

Sports Ecosystem of the “Triad of São Paulo”: Sports Marketing Management According to Fans

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Abstract

A sports ecosystem aims to guide marketers to propose, design and operate a marketing plan with the purpose of obtaining several sources of financial funding for undertaking new business strategies for the sports club. Thus, this paper aims to understand and analyse the sports ecosystem of Corinthians, Palmeiras and São Paulo sports clubs according to their fans opinion, and checking the similarities and differences among the clubs. Concerning the methodology, an exploratory study was designed comprising 79 topics using the Likert scale to be administered to 704 sports fans in 9 matches between February and March 2017. In general, the analysis procedure followed four stages: (i) calculating the parametric analysis (ANOVA) and post-hoc scheffee tests; (ii) selecting process of the issues which achieved the significance $\leq 0,05$ (5%); (iii) observing and settling on which group of fans that agreed or disagreed with other fans; (iv) standing out that topics (and axis) that are most similar and most divergent. Regarding the findings and results, Corinthians is different from Palmeiras and São Paulo in six out of seven axes; club management, stadium, and partnerships and sponsorships are the most critical dimensions; and São Paulo has the best club management axis. Therefore, just one hypothesis and a half were confirmed. Knowing the sports ecosystem axes increases the chances of designing the sport business and marketing plan suitable according to customer-fan orientation principle.

Keywords: sports ecosystem, sports fans, Corinthians, Palmeiras, São Paulo

1. Introduction

Every sports club is involved in a sports ecosystem, alongside its partnerships, sponsorships, suppliers and fans (as customers). The sports club operates in a sports ecosystem with a limited number of stakeholders to aggregate and coordinate relevant resources to enhance the value proposition of the sports club (Amorim & Almeida, 2015). In general, a performance of a sports ecosystem consists of multiple independent organisations and individuals interacting with each other to pursue shared goals such as fan, sports organisation and media (McHugh, Bronson, & Watters, 2015). Three critical assumptions assist to understand the role of a sports ecosystem: the goal is improving the performance concerning the sports events, experiences or entertainments, consists of both organisations (sports and non-sports) and individuals, and it does not approach only one specific purpose in the sporting area (Maltese & Dangle, 2014).

In general, a sports ecosystem should be designed and lined up to the sports management and sports marketing in a sports club. Sports management involves people, activities, business and organisation in producing, facilitating, promoting or organising any product—goods, services, people, places or ideas—for the demand of sports fans (Bradbury & O’Boyle, 2017; Shilbury, 2009). By and large, a sports ecosystem focuses on four components: fan interfaces, strategic heart, strategic resources and value chain (Collignon & Sultan, 2014). The sports ecosystem aims to propose a typology based on business and marketing using stakeholder’s skills for designing a sports event addressed to the entertainment and fan perspectives for undertaking new products and services (Rundh & Gottfridsson, 2015).

Considering the sports club from São Paulo, Brazil, one question came up: ‘how Sport Club Corinthians, Palmeiras Sports Club and São Paulo Football Club have been designed and managed their sports ecosystem,

according to their fans' view and pointing out the similarities and difference among these clubs?' Thus, this article aims to understand and analyse the sports ecosystem of Corinthians, Palmeiras and São Paulo Sports Clubs according to their fans opinion, and checking the similarities and differences among these clubs. These three football sports clubs were chosen, because: they are the biggest sports club from São Paulo city, these authors living in São Paulo city, and there are few incipient studies regarding the sports ecosystem. These three sports clubs have known as the 'Triad of São Paulo' since they are the three sports clubs that have more achievements of the São Paulo city and State, as a whole; see a summary in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptions and achievements of Corinthians, Palmeiras and São Paulo

Descriptions and Achievements	Corinthians	Palmeiras	São Paulo
Foundation	1910	1914	1935
Location or Area	East area of São Paulo city	West area of São Paulo city	South area of São Paulo city
Stadium	Corinthians Arena, 20 kilometres from downtown	Allianz Park, 9 kilometres from downtown	Morumbi Stadium, 15 kilometres from downtown
Number of Fans in Brazil	27.3 million	11.6 million	13.6 million
Brazil Leagues	Champions (6)	Champions (10)	Champions (6)
São Paulo Tournaments	Champions (28)	Champions (22)	Champions (21)
Brazil Cups	Winners (3)	Winners (3)	Winner (0)
Libertadores Cups (like Champions League)	Winner (1)	Winner (1)	Winners (3)
Sudamericana Cups (like UEFA League)	Winner (0)	Winner (0)	Winner (1)
Club World Cups	Winners (2)	Winner (0)	Winners (3)
Attendance at Stadium per Match in 2017, so far.	29.548	31.531	28.427
Uniform Sponsorship	Nike	Adidas	Under Armour
Profit in 2016	US \$ 108 Million	US \$ 147 Million	US \$ 115 Million

Sources: Corinthians (2017); ESPN Brasil (2017); Globo Esporte (2017); Lance & IBOPE (2017); Palmeiras (2017); São Paulo (2017).

Considering the sports club from São Paulo, Brazil, one question came up: 'how Sport Club Corinthians, Palmeiras Sports Club and São Paulo Football Club have been designed and managed their sports ecosystem, according to their fans' view and pointing out the similarities and difference among these clubs?' Thus, this article aims to understand and analyse the sports ecosystem of Corinthians, Palmeiras and São Paulo Sports Clubs according to their fans opinion, and checking the similarities and differences among these clubs. These three football sports clubs were chosen, because: they are the biggest sports club from São Paulo city, these authors living in São Paulo city, and there are few incipient studies regarding the sports ecosystem. These three sports clubs have known as the 'Triad of São Paulo' since they are the three sports clubs that have more achievements of the São Paulo city and State, as a whole; see a summary in Table 1.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 The Concepts of Sports Ecosystem

Maltese and Danglade (2014) introduce a sports ecosystem based on analysing of sport as an entertainment. The sports ecosystem constitutes axes of a business action plan for designing, developing and delivering an offer to market made by fans. These authors see, for instance, a league as a big event comprising matches, which are small events. For Bouchet et al. (2011), sports are entertainments, since, as events, sports matches are a sort of collective celebration which brings fans together to take part in and enjoy a sport and cultural spectacle in one place. In addition, sport as entertainment involves mobilising and allocating tangible and intangible resources to meet goals and objectives. Thereby, according to Shilbury (2009), a league or a match is product and/or service which is produced, sold and delivered for a group of fans in an organised way to make them happy, cheerful and satisfied about paying for something where they can share their feeling and passion for a team. However, to deliver product and/or service to fans, a sports club requires stakeholders to deliver these in an efficient manner.

Rundh and Gottfridsson (2015) believe that in delivering the sports event, there is a complex set of actors who must interact with each other to produce the expected offering. This is clearly in line with the network view in which one of the central thoughts is that a great deal of today's value creating is done between diverse business areas and companies and consumers. For Norris, Wann & Zapalac (2014), the sharing and combining of resources from several firms create new opportunities for delivering value to the fan. Who those actors are, what

they bring to the network and what they gain from it depends on whether one considers the network from a non-commercial sport point of view or from the business side of the network. In addition, as explain Clemes, Brush & Collins (2011), in a professional sport, there are difficulties associated with seeing these actors—above—act alone as professional sport has become a business, i.e., the team and the sports event, where the team which is participating in the sport has become a big business. This situation has encouraged the sports clubs to become more professional with respect to marketing strategies.

The sports ecosystem aims to guide marketers to propose, design and operate a marketing plan with the purpose of obtaining several sources of financial funding for undertaking new business strategies for their sports club (Foster, O'Reilly & Dávila, 2016). In summary, the sports ecosystems presented in this study aim to guide marketers to propose, design and operate a marketing plan with the purpose of obtaining several sources of financial funding for undertaking new business strategies for the sports club. Indeed, sports clubs use marketing strategies for offering benefits to fans, but for producing products and/or services marketers need to select and apply strategic resources to produce expected outcomes in an effective way (Maltese & Danglade, 2014). Then, marketing proposes involving stakeholders' competence for adding value to activities chain for promoting and handing out the best products and services to fans (Piipponen, 2011). In general, a sports ecosystem proposes a typology based on resources level considering all stakeholders and the nature interdependence among them for preparing sports events using entertainment as a concept and considering fans as consumers. According to Maltese & Danglade (2014), a sports ecosystem reveals an actors' network which marketers need to understand in order to address these organisations to fit offers—product and/or service—to target demands—fans and/or supporters. Thus, even before the begin working on their marketing plan, marketers need to organise and analyse all five sources of—fans, media rights, leagues, brands and clubs.

Hence, for developing marketing strategies for sports clubs it is important that marketers to know the stakeholders' skills as well as the capacity to provide products and/or services lined-up of the fans' expectations. Rundh & Gottfridsson (2015) have suggested the term ARA: actors (sponsors), resources (internal and external resources) and activities (ticket sales, the game, etc.). These three perspectives are relevant because they include different transactions, the flow of knowledge, creation of necessary resources and bonds shaped and drawn upon by actors. For Bradbury & O'Boyle (2017), the overall behaviours that emerge in the network shape its development and how it adapts to incidents in the environment, which marketers to must consider at the time they develop the sports club's marketing strategy. For instance, a decrease in the number of fans in the arena and/or watching on TV would make it necessary to reconsider different marketing activities. Shilbury (2009) states that to plan their sports marketing activities, managers need to understand and consider which actors have the greatest impact on the actual network that they are to manage. Sports like ordinary business, have to develop a relationship to allow a flow of exchange benefits among all actors. In the point of view of Chadwick & Thwaites (2005), the synergies between actors may produce activities more lined up to target audience expectation, as part of an activity system managed by sports clubs. It is in marketing activity that the value creation lies, which directly affects the level of fan's satisfaction and encourages them to new exchange patterns to create new relationship perspectives and maximise the potential of the service marketing in the future.

2.2 Sports Ecosystem: Some Proposals

Four sports ecosystems were analysed to design our sports ecosystem model. The first sports ecosystem was presented in a report published by KPMG. The sports ecosystem created by KPMG (2014) focuses on two aspects: sports transparency and professionalism coupled with growing awareness of all stakeholders within and across various segments; and producing a winning sports team. Bearing in mind the transparency, professionalism and a winning team, as the three key objectives of KPMG's sports ecosystem, seven axes were designed for achieving these goals: sports governance; talent scouting & training of players; sports infrastructures; training of trainers; sports equipment (goods); leagues and tournaments; and performance incentives.

Rundh and Gottfridsson (2015) created a sports ecosystem which aims to deliver a sports event using actors for intervening and interacting with each other to produce an expected offer based on entertainment, leisure and experience concepts. They understand that the actors' network is the key, the challenge and the opportunity to create a value proposition for a sports event, because sports clubs have no skills to deal with business, marketing and consumers, as sports and non-sports companies do. Thus, Rundh and Gottfridsson structured their sports ecosystem from ten dimensions: sports fans, partners & sponsors, business suppliers, the communities (managing the external infrastructure around the stadium), tv broadcasting and media, federation and confederation, the volunteers (to assist and guide fans), sports club, the stadium, and athletes.

The third sports ecosystem was schemed by Maltese and Danglade (2014). The sports ecosystem designed by them aims to analyse sports as entertainment to introduce business and marketing perspectives required for planning sports event. They transposed to the business environment the ecological notion of an ecosystem, which is formed by two elements interacting with the environment (biotope) and the living beings that occupy it (biocenosis). They attempted to operationalise the concepts of networks, alliance, and virtual enterprise. On the one hand, biotope may be characterised by an event venue, i.e., stadium, arena, natural spaces and fans; and on the other hand, biocenosis means stakeholders, i.e., athletes, sports institutions, sponsor of a stadium—naming rights—partners, suppliers and media.

The last sports ecosystem was designed by Collignon and Sultan (2014), aiming at a good cash flow management for a sports club. Their inspirations and references came from American sports, European football leagues and Grand Slam tennis championships, as Wimbledon in London, England. For them, a sports club plays a relevant role in the sports ecosystem because clubs understand the need to pay special attention to five elements: (i) fans expectations: spending their money, (ii) media: buying rights to broadcast matches for an audience of fans, (iii) brands in the sports area: selecting the right partner clubs, leagues and athletes, (iv) leagues: organising the seasons and they play an intermediary role in flowing revenues to clubs, (v) clubs: getting revenues and profits from ticketing, selling licensed products, sponsorships and media rights.

For us, a sports ecosystem should have business and marketing concepts embedded into it to ensure fan satisfaction, revenues, and profits to a sports club. Sport is inspiring, engaging, immersive, emotion evoking and rapidly growing the revenues and profits; however, through a platform of market and customer orientation, it is possible to go further. Capturing the essence of understanding sport as an event, introduced by Maltese and Danglade (2014); the sense of professionalism showed by KPMG Reports (2014) related to organisation standard; the concerns about actors' network depicted by Rundth and Gottfridsson (2015); observing the sport as an opportunity for a sports club to make money, as presented by Collignon and Sultan (2014); and, still, analysing the Brazilian context regarding the football culture, sports club organisation, fans and media, we have decided to line up a sports ecosystem in which it was possible to take advantage of each value proposition showed by every author above. Therefore, our sports ecosystem aims to encourage a sports professional to design a sports event in synergy with stakeholders to offer an enjoyable sports experience taking into consideration the customer orientation principles to provide revenues and profit for the sports club. Thus, seven axes were designed to achieve these goals, see Figure 1 and the description below.

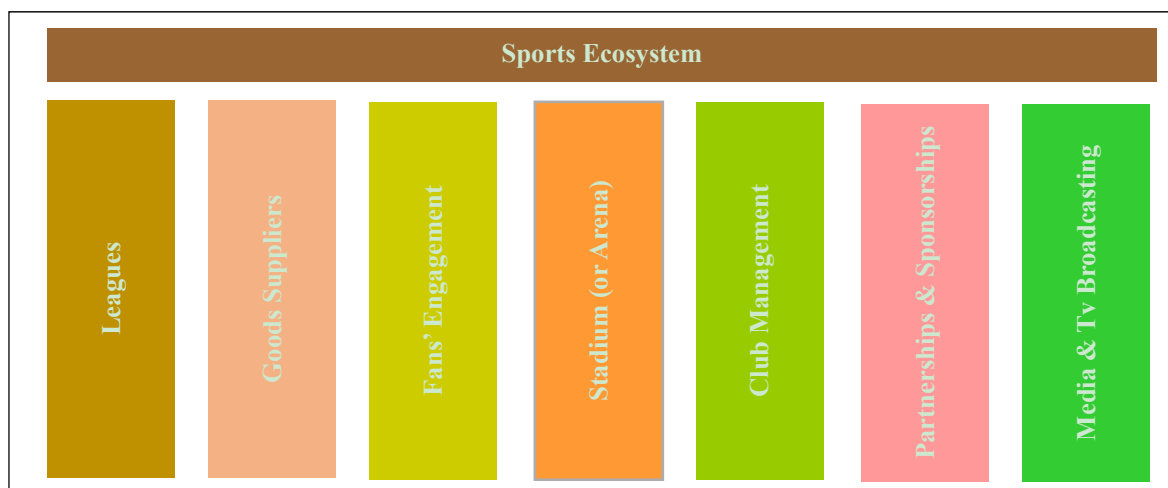


Figure 1. Sport ecosystem by US

Source: Authors.

- Leagues (confederations or federations): responsible for organising the seasons, leagues and tournaments. However, in most cases they also play an intermediary role in flowing revenues to clubs, particularly the media rights money; then, the leagues perform three relevant functions: organising competitions, creating valuable events, and structuring media rights tenders (Bradbury & O'Boyle, 2017; Shilbury, 2009; Storm, Wagner & Nielsen, 2017);

- Goods suppliers: on the one hand, they are investors who put money into the business for promoting their brand, images or products and services through a sports club. On the other hand, they may, also, associate their brands with a sports club and provide uniforms and sports goods for them, as t-shirts, shorts, shoes, cap, jacket, etc, and non-sports goods: foods, drinks, toys, etc (Fullerton & Merz, 2008; Giroux, Pons & Maltese, 2017);
- Fans' engagement: sports clubs should create a customer-oriented strategy to transfer their excitations and passions for spending their money to buy packages of pay-tv, tickets for games, products and services associated with sports club, and to become a member (Norris, Wann & Zapalac, 2014; Piipponen, 2011; Stander & Beer, 2016; Yoshida & James, 2010; Yoshida, 2017);
- Stadium (or arena): it involves facilities, naming rights, architecture, advertising inside the stadium, etc., The sports clubs can make money using several sorts of events (Leopkey & Parent, 2009);
- Club management: responsible for: (i) designing its offers and benefits (embedding its value proposition and experience) articulated to the expectations of different targets, as fans, supporters, enthusiasts and followers, (ii) managing their flow of money from ticketing, selling licensed products, sponsorships, and media rights, as well as ensuring the quality of the event value chain, pre, during and post-game, (iii) and purchasing and selling athletes, ensuring infrastructure and staff, executing governance strategies and managing its brands (Ratten, 2016; Foster, O'Reilly, Dávila, 2016);
- Partnerships & sponsorships: it aims to support fans in sports events (paying for private and public transportation), guide and provide safety for the fans inside the stadium, restaurants, parking, etc. In other words, partners are co-creators of the value chain offering facilities inside and outside the venue (Amorim & Almeida, 2015; Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005);
- Media and TV: responsible for buying rights of matches for television for an audience of fans, and offering to passionate fans an alternative platform, as cable tv, pay-tv, websites, social networks and apps (Burden & Li, 2009; McHugh, Bronson & Watters, 2015).

3. Methodological Design

This research has the purpose of approaching the sports ecosystem in three of the most prominent sports clubs in the State of São Paulo, Brazil. Thus, this exploratory study aims to understand and analyse the sports ecosystem of the Sports Club Corinthians, Palmeiras Sports Society, and São Paulo Football Club according to their fans' opinion and depicting the similarities and differences among these sports clubs. Three hypotheses were described to infer the results: (h1) Corinthians is different than Palmeiras and São Paulo concerning the fans' opinion since Corinthians is the most popular team from São Paulo city; (h2) the stadium, club management, and fans' engagement are—in this order—the most critical dimensions because of the media have criticised, in particular, Corinthians and São Paulo in the matter of issues relate to facilities and services in or out of the stadium and the inefficient management processes; (h3) Palmeiras has the best performance regarding the club management, according its fans.

These authors designed and prepared a sports ecosystem (as shown in Figure 1) to perform this study, since the four models analysed do not reflect the sports club reality in Brazil. Also, a pre-test was carried out with 30 sports fans (10 from each sports club) some weeks before collecting process to see the fans' reactions. The five sports ecosystems were presented to these 30 sports fans: the four which were designed by the authors above, and that one organised by these authors. None of them had any sort of identification, and all of them had a description of each axis. The question proposed the fans was: 'what do sports ecosystem was most appropriate to understand the Brazilian sports clubs?'. At the large, 18 choose the sports ecosystem prepared by us, 5 from Collignon & Sultan's ecosystem, 4 from Maltase & Dangle's ecosystem, and 3 from Rundh & Gottfridsson's ecosystem. None of them choose the KPMG's ecosystem. They argued that a model using seven dimensions designed by us became much more accessible to observe the proposal of each axis for the sports business and marketing. The fans' opinions assisted us in organising a questionnaire to collect data taking into consideration a considerable number of fans.

Table 2. Topics of the questionnaire

Leagues & Tournaments	Stadium (or Arena)	Goods Suppliers
01. Clear rules	11. Point of sale (ticketing)	24. Fans buy illegal goods
02. Calendars for matches	12. Comfortable seats and toilets	25. Discount to fan-members
03. Calendars for tv	13. Car parking structure	26. Assortment of models and sizes
04. Quality of games	14. Snack bar or restaurants	27. 3 goods per year
05. Balanced teams	15. Prioritising fan-members	28. Licensed club stores
06. Media coverage	16. Space (or area) for the disabled	29. Sports stores
07. Tv broadcasting to Europe	17. Partnership with public sector	30. Few options of goods
08. 15,000 fans on average	18. Safety for fans	31. Vintage uniforms
09. Fan's regular audience	19. Guides to help fans	32. Sponsor stamped on club goods
10. Cash prizes similar to Europe	20. Cheap tickets for several seats	33. Stores in stadium
Fans' Engagement		
37. Reading books and newspapers	21. Expensive tickets	34. Celebration uniforms
38. Collecting photos and posters	22. Kiosks to sell products	35. Gifting family and friends
39. Pay-tv subscription	23. Kiosks to become members	36. Customising goods
Club Management		
40. Visiting the trophy room	57. Business management concepts	69. Making investments in the club
41. Main athletes and starting line-up	58. Transparent management	70. Adding value to club brand
42. Visiting club website every week	59. Monetarily responsible concepts	71. Having few incentive policies
43. Attending training	60. Customer-oriented principles	72. Risk for company's brand
44. Following social networks	61. Paying the bills	73. Improving quality of products
45. Visiting club stores	62. Dealing with partners	74. Enhancing relationship with fans
46. Having historical T-shirts	63. Positive image for investors	Media
47. Attending opponent's stadium	64. Producing own athletes	75. Valuing the national league
48. Encouraging relatives	65. Receiving criticisms	76. Paying well to cover games
49. Encouraging co-workers	66. Social responsibility plan	77. Prioritising clubs on media
50. Wearing T-shirts on match day	67. Relationship with fans	78. Promoting naming rights on media
51. Seeing T-shirt in another State	68. Using marketing strategies	79. Interfering on league calendars.
52. Seeing T-shirt in another country		
53. Mock friends		
54. Watching sports tv programmes		
55. Choosing the team in FIFA video game		
56. Accessing YouTube to watch the goals		

Source: Authors.

Apropos the data and results reports, a questionnaire with 79 topics/statements (see Table 2)—related to the sports ecosystem perspective was designed by these researchers considering five Likert levels (1) totally disagree; (2) partly disagree; (3) I cannot answer; (4) agree; (5) totally agree. Besides, four fan's personal details were demanded by the fans in order to know their attributes, for instance, gender, monthly salary (with base on the minimum monthly wages in Brazil), monthly attendance to the stadium (1, 2-3, 4-6) and transportation they use to go to the stadium (own vehicle, public transport or private transportation, as uber, taxi, etc.). These questions were included on the top of the instrument. Generally explaining, 79 topics were presented in questionnaires and fans should select one of the five levels in the rating scale for each statement, spread in seven dimensions: (i) league: 10 statements; (ii) stadium: 13 statements; (iii) goods suppliers: 13 statements; (iv) fans' engagement: 20 statements; (v) club management: 12 statements; (vi) partnerships and sponsorships: 6 statements; and (vii) media & tv broadcasting: 5 statements.

Overall, 704 questionnaires were administered to sports fans between February and March 2017. To use the instrument, these researchers selected three matches of each football sports club, in which, three criteria were relevant: (i) administered to ordinary fans; (ii) carried out only inside the club stadium; and (iii) all 79 statements should be answered. Table 3 presents the Who, Where, When, and What, related to the administration process. The data collection took place inside and around the stadium before the games and took roughly 3 hours per match. However, not the same amount of questionnaires was obtained from the three clubs: 180 instruments were administered to Corinthians' fans, 309 to Palmeiras' fans and 215 to São Paulo's fans. The limitation in obtaining all questionnaires answered is because, on the one hand, Palmeiras' fans demonstrated more engagement to answer the questions; on the other hand, Corinthians' and São Paulo's fans did not want to help us answering them. The administration process was the same in all sports clubs. In other words, 360 instruments were printed to be administered on the day of the three matches for each sports club. Unfortunately, Corinthians and São Paulo had the fewest instruments answered, according to expectation.

Table 3. Matches, places, dates and tournaments

Corinthians' Games	Place	Date	League or Tournament
Corinthians vs Palmeiras	Corinthians Arena	22nd February 2017	São Paulo Tournament.
Corinthians vs Santos	Corinthians Arena	4th March 2017	São Paulo Tournament
Corinthians vs Red Bull Brazil	Corinthians Arena	23rd March 2017	São Paulo Tournament
Palmeiras' Games	Place	Date	League or Tournament
Palmeiras vs São Paulo	Allianz Park	11th March 2017	São Paulo Tournament.
Palmeiras vs. Jorge Wilstermann (Bolivia)	Allianz Park	15th March 2017	Libertadores Cup
Palmeiras vs. Mirassol	Allianz Park	22nd March 2017	São Paulo Tournament
São Paulo's Games	Place	Date	League or Tournament
São Paulo vs. Santo André	Morumbi Stadium	5th March 2017	São Paulo Tournament.
São Paulo vs. Ituano	Morumbi Stadium	18th March 2017	São Paulo Tournament.
São Paulo vs Corinthians	Morumbi Stadium	26th March 2017	São Paulo Tournament

Sources: Authors.

The software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to perform the analysis of the results in three steps: first, a general report calculating the parametric analysis (ANOVA) and post-hoc schefee tests from cross tables among the three groups of fans and sports ecosystem topics; second, the selecting process of the issues which achieved the significance $\leq 0,05$ (5%); then, observing and settling on which group of fans that agreed or disagreed with other fans; and, finally, standing out that topics (and axis) that are most similar and most divergent. The analysis and explanation of the results will be introduced in four tables, see Tables 4 to 10 below which were designed respecting the analysis procedure. Throughout the report of the r findings, relevant fans' attributes are pointed out to indicate the fans' characteristics and their implications for fans' choices.

4. Findings & Results

4.1 Leagues & Tournaments

Leagues (and tournaments) is the first axis of our sports ecosystem. To understand this axis, ten statements were designed; and all of them started with 'The leagues and tournaments have... (1) clear rules and regulation to guide fans and spectators; (2) appropriate date and time for the fans to watch the matches broadcast on tv; (3) appropriate date and time to watch the matches in the stadium; (4) high level of quality of games as well as competitive teams that demonstrate the player's technique and talent; (5) balanced teams that do not permit to predict the winner who will win; (6) draw the attention of the media (television, Internet and the radio) to broadcast the games; (7) matches that are broadcasted to other countries in South America and Europe; (8) 15,000 fans on average per game (30,000 is the average of the European leagues); (9) my attention (as a fan) in all rounds of the league, either in the stadium or on tv; (10) cash prizes to the sports club similar to European leagues, in general'. However, only five questions out of these ten obtained more than 95% of significance (See Table 4). It was observed that Corinthians is different from the Palmeiras and São Paulo in four of them.

Table 4. Leagues & tournaments

Leagues & Tournaments	(I) Team	(J) Team	Sig (I) x (J)	Team	N	Subset for Alpha: 0.05 (1) (2)
1. Clear rules	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.001	Corinthians	180	3.04
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.004	Palmeiras	309	3.49
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.952	São Paulo	215	3.45
2. Calendars for matches	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.026	Corinthians	180	3.29
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.002	Palmeiras	309	3.43
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.466	São Paulo	215	3.50
5. Balanced teams	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.004	Corinthians	180	3.16
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.001	Palmeiras	309	3.50
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.662	São Paulo	215	3.60
9. Fan's regular audience	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.997	Corinthians	180	3.61
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.015	Palmeiras	309	3.60
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.003	São Paulo	215	3.97
10. Cash prizes similar to Europe	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.001	Corinthians	180	3.11
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.208	Palmeiras	309	2.65
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.119	São Paulo	215	2.88

Caption: (1) Fans tend to disagree regarding the statement; (2) Fans tend to agree regarding the statement.

Source: Authors.

Corinthians' fans tend to disagree with Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans about clear rules of the leagues in Brazil. For Corinthians' fans, the leagues are not so clear to assist their fans. São Paulo league has changed the rules three times since 2007; these changes have caused some confusion for fans. Regarding an appropriate calendar for fans watching the matches on tv, all the fans see that the dates and times are not suited for them, and Corinthians' fans are the most dissatisfied. Regarding the balanced teams, Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans tend to agree because with the elevated level of competition, deducing the winning sports club of a league becomes harder, but Corinthians' fans understand that it is reasonably predictable, taking into consideration the latest winners. The audience in the stadium or on tv was another topic on this dimension. São Paulo's fans are more fanatic and more dedicated to the team than Corinthians' and Palmeiras'. Concerning the cash prizes to sports clubs being equivalent to European leagues', Corinthians' fans tend to agree about it, however, Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans have a different point of view. In general, three aspects may support their opinion: (i) the currency in Brazil has low value in relation to the dollar, euro and pound, (ii) the league organisation discourages some sponsors from investing money in promoting their brands, and (iii) the recent rumour of corruption in confederation and federations in Brazil have disgraced the honesty of the leagues and tournaments. It is worth mentioning that the Brazilian League has no identification in terms of a brand or a commercial name to promote itself, as the Premier League, Ligue 1, Bundesliga, La Liga, etc.

4.2 The Stadium

The stadium of the sports club is the second axis of the sports ecosystem. Thirteen questions were prepared for the fans, which began with 'when the team that I support plays in its stadium... (11) there are several points of sale to buy tickets; (12) there are comfortable seats and toilets, cleaned and sanitised; (13) it offers accessible parking for cars; (14) it sells snacks and drinks at honest prices; (15) prioritises members over ordinary fans when the sports club sells tickets; (16) does not provide accessibility areas (or seats) for disabled people; (17) develops the partnership with the public sector to ensure accessible transportation to the fans; (18) guarantees the safety of the fans at the pre, during and post-game; (19) provides employees to assist and guide the fans within the stadium; (20) does not sell cheaper tickets for several seats inside the stadium; (21) delivers high ticket prices in several comfortable sectors within the arena; (22) has kiosks with an assortment of licensed goods for sale; (23) offers kiosks to promote the benefits of a range of services to the member'. Nine questions reached at least 95% of significance. Coincidentally, Corinthians is different in seven of the nine questions considering the fans' view, see Table 5.

Corinthians' fans highlight that the club has fewer points of sale than they expected - physical and virtual. They also disagreed when they were questioned about comfortable cleaned and sanitised seats and toilets. For Corinthians' fans, the club has disrespected and failed in improving the quality of services to achieve the fans' satisfaction. These researchers asked all the fans about what kind of transportation they take to go to the match day. Corinthians' fans, on average, take public transport; Palmeiras' fans regularly take the cab, and São Paulo's fans use their vehicle. Thus, this may explain why São Paulo's fans have more parking services around the stadium, according to them, and why there are reduced parking services for Corinthians' fans. Concerning the foods in the venues, São Paulo's fans believe that the club sells snacks at unaffordable prices. Regarding clubs prioritising members over ordinary fans when the club sells tickets for a match, all of them disagree, of which São Paulo's fans emphasise their disagreement. They claim all clubs are supposed to sell the tickets in an equal condition for both members and non-members. In other question, Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans answered that their clubs assist them when they need assistance within the stadium on match days. As to selling cheaper tickets for several sectors inside the stadium, Corinthians' fans explain that there are not many less expensive seats available to buy. Apropos the licensed goods, Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans depicted that the clubs have kiosks to sell an assortment of products on match days. Regarding the topic of clubs having kiosks on match days to promote the benefits of becoming a member, Corinthians' fans understand that the club does not use this channel to encourage fans to be a member. Small stores or kiosks within the stadium are the options for clubs to approach their fans to sell goods and services, as well as build a relationship with them by a membership service.

Table 5. The stadium

Stadium (or Arena)	(I) Team	(J) Team	Sig (I) x (J)	Team	N	Subset of Alpha: 0.05	
						(1)	(2)
11. Point of sale (ticketing)	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180	2.79	3.88
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.991	São Paulo	215		
12. Comfortable seats and toilets	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.001	Corinthians	180	3.10	3.61
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.024	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.601	São Paulo	215		
13. Car parking structure	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.238	Corinthians	180	2.96	3.19
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.003	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.110	São Paulo	215		
14. Snack bar or restaurants	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.575	Corinthians	180	2.72	3.11
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.018	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.106	São Paulo	215		
15. Prioritising fan-members	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.848	Corinthians	180	3.77	3.70
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.231	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.038	São Paulo	215		
19. Guides to help fans	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.008	Corinthians	180	3.28	3.64
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.211	São Paulo	215		
20. Cheap tickets for several seats	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180	2.89	3.61
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.004	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.068	São Paulo	215		
22. Kiosks to sell products	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.030	Corinthians	180	3.24	3.54
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.004	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.631	São Paulo	215		
23. Kiosks to become members	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.004	Corinthians	180	2.85	3.24
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.488	São Paulo	215		

Caption: (1) Fans tend to disagree regarding the statement; (2) Fans tend to agree regarding the statement.

Source: Authors.

4.3 Goods Suppliers

Products and souvenirs make up the third axis. For contextualising this topic, thirteen statements were developed to know the fans' perspective, as follows: 'Regarding the licensed club's goods and services... (24) I do not buy them because they are expensive, I buy a copy or an illegal good; (25) I do not buy them since there are no discounts to the members; (26) I do not buy them because there are not a lot of options and an appropriate size for me; (27) I buy on average 3 goods or souvenirs of the club every year; (28) I buy them only at licensed club's stores; (29) I buy them in sports stores (e.g. Decathlon) since there are not many club's stores; (30) I do not buy them since there are few good options, only T-shirts and caps; (31) I would like to buy vintage goods that remind me of former idol athletes from the remarkable past; (32) I do not buy them because I do not like the sponsor stamped on the club's goods; (33) I would like to buy goods from the stores in the stadium when I arrive or before I leave the stadium; (34) I want to buy T-shirts that celebrate club's achievements or the third club's uniform; (35) I already bought a good to give as a gift to my relatives, friends and co-workers; (36) I cannot customise some club's goods'. Five out of thirteen statements achieved at least 95% of statistical significance. The statistical analysis has presented some similarities between Palmeiras and São Paulo in several topics related to goods and souvenirs, see Table 6.

Table 6. Goods suppliers

Goods Suppliers	(I) Team	(J) Team	Sig (I) x (J)	Team	N	Subset of Alpha: 0.05	
						(1)	(2)
26. Assortment of models and sizes	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.691	Corinthians	180		2.66
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.005	Palmeiras	309		2.65
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.020	São Paulo	215	2.20	
28. Licensed club stores	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.073	Corinthians	180	2.91	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.044	Palmeiras	309	3.17	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.913	São Paulo	215	3.22	
29. Sports stores	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.001	Corinthians	180	3.19	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309		3.61
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.878	São Paulo	215		3.67
33. Stores in stadium	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180		3.73
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.089	Palmeiras	309	3.23	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.203	São Paulo	215	3.44	
36. Customising goods	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.041	Corinthians	180		3.08
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.274	Palmeiras	309	2.76	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.698	São Paulo	215	2.86	

Caption: (1) Fans tend to disagree regarding the statement; (2) Fans tend to agree regarding the statement.

Source: Authors.

The data indicate that Corinthians' and Palmeiras' fans cannot regularly find some goods models and alternative sizes to buy. The licensed club stores increase the possibilities to sell merchandises related to the club, but none of them take advantage of the point of sale to meet more fans. However, Corinthians' fans are those who spend less money and buy fewer products in licensed club stores club stores in comparison to Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans. The curiosity lies in the fact that Corinthians' fans do not buy in sports stores either. Thus, it is possible to deduce that if they do not purchase goods in licensed club stores nor at department stores, they probably purchase goods in sponsors' stores, e.g., Nike stores. Although, Corinthians' fans are more prone to buy official goods in stores inside the stadium before or after matches than Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans. Connecting this idea to that introduced in question (22), it is possible to point out that the Corinthians' fans want to buy goods, but there are no kiosks and stores to sell them. Hence, they are potential fans to make money on a match day. As to the probability to customise a good, Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans believe that it is regularly possible. It is noticeable that marketers require monitoring of the fans' habits for suiting the goods ('P', Product) and the stores ('P', Place) to fans' convenience.

4.4 Fans' Engagement

The fourth axis of the sports ecosystem involves fans' engagement. Twenty questions were planned for the fans; all of them started with 'as a fan of the team... (37) I love reading books, newspapers, and magazines about the team; (38) I love collecting photos and posters of my team; (39) I subscribe to pay-tv to watch the games and help my team; (40) I have never been to the trophy room to know the achievements of the team; (41) I can identify and recognise the main athletes and I know those who usually play in every match; (42) I visit, at least once a week, the club's official website; (43) I attend the training, at least once a month; (44) I follow and like the players posts on Twitter and Facebook; (45) I always go to the club stores to familiarise with the new goods and promotions; (46) I have t-shirts from several periods of my team history; (47) I attend the matches of my team when they play in the opponent's stadium; (48) I have already encouraged my relatives to support the team who I am a fan; (49) I have already encouraged friends and co-workers to cheer for my team; (50) I have always worn my team's t-shirt at their games; (51) I have seen people wearing my team's t-shirt in other States or provinces I have visited; (52) I have seen people wearing my team's t-shirt in another country I have visited; (53) I use social networks to mock my friends who support the opponent teams and to defend my team; (54) I have watched daily sports tv programmes to get updated on information about my team; (55) I always choose my team in FIFA video game; (56) I always access YouTube to watch the goals and matches of my team'. Twelve questions stood out with 95% of statistical significance, overall. Again, Corinthians was different, see Table 7.

Corinthians', Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans appear to be sensitive to their club's history, but Corinthians' fans seem to be more fanatic because they are voracious consumers of literature and photos. Regarding cable tv, Corinthians' fans are those with more pay-tv subscriptions to watch games. The fanaticism of Corinthians' fans was expressed when they were questioned if they had visited the trophy room, and some of them had visited it at least once. However, São Paulo's fans seem to be more updated about the news than Corinthians' and Palmeiras'

fans, possibly because they attend the training at least once a month. In respect of social media, Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans show more interest in following their teams and athletes' posts on Facebook and Twitter. Corinthians' fans usually have little interest in going to the club stores to check new goods and services. Corinthians' fans are those who most often watch their team performing in the opponent's stadium. Regarding the sports club internationalisation, Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans stated that they had seen people wearing the team's t-shirt in other countries; however, not as many as Corinthians' fans had. The last question was if Corinthians' fans are those usually choose their team when they play FIFA video game with friends. Therefore, Corinthians' sports marketers should know their fans' habits and attitudes to format a suitable service for them; and Palmeiras' and São Paulo' sports marketers should encourage their fans' passion because these clubs are far below Corinthians' fans. Positioning and brand strategies are two marketing options to design innovative solutions.

Table 7. Fans' engagement

Fans' Engagement	(I) Team	(J) Team	Sig (I) x (J)	Team	N	Subset of Alpha: 0.05	
						(1)	(2)
37. Reading books and newspapers	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180		3.87
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309	3.28	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.360	São Paulo	215	3.10	
38. Collecting photos and posters	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180		3.89
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309	3.19	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.349	São Paulo	215	3.01	
39. Pay-tv subscription	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.004	Corinthians	180		3.24
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.025	Palmeiras	309	2.74	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.902	São Paulo	215	2.80	
40. Visiting the trophy room	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.012	Corinthians	180		3.36
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.052	Palmeiras	309	2.90	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.928	São Paulo	215	2.95	
41. Main athletes and starting line-up	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.899	Corinthians	180	3.77	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.133	Palmeiras	309	3.71	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.022	São Paulo	215		4.02
43. Attending training	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.243	Corinthians	180	2.21	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.003	Palmeiras	309	2.44	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.109	São Paulo	215		2.71
44. Following social networks	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180	2.38	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309		3.26
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.456	São Paulo	215		3.41
45. Visiting club stores	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.020	Corinthians	180	2.71	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.137	Palmeiras	309		2.99
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.793	São Paulo	215		3.07
47. Attending opponent's stadium	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.013	Corinthians	180		3.66
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.038	Palmeiras	309	3.26	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.979	São Paulo	215	3.29	
48. Encouraging relatives	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.245	Corinthians	180		4.03
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.009	Palmeiras	309	3.81	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.221	São Paulo	215	3.60	
52. Seeing T-shirt in another country	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.004	Corinthians	180		3.62
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.001	Palmeiras	309	3.22	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.784	São Paulo	215	3.14	
55. Choosing the team in FIFA video game	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.003	Corinthians	180		3.53
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.108	Palmeiras	309	3.11	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.470	São Paulo	215	3.25	

Caption: (1) Fans tend to disagree regarding the statement; (2) Fans tend to agree regarding the statement.

Source: Authors.

4.5 Club Management

The club management is the fifth dimension of the sports ecosystem. Twelve questions were written for understanding the fans' point of view related to their sports team. These questions began with 'the management

of the club...’ (57) is professional since managers use business management principles; (58) is transparent seeing that it executes accountability, and decision-making in the club; (59) is responsible, inasmuch as the managers only invest money and resources that are available; (60) does not have professionals who develop principles that approach customer-orientation; (61) can pay its bills, athletes, employees, and other investments; (62) has established partnerships with attractive companies; (63) seeks to ensure a positive image to the club in view to get more investments; (64) invests in athletes produced by the club in order to sell them to get profit in the future business; (65) receives criticisms for managing the club not in line with new management trends; (66) invests in social responsibility programmes to enhance the image of the club; (67) aims to build a healthy relationship with fans; (68) practices marketing and communication strategies to meet its fans’ expectations. For fans, ten of these twelve questions have more than 95% of statistical significance. Palmeiras’ fans expressed some divergent perceptions from Corinthians’ and São Paulo’s fans, see Table 8.

Table 8. Club management

Club Management	(I) Team	(J) Team	Sig (I) x (J)	Team	N	Subset of Alpha: 0.05	
						(1)	(2)
57. Business management concepts	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.399	Corinthians	180	3.35	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.214	Palmeiras	309	3.19	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.003	São Paulo	215		3.58
59. Monetarily responsible concepts	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.012	Corinthians	180	2.86	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.008	Palmeiras	309		3.19
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.924	São Paulo	215		3.23
60. Customer-oriented principles	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180		3.26
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.715	Palmeiras	309	2.64	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.000	São Paulo	215		3.16
61. Paying the bills	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.255	Corinthians	180	3.04	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.002	Palmeiras	309	3.22	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.062	São Paulo	215		3.47
62. Dealing with partners	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.303	Corinthians	180	3.23	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.002	Palmeiras	309		3.39
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.058	São Paulo	215		3.62
63. Positive image for investors	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.063	Corinthians	180	3.17	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309	3.41	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.033	São Paulo	215		3.67
64. Producing own athletes	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.533	Corinthians	180	3.12	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309	3.25	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.000	São Paulo	215		3.74
65. Receiving criticisms	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180		3.35
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.481	Palmeiras	309	2.91	
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.019	São Paulo	215		3.20
67. Relationship with fans	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180	2.71	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309		3.48
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.261	São Paulo	215		3.64
68. Using marketing strategies	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180	2.51	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309		3.31
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.486	São Paulo	215		3.44

Caption: (1) Fans tend to disagree regarding the statement; (2) Fans tend to agree regarding the statement.

Source: Authors.

Looking into the data above, it can be observed that, except for questions (60) and (65), all the others place São Paulo as the club that has the most professional management model. For São Paulo’s fans, the club has improved in business management principles, governance principles, financial responsibilities, development of attractive partnerships, institutional image, relationships with fans, and marketing and communication strategies. However, the club fails to create some customer-oriented principles. Corinthians’ fans pointed out that the club has failed in the following aspects: spending more money that was available, building a healthy relationship with them, and carrying out marketing and communication strategies targeted at fans. According to Palmeiras’ fans, the club has a customer-fan orientation and the club receives criticisms from fans. By and large, the media have backed up Palmeiras’ fans view since the club that has more resources to invest, due to a new management philosophy that

has been implemented since 2012. In turn, Corinthians and São Paulo have been involved in a rumour concerning corruption. Besides, these three clubs do not have agency principles, for instance, remunerated market professionals, and initial public offering (IPO), the way it happens in sports clubs from Europe and the United States. A professional management can might encourage new investments from shareholders, sponsorships and fans. It is noticed that the sports managers in Brazil manage and control the sports clubs much more as a fan—by emotion—than as a professional manager (or a business professional).

4.6 Partnerships & Sponsorships

Table 9. Partnerships & sponsorships

Partnerships & Sponsorships	(I) Team	(J) Team	Sig (I) x (J)	Team	N	Subset of Alpha: 0.05	
						(1)	(2)
69. Making investments in the club	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.045	Corinthians	180	2.83	3.14
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.014	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.783	São Paulo	215		
71. Having few incentive policies	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.038	Corinthians	180	3.23	3.47
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.397	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.509	São Paulo	215		
73. Improving quality of products	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.004	Corinthians	180	3.26	3.59
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.214	São Paulo	215		
74. Enhancing relationship with fans	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.000	Corinthians	180	2.94	3.48
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309		
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.882	São Paulo	215		

Caption: (1) Fans tend to disagree regarding the statement; (2) Fans tend to agree regarding the statement.

Source: Authors.

The sixth axis is formed by partnerships and sponsorships. Six questions were planned to fans, and all of these questions started with ‘regarding the partners and sponsors... (69) they have invested more resources and money into the club; (70) they have added value to the club brand; (71) they have little support from the Brazilian government to invest money in sports; (72) they suspect that the mismanagement of the sports club might damage their brands; (73) they have incremented the quality of club’s goods and services; (74) they have enhanced the relationship between club and fans’. Only four questions had more than 95% of statistical significance. According to Corinthians’ fans, the partnerships and sponsorships have assisted the club less than they expected, whereas Palmeiras’ and São Paulo’s fans have a contrary point of view, see Table 9.

Corinthians’ fans have a different opinion about the benefits of a partnership and sponsorship. According to them, partners and sponsors have invested money and resources into the club. However, they state that the partnerships and sponsorships have not improved the quality of club’s goods and services nor the relationship between club and fans. Then again, Palmeiras’ and São Paulo’s fans tend to disagree on this aspect, as well as on the question about the government support to invest money in the sport. These two groups of fans believe that companies have not been encouraged by the government to spend money on sports, while, Corinthians’ fans do not see it that way. Indeed, companies have decreased investments in football in Brazil since the last decade. Some relevant clubs in Brazil, for instance, do not have a sponsors’ logos printed on their uniforms. First, there are no transparent rules for companies to invest in sports clubs. Second, the media do not broadcast the sponsors’ brands on tv, radio, newspapers, etc, including the stadium naming rights. Third, the fans have prioritised buying goods without the sponsors’ logos printed on them, the sports stores have been provided with both kinds of goods, i.e., with and without sponsorship printed. Forth, the non-professional management and mismanagement have discouraged some investors. Thus, these are the main difficulties that a sponsor faces to invest money in sports clubs in Brazil.

4.7 Media & TV Broadcasting

Media is the seventh dimension. Five questions were designed for fans, all of them started with ‘the media... (75) value more the national leagues and tournaments than the international ones; (76) pay an amount of money to buy rights to broadcast games, as the European media do; (77) broadcast and publish more information about one club than others; (78) promote the sponsor naming rights in order to encourage new investments to the club; (79) and interfere on the leagues or tournaments to define the matches calendar’. Overall, only three questions

were determined by the fans as having more than 95% of statistical significance. Corinthians' fans have a distinct point of view from Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans in all of them, see Table 10.

Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans understand that the media broadcast and publish more information and material about one club than others, and, for them this sports club is the Corinthians since: (i) it has the most number of fans in the State of São Paulo and the second in Brazil (Lance & IBOPE, 2017); (ii) and it receives the highest amount of money from tv rights alongside Flamengo, from Rio de Janeiro. São Paulo is the second; and Palmeiras the third, just like Vasco da Gama from Rio de Janeiro. From these three sports clubs from the city of São Paulo, only Palmeiras has naming rights. Both Corinthians and São Paulo are looking for partners or sponsors to badge their stadiums (Esporteemidia.com, 2016). Actually, Palmeiras' fans pointed out that some media do not broadcast its naming rights since they refer to the stadium as 'Palmeiras Arena' instead of Allianz Park. São Paulo's fans state that the media should communicate the naming rights. Corinthians' fans do not see it the same way; for them, broadcasting the companies' names should not be mandatory for the media. Finally, Corinthians' fans do not agree regarding interference from the media on the games calendar, whereas Palmeiras' and São Paulo's fans agree. In other words, media interferes with the date and time of ongoing matches of leagues and tournaments to line them up with the TV or radio programming grid. The sports clubs have been giving in to the media's requirements in Brazil due to 'mismanagement' of these sports clubs. Sports managers are forced to be even more dependent on the media's money.

Table 10. Media

Media & TV Broadcasting	(I) Team	(J) Team	Sig (I) x (J)	Team	N	Subset of Alpha: 0.05	
						(1)	(2)
77. Prioritising clubs on media	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.009	Corinthians	180	3.35	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.000	Palmeiras	309		3.68
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.364	São Paulo	215		3.83
78. Promoting naming rights on media	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.108	Corinthians	180	2.78	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.002	Palmeiras	309		2.99
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.199	São Paulo	215		3.17
79. Interfering on league calendars.	Corinthians	Palmeiras	0.006	Corinthians	180	3.44	
	São Paulo	Corinthians	0.001	Palmeiras	309		3.77
	Palmeiras	São Paulo	0.710	São Paulo	215		3.86

Caption: (1) Fans tend to disagree regarding the statement; (2) Fans tend to agree regarding the statement.

Source: Authors.

5. Final Considerations

As has been noticed, a sports ecosystem comprises some axes that support, connect and create a customer-orientation for a business and marketing plan addressed to a sports club to undertake sports events, entertainments, and experiences. Thus, a sports ecosystem consists of a number of assumptions to mitigate the risk of a sports event as well as ensure the efficiency and efficacy of the value chain of the processes using stakeholders as partners to perform a group of relevant activities to deliver a sports experience. Hence, these authors had to design and line-up a sports ecosystem for performing this study, as a pre-test performed weeks before the collecting process, showed that: (i) the proposed models were not viable to analyse the perspectives of the clubs (some axis did not reflect the clubs' reality and culture), and (ii) and the fans had difficulties to express their point of view having as basis these four models. The fans felt more comfortable answering topics proposed in our sports ecosystem model.

Considering the objective of this empirical article, which was understanding and analysing the sports ecosystem of Corinthians, Palmeiras and São Paulo Sports Clubs according to their fans opinion, and checking the similarities and differences among the clubs, the fans helped us understand that:

- Corinthians is different from Palmeiras and São Paulo in all of the seven axes; actually, the axis club management is the only one that Corinthians and São Paulo showed a sort of 'tie', according to their fans;
- Corinthians' fans disagree in six out of seven dimensions, except for club management;
- Corinthians fans tend to take public transportation to go to the stadium, due to limited parking offer;
- Palmeiras and São Paulo have resemblances in most of the axes in plenty aspects, as pointed out by their fans;

- Taking the seven dimensions of the sports ecosystem into consideration, the most critical was the club management (10 topics out of 12 - 83%), followed by the stadium (9 out of 13—69%), partnerships and sponsorships (4 out of 6—66%) and media (3 out of 5—60%); and
- São Paulo has the best point of view, regarding the club management dimension, Palmeiras is the second.

Therefore, linking the results and the three hypotheses proposed, these authors verified that: the hypothesis number (h1) was confirmed, since Corinthians is different from Palmeiras and São Paulo in six out of seven axes, (h2) was partially met, since the order was: club management, stadium, and partnerships and sponsorships; but the proposal was: stadium, club management, and fans' engagement, in this order, and (h3) was not reached, because São Paulo has the best club management axis, according to the fans. The idea of this study was not to know how a sports club organises a sports ecosystem, but to place them according to their fans point of view, and understand and analyse each dimension. The results depicted the media's ordinary sense, that is, the number of Corinthians' fans in Brazil overcome a country such as Australia (24.5 million people) (CTWP, 2017), for instance. Palmeiras and São Paulo have the best management system; however, since 2012, Palmeiras have exceeded São Paulo, due to partnerships with relevant companies in Brazil. Nevertheless, Palmeiras' fans have not perceived yet results in relation to sporting achievements.

It is worth mentioning that one limitation of this study lies in the number of fans who took part in this research. As it can be observed, Palmeiras has many more instruments answered (319) than São Paulo (215) and Corinthians (180). The initial expectation was to collect 360 of each group of fans. The procedure of data collection was carried out the same way for all clubs, but some Corinthians' and São Paulo's fans refused to answer the questionnaire and, some of them were answered incorrectly. Besides, they did not demonstrate the will to collaborate and help us in this study. Some argued that 'this study could/would damage the club's image'. The Palmeiras' fans were much more receptive and proactive in assisting us in this study. Nevertheless, the amount of data and information were enough to describe the fans' opinion about their sports club. As a suggestion for future studies related to sports business, marketing, and ecosystem, we recommend studying more sports club using this sports ecosystem proposed here, or another one to provide new knowledge or even to refute this one.

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