

SERVICE DESIGN: A STUDY OF THE INNOVATION PROCESS IN BRAZILIAN SOCCER CLUBS

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ABSTRACT

The knowledge society is characterized by a shift from product to services and knowledge. Considering this concept, companies have to change their focus to generate value. Although the development of new approaches takes place in organizational environments, in some spaces this process is still quite incipient. Among these areas, one highlights the management of institutions linked to sport, more specifically soccer. In Brazil, soccer is one of the main products. Although there is great potential, the revenue of Brazilian soccer clubs is approximately 25% of the revenue of English soccer clubs. This study intends to present an evaluating of this scenario. Based on the opinion of experts, the three main soccer clubs in Brazil were analyzed. This study try to identify the existence of practices related to design in Brazilian soccer clubs, and their alignment with the concept of system-product and service design.

Keywords: service design, Brazilian soccer clubs, innovation

INTRODUCTION

The process of building competitiveness has been historically developed taking into consideration different attributes. For instance, in the 1990s, focus on quality was a premise for the expansion of markets and acquisition of new customers.

However, as the end of the 1990s, the consolidation of quality systems don't assure the opening and expansion of markets. Then, it became a requirement for staying in the market. It is from this moment that issues related to innovation process start to be considered essential to organizational competitiveness.

The concept of innovation is directly related to the production of economic values to the company, customers and society from the expansion or opening of new markets. Nevertheless, some premises are needed for the construction of a company turned to innovation. One of the issues identified in international research that seeks to identify innovative companies is the emphasis in companies that work with design as a strategic attribute for competitiveness.

In this context, design goes beyond its traditional concept, considering the different stages of value adding, broadening its scope to service and experience.

The present study is inserted in this context. Based on the opinion of experts, the three main soccer clubs in Brazil were analyzed. So, this study is focused in two main points:

1-brazilian soccer clubs are familiar with the importance of strategic design to develop a product system?
2-how design could improve business performance of Brazilian soccer teams? The following five dimensions were assessed: product, image, services, communication, and social accountability.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Strategic design is defined by Zurlo (1999) as an activity of projection in which the object is the integrated set of product, service, and communication (system-product), with which a company presents itself to the market, inserts itself in society, and shapes its own strategy.

The Table below shows the concept proposed by the main authors who deal with this topic.

Table 1. Design concepts

Authors	Concepts
Michael Farr (1966)	A cohesive approach to the activities of design of the company, contributing to the total quality of the company, the way it is perceived by users, employees, and stakeholders.
Henrion (1967)	(...) the main focus of the activity of design is to coordinate company image and all its possible aspects.
Parkin (1967)	(...) management is guided by the control of the visual aspects of the organization, from the beginning of the project to the definition of the briefing, assessment tests, and approval of end results.
Kelley (2001)	(...) design is a methodological process that allows for the construction of a culture for innovation, considering the understanding of the market, customers, and technology.
Kotler (1984)	Design is a process that optimizes customer satisfaction and company profits through the creative use of the main elements of design.

One may conclude that, from the perspective of not only product but also process, strategic design acts as a space for value adding, aiming at the increase in competitiveness of organizations (strategic dimension). The generating element of this competitiveness is innovation seen not only from the standpoint of the product but, and above all, of the product devised from the value chain, which considers the different stages, that is, conception, production, communication, and distribution. The expression “system-product” aggregates the expansion of concept by combining services and experience to the process of its use.

2. SOCCER MARKET IN BRAZIL

According to Rocco Jr. (2007), Brazilian clubs generate annual revenue of approximately 182 million dollars, i.e., a value that is much lower than that observed in Europe.

In the domestic scenario, one observes that, for club managers, stadiums are seen only as a place to host games, not committed to the comfort and satisfaction of supporters. This process contrasts with what is seen in Europe and identified in Table 2, as follows:

Table2. Brazil and Europe comparison

	Brazil	Europe
Thoughts of stadium managers	Place of games	Multiuse soccer arenas
Related services	Bars	Stores, restaurants, snack bars, box seats, VIP services
Experience	Promotions	Getting to know the premises of the club, such as museums, lockers, trophy rooms

The next section will present the research method applied in the present study.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The first stage was the identification of clubs that would be the focus of the present study. Thus, we sought the definition of criteria that would allow for the identification of clubs. The following were used as criteria:

- a. CBF ranking: Only clubs classified between the first 10 clubs in the ranking were considered in the sample.
- b. Clubs recognized in publications and by experts as examples of management
- c. Expert forums consulted via email

Based on this analysis, the 3 clubs that would be part of the sample were defined:

- Sport Club Internacional: Founded in Porto Alegre in 1908, it is one of the clubs that has won most championships in the country; its history was consolidated recently after winning the titles of World Champion and champion of the Recopa.
- São Paulo Futebol Clube: It was born in 1935, on the day of the official extinction of Clube Atlético Paulistano. Presently, it is considered a national reference in management.
- Cruzeiro Esporte Clube: Its foundation was in 1942.

The data were analyzed based on their triangulation, considering different categories of analysis. Moreover, the system-product structure proposed by Stenros (2005) was used; this structure involves the following dimensions:

- Product
- Corporative image
- Services
- Communication
- Social accountability

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Presentation with Experts

In order to assess the perception of experts on Brazilian clubs, a research via email was conducted; it was composed of four open questions, which considered the dimensions existing in system product.

Table 3 - Summary of interviews conducted with experts.

Interviews	Most organized clubs	Other products	Service-Product System	International benchmarking
1	São Paulo Internacional (RS) Cruzeiro, Atlético (PR) and Santos (SP)	Corporative supporters, seat boxes, VIPs	Internal stores, “baptism” of supporters, direct relationship with the club’s supporters, meetings with the president, guided tours, etc.	N/A
2	São Paulo and Cruzeiro	Products for less favoured social classes	Fidelization programs and products related to soccer	English clubs
3	São Paulo and Cruzeiro	Products linked to soccer: uniforms, soccer school, etc.	N/A	Barcelona, Real Madrid, Chelsea, Milan, Porto, Benfica, Arsenal.

4.2. Website Analysis

The second stage of the research was an analysis of the websites of the clubs. Table 4 summarizes the analysis.

Table 4 - Summary of analysis of club websites

Club	Product	Image	Services	Communication	Social accountability
São Paulo	Games, brand licensing in different products	Strong professionalism	4 plans for club members, incipient services, “baptism” tricolour	Focus on supporters, audio, video, virtual tour, online games	No information available
Cruzeiro	Games, books	Strong organization	Focus on young supporters, 5-star card, focus on members, e.g. travelling with players, games in Toca da Raposa (training facility of Cruzeiro), etc. Members pay for game tickets.	Focus on supporter, audio, video, virtual tour, online games	No information available
International	Games, brand licensing in different products, DVD, books	Intense growth and organization	Focus on club members, raffles of items used by players, participation in activities during game intermissions, etc, free monthly magazine, free DVD, members do not pay for game tickets.	Focus on supporter, audio, video, virtual tour, online games	Strong program of social accountability, social project “Saci Colorado”, “Interagir” Project

Based on the analysis of Table 4, the following issues were pointed out:

Product: Clubs, especially São Paulo and International, try to explore as much as possible products related to their final product: soccer. In this sense, the licensing process is essential. However, one notices a strong misalignment in brand use applied to different products without much concern with its adequacy to the product.

Image: Clubs have different images, which were reinforced in the interviews with experts. One notices a broad process of professionalism in São Paulo, a process of intense organization in Cruzeiro and International, and in the latter this process of organization is reinforced by an intense growth, especially in the number of club members.

Services: In relation to services, one may identify a significant advantage of Cruzeiro and Internacional. In São Paulo, services are still incipient and focus few possibilities. Internacional has as a differential a concrete focus on its club members, and it is the only club that does not charge its member for game tickets. Cruzeiro has an important focus on the young public, which may guarantee its success in the medium term. However, services could be better aligned to the remaining items assessed, generating an organic and systemic system, in which relationships and integration could reinforce the club brand.

Communication: With web channels, the format of communication of the clubs is quite similar. All clubs make use of spaces on the web with radio, TV, etc in order interact with their members.

Social accountability: Based on the website of the clubs, one notices that this item is most developed in Internacional. Its social projects have great impact and have been ongoing for some time.

Next, the benchmarking study conducted in two English clubs will be presented. The choice of international benchmarking took place due to the fact that these clubs were pointed out by interviewees and that these clubs have global visibility.

4.3. International Benchmarking

The Table below highlights some of the points identified.

Table 5 - International benchmarking

Club	Site structure	Main highlights	Focus children
Chelsea	Total alignment of information	Spaces for interactivity, concept store and alignment of products to brand, rescue of history, products in special commemorative dates, alternative services	Games, birthday parties
Manchester	Total alignment of information	Social accountability, concern with history (managers, players, and technicians), museum (rescue of history through experience)	Download options, information on soccer school, online spaces for interaction, birthday parties

5. FINDINGS

Based on the 3 axis of the analysis, that is, view of experts, analysis of clubs' websites, and international benchmarking, some suggestions can be made in order to broaden the scope of soccer business in the national clubs.

Focus beyond the product: The first element to be considered is the expansion of the present focus: the product. There are countless possibilities of services to be supplied, which are already broadly spread in European clubs. However, one should consider the importance of an alignment of services with the club's brand. Following, some possibilities are highlighted:

Brand alignment in all activities and businesses: the main guideline to the development of clubs is a thorough study for the conceptual alignment of the brand. The diversity of products licensed by the clubs is impressive, with the application of the brand and total lack of concern with the alignment with the values and strategies of the club. As an example one may mention the use of the brand in products such as dog beds, among other.

Services: As to services, one may point out the construction of theme bars both in the stadium and outside it; activities with focus on members or on new supporters.

Experiences: Participation in trainings; interactive spaces in the club's museum (presently the main characteristic of national museums is the fact that they are totally static); carrying out of activities involving children, etc.

Products: Although the focus of clubs is effectively the product itself, there are a number of opportunities that are not taken advantage of, such as the creation of club collections, annual and theme games, commemorative dolls, etc. For instance, we highlight the existing gap for International and São Paulo. The recent victory in the world championship by International and the Brazilian championship by São Paulo could generate countless products, such as games with winning players (a product sold annually by clubs such as Barcelona); cards with the players, etc.

Partnerships and cooperation networks: a space that can be further developed by Brazilian clubs is the establishment of partnerships with institutions that may support the professional development of clubs and broaden their social insertion. In this sense, partnerships with universities, seminars, courses, and activities involving the club's development (e.g., formation of leaderships), players (e.g., team work), and supporters (e.g., thematic workshops for professionalism) could be broadly promoted in Brazilian clubs.

Social accountability: The area of social accountability remains an important space to be developed in clubs. The experience of International is an example of how to socially add value and generate results for the club. However, these practices are still incipient in the remaining clubs.

It is important to highlight that this study showed that there are different opportunities identified as alternatives for clubs, many of which complement the analysis described in the present item.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The present study had as objective a critical analysis of products and services offered by the 3 main Brazilian clubs, trying to identify practices that may be added to the existing to reinforce the club's brand. Some of these practices are considered of easy application (ex. theme products). Other, however, demand a strong cultural change in clubs. Among these, we highlight the importance of the historical rescue of clubs, considering the different axis of the analysis. Finally, it should be highlighted that the present study was qualitative and exploratory. Thus, the conclusions presented herein are related to the clubs analyzed and may not be generalized. In this context, for the future, we suggest a broader research to be carried out with experts from different regions of the country and with interviews focusing the clubs analyzed. Thus, perceptions may be broadened and consider those that are part of the day-by-day of the club.

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