


# Chapter 16

## Communication and Marketing in the Fight Against Racism in the Sports Context: A Theoretical Reflection on European Football

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### ABSTRACT

*Racism is a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority that has been politically, culturally, and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions, in different countries, depending on their colonial history. In that sense, racism cannot be seen as a concept that is equal in every region of the world. Racism in sport is a research topic that has been particularly valued in recent years (and decades). There are several episodes of racism that occur in sport (among fans and athletes). In this sense, sports institutions (European and global) regularly invest in social marketing campaigns to raise awareness of this social phenomenon. Therefore, social media has allowed football fans to engage in discussions concerning football and other subjects. This chapter presents a brief theoretical reflection with three (European) examples of marketing campaigns against racism in sport (UEFA, Premier League, and F.C. Porto). This chapter presents inputs for marketing, ethics, and management in sport. At the end, lines of future research will be presented.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Racism in sport is a research topic that has been particularly valued in recent years (and decades). There are several episodes of racism that occur in sport (among fans and athletes). In this sense, sports institutions (European and global) regularly invest in social marketing campaigns to raise awareness of this social phenomenon. In the last decade, there have been several issues that have arisen about social inequalities, domestic violence or natural disasters that devastate communities. The complexity that is linked to this situation, together with the growth of globalization and changes in organizations, led to the development of the concept of Social Responsibility, which implies the social contribution to the environment of a society or group. This has led to the emergence of new concerns and expectations from individuals. Thus, marketing has now played a key role in managing these new changes (da Silva Pereira & Sousa, 2020; Sousa & Soares, 2021). Racism is a problem for football across Europe and is an important factor in the problem of football hooliganism itself. The actual extent of racism is virtually impossible to measure as detailed statistics in this context are almost non-existent. Nevertheless, acts of football disorder, especially on the international scene, have frequently been referred to as 'racist', or perpetrated by racist groups, and some clubs are now viewed as having an inherently racist support. Social marketing has an added importance to develop awareness in the population, supporters and athletes. Simultaneously, digital marketing and digital communication (through social networks) are assumed as a fundamental management tool to reinforce the call for behavior change. Digital communication on social networks seems to have a decisive impact on young people and adults. In the sporting context, it is essential and mandatory that ethical values are progressively increased in order to achieve a significant reduction of racism through marketing, business and sport organizations in European football. This chapter presents a brief theoretical reflection on the phenomenon of racism in sport and on the theoretical framework of digital marketing to combat racism.

## **2. ORGANIZATIONAL, BUSINESS AND MARKETING ETHICS**

According to De Waegeneer and Willem (2019) Mullane (2015), and Walters and Tacon (2018), all types of sports organisations, such as; (international) sports federations, professional and amateur sports clubs and local sports services, implement codes of ethics, with the purpose of preventing unethical behaviour.

As concern over ethics grows in companies, forums dedicated to the promotion of ethical practices and models, studies on the subject, the introduction of disciplines in various courses have emerged around the world, naturally leading to the development of the area of business ethics (da Costa et al. 2020; Robertson, Voegtlin & Maak, 2017).

*The football sector has increasingly come under scrutiny following a number of corruption scandals. Italian football in particular has demonstrated to be very vulnerable to a number of corruptive practices carried out by dishonest sportsmen, white collar criminals, and organised crime syndicates. A widespread culture of illegality seems to affect the football environment, to the point that corruption-related illegal and unethical behaviours have become endemic along the years (Lavorgna & Di Ronco, 2015, p. 260).*

For various reasons, business ethics has decisively influenced companies' behaviour and respective communication actions, particularly marketing campaigns (Jones, Parker & Ten Bos, 2005). In a

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