotal in strategic communication, within the context of St. Pauli football club in Hamburg, Germany. The hypothesis posits the possibility of an alternative football model, necessitating a corresponding alternative corporate communication policy consistent with eco-social logic. The analytical approach follows an inductive-deductive process as a tool for analysis, with the primary method employed being a case study utilising heuristic and documentary analysis strategies. The reality of football's social responsibility is scrutinised through text analysis and an ethical perspective. The focus lies in examining six variables within the club's corporate policy: 1) political dimension; 2) economic dimension; 3) social dimension; 4) environmental dimension; 5) cultural dimension; and 6) other dimensions. The study identifies the club's cultural values based on tolerance, LGBTBI+ inclusion, and environmental protection, along with the ideology influencing its actions, linked to social groups, ecological associations and left-wing political formations, at times adopting an anti-capitalist stance. There is evident interest in understanding social interaction in the sports domain from the realms of advertising and public relations, extending beyond financial aspects. This interest is presented as an imperative need to comprehend, from a social communication standpoint, the dynamic mechanisms of a world navigating decision-making amidst the ongoing environmental, health, economic, and social crises.

Keywords

Communication; Sports; F.C. St. Pauli; Football; Advertising and Public Relations; Corporate Social Responsibility.

Resumen

Este trabajo analiza el caso paradigmático de las acciones de responsabilidad social corporativa (RSC), claves en la comunicación estratégica, del club de fútbol St. Pauli de Hamburgo (Alemania). La hipótesis de partida es que otro fútbol es posible, lo que implica otra política de comunicación corporativa alternativa, coherente con la lógica ecosocial. Se sigue el proceso inductivo-deductivo como herramienta de análisis. El método principal es el estudio de caso a partir de una estrategia heurística y de análisis documental. La realidad de la responsabilidad social del fútbol se estudia desde el análisis de texto y desde una perspectiva ética. Para ello se centra en el análisis de seis variables de su política corporativa: 1) dimensión política; 2) dimensión económica; 3) dimensión social; 4) dimensión medioambiental; 5) dimensión cultural; y 6) otras dimensiones. El trabajo identifica los valores culturales del club, basados en la tolerancia, la inclusión LGBTBI+ y la protección del medioambiente, así como su ideología, ligada a grupos sociales, asociaciones ecologistas y formaciones políticas de izquierda, a veces incluso anticapitalista, que marca su modo de actuar. Se observa un interés en comprender la interacción social en el ámbito deportivo desde la publicidad y las relaciones públicas, más allá de aspectos relacionados con lo crematístico. Este interés se presenta como una necesidad imperante para entender, desde la comunicación social, los dinámicos mecanismos de un mundo que tiende a la toma de decisiones en medio de la actual crisis medioambiental, sanitaria, económica y social.

Palabras clave

Comunicación; Deporte; F.C. St Pauli; Fútbol; Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas; Responsabilidad Social Corporativa.

1. Introduction

Every organisation, whether private corporations, public institutions, entities of mixed nature, or other typologies, has an undoubted social responsibility in the 21st Century. However, social responsibility in business has been used exclusively to increase economic benefits for over half a century (Friedman, 1970: 57-63). From a conceptual framework perspective, we are immersed in a profound state of social, economic, and values change, which is decisively affecting organisations (Viñarás-Abad, González-Vallés and Rincón-Alonso, 2020: 336). Therefore, social responsibility is part of strategic communication, public relations, advertising, and marketing today (Barquero-Cabrero, 2015). Thus, a corporation with a good reputation must be a "responsible corporation, but also a profitable one, have a wide offer of quality offer, be a good place to work, be innovative and possess a global dimension" (Villafañe, 2009: 75). Using communication, advertising, and public relations as priority tools, organisations establish relations with their public and environment, generating a certain corporate reputation or a particular public image. There are constantly new formats (virtual reality, drones, podcasts, messenger services) and sustainability formats (readers and user's communities), according to Anguís-Sánchez, Cabezeulo-Lorenzo, and Sotelo-González (2019: 1698), which determines new ways to manage communication. This communicative exercise does not always imply better communication between organisations and their public, who, in the end, are the individuals. Social communication in its advertising and public relations variant is able to guide conduct and thought (García-López, 2016). This capacity can be utilized to reinforce the currently increasing production and consumption systems, but it can also be utilized for change. Corporations and institutions, through socially persuasive communication, aim to affect individual conduct, as multiple recent studies in the last half-century have proven, according to different authors and trends (Hirschman, 2003; McIlwain, 2007; McQuarrie & Mick, 1999; Morley, 1996; Scott, 1994; Williams, 1993 o Williamson, 1978).

The current system offers a glooming panorama. As Eagleton indicates, "our predominant lifestyle has the power not only to generate racism and propagate cultural idiocy, to push us to war, or to drive us like cattle to fields of forced papers but also trying to wipe us out from the planet" (2011: 21). The human condition presents certain organizational problems that tend to be forgotten in some social analysis. According to Riechmann (2011: 36), there are three problematic features attached to Western society or those societies that have adopted Western patterns: The instrumentalization, which implies realizing actions with the goal of constant growth and result-oriented; the temporality, which limits the perception of the majority of people regarding past and future; and the *egocentricity*, since individualism defines our lifestyle and apparently there are no perspectives of a change in social behavior. These attributes of the human condition forge obstacles that prevent the defense of the environment and the construction of social relations outside of capital accumulation as the only final objective.

This same system that has forged the globalized life we know in industrialized nations has resulted in almost insurmountable environmental problems and increasing social inequality (Kempf, 2011). Regarding environmental problems, it is essential to point out climate change. Regarding the social distance, there is a search for real equality between men and women, according to Bottomore (1991: 6), Barrales Martínez and Rodríguez Gutiérrez (2023: 1-16), and Riechmann (2014), who affirm that the change in the socioeconomic system only will be effective if it is *eco-social* and eventually, it is more attentive to the real needs of people. Brown, Flavin, and Postel (1990: 58) even affirm that the destruction of the environment can be compared to the effect of a "nuclear war, regarding its capacity to transform a wide arrange of human and natural systems, and to hinder the work of economic management and to generate other diverse problems". Because of all the above, it is indispensable that the organisations that have adopted an *ecosocial* commitment use advertising and public relations to communicate their actions that positively impact the entire ecosystem, both in nature and in the relationships between individuals. More social communication is necessary, and "the key indicator to recognize a social campaign without any lucrative or commercial end is identifying the transmitter" (Fanjul-Peyró, González-Oñate and Santo-Mirabet, 2020: 262).

Up to this moment, this communication has helped mostly the systemic entities to immortalize the production and consumption systems, with the goal of creating a certain vision of an impossible exit or an unnecessary change. Sports as mass showmanship contributes to reinforcing this system. Part of the social system has imposed a perspective that communicates that what is counterproductive would be an alteration of the current system and has assured that any change would inevitably imply a return to a worse lifestyle. However, advertising and public relations also can be used to communicate a more likely change of paradigm, one to a system more adjusted to the *eco-social* reality, to the needs of resources we experiment now and will experiment in the upcoming future and much more amicable to the people and their social relationships (between people, and corporations and institutions). There are numerous examples of private, public, and mixed initiatives that have opted for responsible production, contained consumption, equality policies, and actions that will help women to occupy their role in society, which they should occupy, amongst other actions. Such is the case of FC St. Pauli, a German multisport association characterized by their *eco-social* commitment and which serves as the object

of analysis of the present paper. The paradigmatic St. Pauli shows corporate conducts that deserve to be publicized and communicated to show the benefits of such actions sustained in defense of human rights and the environment.

2. Objectives and Methodology

It is crucial to rely on the application of reputed scientific methods for the management of information, especially around decision-making in the face of the digital, social, and environmental challenges we face. This paper supports the principles established by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, understood as a plan of action in favor of people, the planet, and prosperity. A plan that also pretends to strengthen universal peace and access to justice. The plan includes seventeen objectives and 169 goals of integrated and indivisible character covering economic, social, and environmental spheres.

Thus, the present paper has the following objectives:

O.1. Study a paradigmatic case such as FC St. Pauli (Hamburg), in which we pay special attention to the inspiring principles of the corporative philosophy of a football club to lately assess how such philosophy becomes the cornerstone of the communication strategy of the club, and influences the advertising, public relations, and communication efforts in the social and environmental areas applied to the European football industry.

O.2. Similarly, this paper pretends to analyze the necessary responsibility of (sports) organisations with their natural and social environments.

We start from a critical socioeconomic status countercultural with the current global sporting scenario. The initial hypothesis is that another football is possible. In contrast with the large teams with millionaire budgets and enormous commercial sales, some teams choose other, less megalomaniac models for their actions while maintaining a competitive level in the European top-quality competitions they participate in. "The osmosis between sport and communication goes beyond the critical role played by mass media in the financing of sports, fundamentally, but not exclusively, in its professional sphere" (Sotelo-González, 2012: 219).

2.1. Method

Following the methodology established by Niño-González, Barquero-Cabrero, and García-García (2017: 85), this paper adopts the inductive-deductive process as a tool for analysis. The documental analysis or source analysis methodology is complemented in this case with the *case-study methodology*. We examine the ethical and deontological dimensions of social responsibility in football, treating it as a socio-communicative phenomenon and how a means to transmit messages, regardless of their orientation and purpose, through a textual analytical focus. This research is founded on the importance and originality of the topic, which is evident in the increasing exploration of the phenomenon of social communication applied to sports. We examine beyond aspects connected to marketing, commercialization, and market research, considering it as an area of crucial academic study. Understanding the dynamic mechanisms in a world that contrasts crucial decisions amidst an environmental, health, economic, and social crisis is also perceived as necessary.

We start with an ecosocial theoretical framework: "The analysis of the interrelations between people, the environment, productive forces, and social organizations provides plausible explanations for the majority of the significant changes currently taking place in the last decades" (Riechmann, 2012: 186). The optical theory in which this paper is sustained is multidisciplinary. Therefore, we adopt the practical philosophy, applying it specifically to advertising and public relations. This philosophy is centered around studying human action without neglecting the everyday aspects and, therefore, paying attention to the social, cultural, and environmental problems that characterize our current social configuration. It is a philosophical approach that allows reflection on the inner workings of the advertising and marketing industries, considering them as fundamental promoters of the production and consumption systems. It is essential to point out that the theoretical orientation is aligned with a philosophy of an open nature in the social context, avoiding adhering to closed systems (Fernández Buey, 1998).

An analysis sustained in such a theoretical framework must aim to produce, as secondary effects or objectives, a reduction of inequalities and diminishing needs and, thus, a consumption more friendly towards the environment that surrounds and protects us. All of this opens an opportunity for reflection about the ethical limitations of advertising and public relations as predominant modes of communication between organisations, such as the large football clubs in Europe.

Applying the case study methodology, we pay detailed attention to the paradigmatic case of FC St. Pauli, a multi-sport German organization committed to its community, equality, human rights in general,

and the environment as a form to create a more friendly and respectful lifestyle. Sports, especially professional football through teams or the club's own stadiums, is a primary advertising medium to offer visibility to corporations (Lobillo-Mora, Ginesta-Portet and Badia, 2016: 1). However, this paper proves that FC St. Pauli utilizes its structures with social objectives above other cases centered in building a commercial brand around grand teams such as Real Madrid (López-Medel and Cabezuolo-Lorenzo, 2018; Mañas-Viniegra, 2018).

2.2. Analytical Variables

Therefore, a study must understand how the German entity has committed itself to its public and its environment. To that end, we have carefully studied the cultural conditionings of the club, and the ideology that guides its behavior, and how we can describe its sociopolitical dimension and its effects on society and the environment. Lastly, we have studied how the club develops its eco-social responsibility through communication tools such as advertising and public relations. There are corporate and institutional actions that, though minor now, contribute to creating a more sustainable world. Such initiatives are based fundamentally on eliminating the social distances that, as explained by Kempf (2011), have been created through the notion of a supposed legitimate idea of increasing capital accumulation. Therefore, the paper focuses on the analysis of six variables of the club's corporate policies: 1) the political dimension, 2) the economic dimension, 3) the social dimension, 4) the environmental dimension, 5) the cultural dimension, and 6) other dimensions.

3. Argumentative Foundation for the Ecocritical Analysis

Scholarly research on popular movements in different parts of the world has been widely studied from a multitude of perspectives, especially from the fields of mass information technology and social networks theories (Caldevilla-Domínguez, Rodríguez-Terceño and Barrientos-Báez, 2019: 1264). However, this paper embraces an *ecocrítica* or *ecosocial*, not a technological perspective. Climate change, with its corresponding natural catastrophes, pandemics such as COVID-19, global warming, and many other current tragedies, prove that human beings are immersed in a constant economic and environmental crisis. Daly describes this scenario as a "Full world" characterized by a "process of economic deterioration of difficult solution that is driving us to a situation of a potential collapse, more or less imminent" (Daly, 2005), marked by an extreme weakening of the social and economic structures. This potential destruction, which we begin to observe in the increasing social inequalities, global warming, overpopulation, hunger, pandemic, or the worsening of working conditions, impacts the entire system globally. Similarly, it determines the social relationships between people, the relationships between people and institutions, and the rest of the elements of the biosphere. It is, undoubtedly, a systemic crisis that is also systematic since it is produced by the same group of agents that communicate the supposed benefits of the status quo and advocate for the damaging effects of changing our established lifestyle.

If we assume the destructive capacity of the current productive forces (the environment and positive social relations can be destroyed), one of the more reasonable solutions would be a change towards a more friendly metabolism between individuals and their natural habitat. For that reason, corporations and institutions must become eco-responsible, more social, and more equalitarian. Following Castoriadis (2005), we cannot ignore that freedom and equality must not be any se ha de contrasted. "In a world with limits, certain types of freedom are impossible or immoral. Unlimited freedom to accumulate material goods is one of them" (Jackson, 2011: 72). In that regard, many current actions of our socioeconomic system are generally understood as freedom would be immoral freedom, such as to dream with a social recognition based on the purchase of a running shoe produced by slaved children in the Southeast of Asia. Such are the freedoms that Jackson (2011: 82) labels as immoral, and they are, in a certain way, promoted by conventional advertising, public relations, and the world of football in general.

The *ecosocial* perspective establishes that there cannot be harmony between the economy and nature if it is not accompanied by a solid intention to drastically reduce social distance in our contemporary society. Similarly, the distinction between social classes and groups is established through immaterial values such as for example, preferences in aesthetic appreciation, the ways in which an object is advertised or communicated works as a symbol that reflects thought patterns, and how audiences can interact with it (Bourdieu, 1984). For these reasons, launching a moment sustained over time and defined by self-limitation in the production and consumption process is necessary. Therefore, it is necessary today, more than ever, to adjust the economy to the biophysical limits (Linz, Riechmann, and Sempere, 2007). Organizations must accept the limits imposed by nature and contribute to improving society.

Large corporations, aided by advertising and public relations, contribute to sustaining the industrial system disguised as cultural expressions and celebrations (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2007). Whoever possesses and dominates the technology controls the economic spectrum and contributes to consolidating an aligned society. This technological rationality is, in reality, the voice of irrationality that moves individuals and determines them to act in the interests of the main groups of power (Marcuse, 1985). Postmodern

society is organised according to a logic of consumption, where goods and services are used to establish social relations (Ritzer, 2000). "To label our current society as a consumption society is as idle as redundant. Or there is consumption, or there is no society" (Verdú, 2005: 95). Contemporary lifestyle is framed by a consumption culture that exudes individuality (Featherstone, 2000). Such individuality is connected to the notion of life sustained by consumption and tries to gain access at any cost to all the vital, cultural, and sports-related activities around us related to consumption. Technological changes and new media facilitate the functioning of new forms of consumption. These new guidelines, which are marked by technology and media, create new forms of "socialization" (Rifkin, 2000).

However, from the consumer's perspective, although always studied from a social and not an individual perspective, the possibility also exists of provoking a cultural transformation that forces less-responsible corporations to act in a more committed way with individuals and the environment. We as humans tend to compare each other constantly, which moves us to act on most occasions in a partial or totally gregarious way (Marshall, 1998: 93-112). Also, "the propensity to emulate, the evaporative comparison, is very old and constitutes an ever-present trademark of human nature" (Veblen, 2008: 82). In this line of argument, traditional advertising actions are founded in the idea of distinction between each of its narratives (García López, 2016). The concept is that people desire to constantly distinguish from one another, though that attitude that desire produces "conspicuous consumption patterns that foster a generalized overspending" in certain circumstances (Veblen, 2008: 95). But the same tools of persuasive communication prevalent in Western societies can be used by the advocates of a friendly change. We can communicate to the receiver-consumers that the distinction can take an alternative route, one of consumption restriction and respect for others and the biosphere.

Nowadays, the presence of social movements committed to the biosphere and political parties focused on environmental issues have experienced a notable increase in the political scene. Interestingly, that phenomenon does not constitute a novelty in history since scientists have warned governments about the dangers of global warming and its repercussions for decades. In our day, the green movement can be characterized as inclusive. However, in European Parliaments, it is found more attached to the political spectrum of the left, in most cases, or inclined towards progressive worldviews. On the other hand, the right tends to perceive any legislation or norm destined to reduce pollution as a threat to the freedom of the individual and the corporations.

However, Biehl and Staudenmaier (2019) argue that the origins of the environmental movement are, in a significant manner, rooted in the Nazi ideology. Following the same argument, Arendt (2006) strongly criticized central Europe's industrialization and condemned the senseless short-term usage of forest resources. However, such perspectives hid an aggressive and xenophobic nationalism since its postulates, apparently sustained in environmental conscience, always had an exclusively supremacist German approach.

4. Case Study Analysis: FC St. Pauli

Though widely known as FC St. Pauli, its official complete name is *Fußball-Club Sankt Pauli von 1910 e. V.* This socio-sportive institution is rooted in the neighbors of Sankt Pauli, inside the city district of Hamburg-Mitte, an area characterized by its social and cultural dynamism in the city-state of Hamburg (*Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg*, in its original German name) in the north of the German Federal Republic.

The Sankt Pauli district, also known as the Kiez neighborhood, houses Hamburg's famous red district. This area includes a significant part of the city's nightlife and entertainment industry. It is a multicultural environment where different cultures coexist, including bohemians, artists, and blue-collar workers. Its main street, Reeperbahn, serves as the epicenter of the cultural life of the city, hosting multiple theaters, art galleries, bookstores, record stores, and what is particularly specific, a football stadium, which is a feature not common in other cities and their relationships to its teams.

Figure 1. Landing image of the Banner of FC St. Pauli's Mobile Application



Source: Own screenshot from the club's official website[www.fcstpauli.com].

The St. Pauli movement is rooted in the first years of the twentieth century, when the game of football became a symbol of the prevailing devotion towards physical education, promoted to revitalize German nationalistic morality. In Hamburg, socialist movements and football were quite prevalent. Also, the city presented stark differences between the relaxed lifestyles of the bourgeoisie and the hardships of the working class. On May 15, 1910, one of those popular neighborhoods aligned to the ideological left created their own football team, though with the initial capital of some of the local bourgeoisie (Viñas and Parra, 2014).

Football became enormously popular during World War I, and the Sankt Pauli experienced its first modest steps in professional competition. During the years of Hitler's dictatorship, the club continued its activities, though under Nazi supervision. Despite this fact, it manifested its contestant character by defying the law that banned Jews from becoming members of the club until 1940. During World War II, the St. Pauli district suffered horrifying repression, and large portions of its population were oppressed or contained. The challenging economic situation after the war coexisted with a rebirth of the social and cultural activity of the St. Pauli district, along with the entrenchment of a club that, despite not achieving any significant sporting success, displayed a great football in the 1950s and 1960s.

As a direct consequence of the social conflict, St. Pauli's supporters have discreetly navigated the lower divisions of German football, with sporadic promotions to the Bundesliga (Hesse, 2015). All of these helped build a particular club identity on the margins, separated from the big commercial sponsors and, therefore, the great income sources of football (Davidson, 2014). However, it was precisely that halo of marginality that turned the team into a cult club. During the 1980s, the club's supporters attached themselves to punk movements and were able to reinforce the club's identity as an activist club (Schuster, 2013). As Viñas and Parra (2014) explain, during the 1980s, "the club embraced causes like antifascism, anti-nuclear, feminism, anti-patriarchy, and anti-militarist before anyone else, consolidating itself as an alternative to the rising presence of neonazi groups infiltrated as hooligans on other clubs, such as its historic rival, HSV Hamburg" (Viñas and Parra, 2014: 27).

4.1. Public participation

One of the essential aspects of public relations is the relational element between an organization and its publics (Castillo-Esparcia and Xifra-Triadú, 2006: 143). Currently, the social mass of the club is composed of around twenty-two thousand members. During main sporting events, the audience also becomes a supporting chorus, in a sort of celebratory energy deposit. Thus, if athletes are destined for glory, the fans have the crucial role of invoking the rest of us, interceding, exciting us, and even making us laugh (Méndez-Rubio and Lizaga, 2020: 84). FC St. Pauli also has different fan clubs worldwide. This is a particularly interesting point because we are dealing with a modest, local entity in a neighborhood not excessively large or populated.

It is an organization that fosters an atmosphere favorable to a somewhat homogeneous ideology identified with critical moments, countercultural, and foreign to the dynamic of the greatest football clubs in Europe. In their sociopolitical dimension, as they define themselves, they are characterized by the "defense of social causes, the elimination of social differences and the protection of the community, including especially the environmental aspects." (<http://www.fcstpauli.com>). Similarly, they are defined as "hosting the social majority that holds the least amount of capital and carries the obligation of generating the force of the working class".

The most popular area of the club and the one attracting the largest number of people worldwide is the senior football team, generally known by supporters as Die Piraten (the Pirates) because of its unofficial and representative flag, the black Jolly Roger with white skulls that resemble the traditional representation of piracy.

St. Pauli's supporters, also known as pirates, traditionally oppose extreme right and intolerance and favor inclusion and diversity. These supporters have been praised for their capacity to mobilize the masses to fight against what are considered social, cultural, and environmental injustices. Additionally, the supporters have significantly contributed to the entity's sustainability when the club has faced economic difficulties.

Figure 2. Outside, Aerial View and Interior of Millerntor Stadion (Hamburg)



Source: <http://www.fcstpauli.com>

The team has competed for most of its history in the second division of the German national competition, which is called Bundesliga 2. This is reflected in the professionalization of the organization. However, the team was also able to compete in the first division, nowadays known as Bundesliga 1, or division of honor, during eight seasons: 1977/1978, 1988/1989, 1989/1990, 1990/1991, 1995/1996, 1996/1997, 2001/2002, 2010/2011) both in the 20th century as well as the 21st century (Schmidt, 2011).

The club's popularity as a counter-cultural phenomenon was mostly developed during the 1980s. In reality, the organisation built its own identity together with the development of the neighborhood where it is located. The area's cultural activity, with an important and dynamic music scene and alternative nightlife options, helped the club's identity and its development as an entity for the people and of the people, creating a corporate identity that has persisted until our days.

Different groups on the left of the political spectrum, mostly anarchists, associated with the club and began to populate the stands of the main stadium, Millerntor Stadion, even though the results of the games were not positive. It is interesting to point out that the countercultural movement generated around the club in the 1980s and 1990s is counter to the massive mainstream movements in football at the time in Europe: the so-called *hooligans* originally from England but also spread to other countries. These fan groups were characterized by their alignment with nationalist movements and their vandalic and violent acts. In that regard, it can be said that FC St. Pauli's fanbase followed a profoundly democratic (in the strict sense of the term) attitude, which garnered some sympathy in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), somehow suspicious of any leftist movement, especially in the context of the last years of the Cold War.

All this social activism also manifests in the institution's social network profiles. We now show a table describing the number of followers on the social networks where the club is present. As it can be, St. Pauli utilizes the most popular and mainstream social networks as communication channels with its followers, thus fostering activism in all cultural and social spheres previously described.

Table 1. FC St. Pauli's Social Networks (Updated on January 25, 2024)

Social Network	Name or handle of each network	Followers
X, formerly Twitter (in German)	@fcstpauli	244.000
X, formerly Twitter (in English)	@fcstpauli_EN	37.500
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/fcstpauli	329.000
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/FCSP	550.000
YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/user/flimmerkiste1910/	25.800
Twitch	https://www.twitch.tv/fcsp	4.054
TikTok	https://www.twitch.tv/fcsp	35.200

Source: Own elaboration based on data published by the different social networks.

Nowadays, most of the population can be connected to the Internet anywhere and anytime, from any place, which is promoting a series of important changes in how people relate to each other, work, study, buy, or consume information (Barquero-Cabrero, 2016: 17). Therefore, FC St. Pauli uses these social networks to keep its followers connected to the culturally and socially disruptive tendencies that are on the margins of the mainstream ideas promoted by large corporate conglomerates that currently dominate global football. In fact, and following St. Pauli's line of argumentation, it can be said that the specialization in sports communication has become one of the great areas of improvement, reaching up to 17% of the new digital media market (Manfredi-Sánchez et al., 2015: 265).

4.2. Die Leitlinien: The Corporate Philosophy and Ecosocial Commitment of FC St. Pauli

FC St. Pauli presents a letter of foundational principles established as a corporate identity manual or social responsibility. This document (*Die Leitlinien*) places the Hamburger organization as the first sports entity in the German state to include such eco-social commitment actions.

It is a statutory document approved in the year 2009 by the institution's body of members that includes the essential principles guiding the workings of the entity, how it should be managed, and what the relationship between the organisations and the fans (the social mass), with other stakeholders and with its environment should be. *Die Leitlinien* includes the following references or essential principles that must be honored, preserved, and promoted:

Table 2. Main Corporative Foundations based on *Die leitlinien*

DIE LEITLINIEN	Political Dimension	Economic Dimension	Social Dimension	Environmental Dimension	Formative Dimension	Other dimensions
is the document that explains the mission, vision, and values of the club						
The club's socio-political characterization, especially in the stimulus towards the weaker on the social scale as opposed to the enriched minorities.	•	•	•			
Its relationship with the district or neighborhood includes adding athletic training and supporting cultural movements in the area.		•	•		•	

DIE LEITLINIEN

is the document that explains the mission, vision, and values of the club

	Political Dimension	Economic Dimension	Social Dimension	Environmental Dimension	Formative Dimension	Other dimensions
The values representing the organization must be communicated. The club believes in using social communication only as a tool for community development and social and environmental defense.	●	●	●	●		
Respect for human rights and its defense in any area.			●			●
Its multi-sport essence fosters other sporting disciplines, whether majority or minority sports, as long as they benefit the fans and the community.		●			●	
The supporter's behavior, respect, and tolerance towards rival fans must drive any action of the club fans, although the organization is clearly contrary to totalitarian movements.	●		●			●
Developing the community through cultural actions such as concerts and other events benefits the area population and visitors. The club understands that it has a responsibility to the people who live in the surrounding area and who work in cohesion. They have a fan center that can host different activities, the so-called Fanlanden St. Pauli.		●	●	●	●	●
Consumerist contention, which implies a strong revision of commercial actions and sponsorship deals.	●	●	●		●	
Defense of the environment, a primary topic in our day and age, is submerged in a profound environmental crisis of a complex solution. However, strong responses from the powers currently sustaining the economic system are needed.	●			●		

Source: Own elaboration based on <http://www.fcstpauli.com>

5. Analysis of the corporate policies variable

5.1 The political dimension

Respecting others is a fundamental part of the organization's code of conduct, an idea that every fan or member of the club must embrace. In this regard, it is relevant to remember the gesture that the player Marcus Ebbers had on April 12, 2012. On that day, after scoring a goal for FC St. Pauli, Ebbers admitted he had involuntarily handed the ball into the net because of a physical reflex. The goal would have advanced his team in the game, but respecting others is above any individual objective for the club members.

I have experienced and learned, especially in my time as St. Pauli's player, about fraternity and solidarity amongst colleagues, but also rivals, and can create an incredible force; when we stand united, there is nothing we cannot overcome. This team, a great source of pride for Hamburgers, has taught me that frontiers only exist in their minds. It showed me what it means to support each other and to play for your teammates, the coach, the fans, and even the vendors at the stadium. It taught me to make an effort to provide a positive experience for all. I wasn't playing just for myself but for everyone, from the parking staff to the captain; we all contribute equally to the club's success. (Deniz Naki in Viñas and Parra, 2014: 7).

FC St. Pauli presents itself as tolerant and advocates freedom of opinion and expression at all times (Daniel & Kassimeris, 2013). However, because of its anti-fascist character, the club has identified another German club, FC Hansa Rostock, as its main rival since some of Hansa's supporters belong to fascists and extreme right movements. There is also a strong rivalry with FC Bayern Munchen, the most awarded club in Germany because it represents, according to FC St. Pauli, the factual powers in Germany and is an economic powerhouse.

Another remarkable event, also as an advertising and public relations effort in service of society and the environment, has been the 2006 FIFI, along with the International Federation of Independent Football (FIFI). The club organized an international tournament for nations comprised of countries not recognized by the largest governing body in football (FIFA, Fédération Internationale de Football Association). This tournament includes nations like Gibraltar (hence recognized by FIFA in 2013, a British territory in the Iberian peninsula with certain economic power), Greenland, Tibet, Zanzibar, The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and the ad-hoc created Sankt Pauli Republic (made of amateur soccer players). The tournament was not free of controversy since the Chinese embassy in Germany and FIFA itself tried to prevent the tournament from taking place, especially because Tibet participated as an independent nation.

On another note, in July 2017, coinciding with the G-20 meeting in Hamburg, the first one attended by Donald Trump as president of the United States, the club explained in its board meeting that they had decided to open their stadium and part of its facilities to house some two hundred participants in the anti-G20 demonstrations, to let the world know their position in support of human rights, freedom of expression, and the right to protest. The city of Hamburg vetoed the installation of street camps during the G-20, and the club's response was the campaign **Yes, We Camp**.

In October 2019, FC St. Pauli announced the resignation of Cenk Sahin's contract. Sahin publicly endorsed the Turkish military action in Syria through his Instagram post, "I stand by our military heroes and our army; you are present in our prayers." The player refused to remove his post and declared he was not repentant. The team decided to transfer the player to another club based on its anti-militaristic and anti-war nature.

5.2 The Economic Dimension

Die Leitlinien, or letter of principles, together with the specific actions developed based on its principles, conform to a communicative structure that implies a new form of understanding persuasive communication beyond a simple financial interest on behalf of those holding the main economic power, such as corporations and large conglomerates, and into service of citizens and their environment. In this regard, FC St. Pauli communicates a lifestyle alternative to the mainstream lifestyles rooted in a fully capitalistic economy but with a foundation for detached from the consumeristic and productivism logic prevalent in society. The club does not pretend to force its culture. However, the advertising and public relations actions developed aim to communicate the benefits of a lifestyle detached from consumerism, production, and its exponential growth. A lifestyle that is more friendly with others and with nature. Thus, fans identify with the organization because of its values (Ossorio-Nuñez and Morgado-Poveda, 2022, pp. 2-9), its defense of people and not corporations, and its protection of the environment. All of which go beyond positive or negative results. The result for the collective, the human group, and its connection with the environment matters. It is, therefore, creating a new thought and action pattern. Therefore, we are talking about a foreign ideology (García-López, 2016) that identifies values such as anti-racism, feminism, and the defense of the fundamental rights of people, one that promotes a symbiosis with the environment. Therefore, a new phenomenon in fanbase is created for the working class and against the hegemonic powers that promote the accumulation of capital and increasing production and consumption (McDougall, 2013: 230-245).

5.3 The Social Dimension

The corporation conducts intense social activity in its environment. It involves the entire community cooperating, developing club actions, and the multiple cultural and social movements around the club. The supporters frequently participate as volunteers or member-owners in organizing events to promote social justice. For instance, the campaign *Viva con Agua* helped raise funds to buy water dispensers in schools in Cuba and to provide clean running water to different areas of Africa like Rwanda and other developing nations.

Similarly, the institution has joined the Refugees Welcome movement recently to offer hospitality to displaced peoples from nations torn by war and economic hardships, especially those already vulnerable to poverty and abandonment in their home countries. In the same way, the organization has actively participated in the campaign to welcome the people impacted by the humanitarian (or media-generated) crisis in 2015.

5.4 The Environmental Dimension

FC St. Pauli pretends to promote lifestyles that are in harmony with nature and, thus, in defense of society. FC St. Pauli becomes a model of ecosocial production, which prioritizes the defense of practical principles aimed at tending to the essential needs of human beings and fostering self-realization, as Riechmann (2011) suggested. Therefore, at the end of 2016, the team from Hamburg announced the

production of natural bee honey in its stadium to protect and increase the worldwide presence of bees. Since 2016, the club has commercialized the honey brand Ewaldbienenhonig in hopes that residents add themselves to the campaign, contributing to the flourishing of the bee population, which has decreased by 30% in the last ten years in Europe. "It is hoped the initiative will raise awareness of the declining bee population. Others have balconies to celebrate championships, and we have them for the bees," explained the club's director, Andreas Rettig (BBC, April 6th, 2017).

It cannot be argued that the club's ideology is unique and exclusively ecosocial. However, the impacts on its surrounding society and the environment coincide with the main postulates of such philosophy, as suggested by Riechmann (2011).

5.5 The Cultural Dimension

From a cultural or counter-cultural standpoint, the club's essential musical activities, rooted in punk and heavy metal, are a significant part of its identity. The first football team's entrance is always accompanied by the iconic Hells Bells by Australian rockers AC/DC. Local victories are celebrated with the chorus of Blur's British anthem, Song 2. This cultural connection with the fans and potential audience is vital and optimistic from an advertising and public relations perspective. It's crucial to remember that both advertising and public relations are types of persuasive communication that can have positive cultural effects, beneficially shaping thoughts and behavioral patterns (García-López, 2017).

5.6 Other Dimensions: The importance of the LGBTI+ Collective

FC St. Pauli has also stood out by supporting the LGBTI+ movement. However, it is necessary to highlight that one of its last presidents, the well-known local theater entrepreneur Cory Littmann (in charge of the Schmidt Theater), has publicly announced his homosexuality and has been an advocate for the rights of the collective. At the Millertor, the club's stadium, there is a great mural depicting two men passionately kissing on the mouth with the legend that love is the only thing that matters.

Figure 3. Images of FC St Pauli fans on the stands supporting the LGBTI+ community



Source: <http://www.fcstpauli.com>

It seems evident that the institution is doing its due diligence in eliminating the social distances generated by market-driven economic activity and fighting against the environmental crisis. For example, in 2002, the club removed an advertising banner from a British men's magazine, Maxim, which was characterized by portraying actresses and female celebrities wearing a few clothes. The institution considered that this type of advertising was sexist and could cause discrimination towards women based on gender. Therefore, it decided to cancel the contract and lose a good source of revenue to defend women's fundamental rights and role in society.

6. Conclusions

As we have attested, incorporating social stratification in some corporations produces, in turn, individuals within a community perceive specific differences while ignoring others. The vision of some models of sports management is promoted as exclusive. All of this takes place in a context where competence between people forces individuals to structure their goals according to the idea of social merit, with a clear financial goal, forgetting all other social and environmental variables. In contraposition, there are organizations such as FC St. Pauli that have managed to integrate cultural, social, and environmental variables and align them with a great mass of the public, who, in conjunction, are able to forge a truly socially responsible corporation in such a competitive and cut-throat world such as football. Thus, we conclude that:

C.1) The current context is marked by an economic crisis, pandemic, and environmental problems of a difficult solution. In this scenario, all organizations, including football clubs and clubs de football, cannot sidestep the limitations imposed by the environment or the demands from society or nature. Today's social theory is more than ever a socio-ecological theory. The environment has become a critical stakeholder of any organization, alongside their external public, such as their communities. Therefore, every communication strategy put forward by any organization must operate in harmony with the biosphere, recognizing our condition as temporary residents. In a worldwide framework of globalization, social disparities have reached unprecedented levels, with most people on the planet experiencing unfavorable situations and feeling the burden of their inability to change their condition, thus aggravating, even more, the gap between those who accumulate the most wealth and the rest.

C.2.) Conventional advertising storytelling and public relations actions based on corporate social responsibility promote needs as lacking and constant impulses to overcome those needs. Therefore, the economic system and its habitual persuasive communication strategies generate social separations because they incentivize the classification of people into social strata. Similarly, the receivers perceive the need to reach higher social levels at any cost since they perceive this as guaranteed future satisfaction. However, utilizing an individual's social self-realization is not frequently employed as a strategy, as we have seen with FC St. Pauli. On the contrary, the most prominent football clubs, in this case, anchor individuals to a spiral of needs, consumerism, and productivism, using advertising and public relations as communication tools. Thus, they become an example of economic power and influence millions of people, for which they should establish communication actions and strategies closer to the ones developed by FC St. Pauli in favor of a lifestyle more balanced and in harmony with nature and us.

C.3) The study of the context proves that the noticeable disparities in social stratification and the economic variability evident in different social strata do not contribute to a more diverse society. On the contrary, they promote marginalization. Ultimately, this implies normalized discrimination from large corporations, such as football clubs, where advertising and public relations can act as unavoidable persuasion tools, whether from a vision rooted in immobility or from the perspective of a necessary change. The FC St. Pauli paradigmatic case proves that some clubs have opted for an alternative way of change outside the mainstream.

Amongst the recommendations, it is essential to point out that from an ethical, even a deontological, perspective, the future actions of dominant sports clubs should promote the building of less individualistic and self-centered people. However, to achieve that goal, the central area of action should be the production (of goods and capital) to be able to then act in the realm of consumerism. It is important to remember that the imperative must not be individualism, differentiation, or social distance. Thus, examples such as the FC St. Pauli are necessary. Organizations communicated to football fans that embracing activities to support positive social relationships and protect the environment is much better. Actions must be taken to change the consumerism and production systems because the dominating socioeconomic system is not the only alternative. For that reason, sports organizations must enter in communion with their public, making them participate in the activities constantly developed in favor of positive social relations, human rights, and the defense of the environment as weapons to overcome the worldwide economic crisis in which we are immersed, which is in essence, a social and ecological crisis.

The organization's activities developed to communicate values in sports industries, particularly in the football industry, must be managed globally and integrally without ever ignoring the local or community spheres. It must always consider all the publics and their environments. All of this makes evident that neither the activities nor the persuasive communication strategies utilized to reach the public must be exclusively centered on the individual, success, or victory. On the contrary, social construction, defending the least of these, eliminating social distances, social equality, and respect for the environment must be the fundamental values for an organization, such as the in-depth analysis of FC St. Pauli. The analyzed entity is paradigmatic in promoting responsible production and consumption and social relations in the service of the community and not exclusively financial interests. In a society like ours, sustained by a

market-driven economy, the dominant football clubs should imitate certain actions in the service of the biosphere and a lifestyle more harmonious with the biosphere.

7. Contributions

Task	Author 1	Author 2	Author 3
Conceptualisation	X	X	
Content curation	X	X	X
Formal Analysis	X	X	X
Financing			
Research	X	X	X
Methodology	X	X	X
Project administration		X	
Resources			
Software			
Supervision	X	X	X
Validation			
Visualisation		X	
Drafting	X	X	X
Review and editing	X	X	x

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10. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

11. Declaration of Responsible Artificial Intelligence Usage

No Artificial Intelligence tools have been utilized in the writing of this paper.

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