

Managing the Reputation of the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA): The case of the corruption crisis

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Abstract

Reputation management is essential to associations, particularly after a crisis. As an example, a corruption crisis happened after Swiss authorities arrested some Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) officials and issued criminal charges regarding bids for the 2018 and 2022 World Cup. There is considerable scrutiny of how profit and nonprofit corporations manage their reputations after crises, with less attention focused on international associations. This case study examines how FIFA used the media and communication strategies to protect its reputation after the corruption scandal of May 2015. We analyze FIFA news releases, examine press conferences, and investigate its website, including how this crisis affected relationships with stakeholders (largely sponsors and partners). It is understood that reputation management and open communication channels help rebuild trust. This study shows that FIFA depended on a “Deny strategy” to avoid responsibility, as there was no benefit in using the mass media. They organized a press conference to make a few statements via their official website, with little media use.

Keywords: FIFA's reputation, reputation management, crisis communication, FIFA, crisis management.

Introduction

Sport is a multi-billion-dollar, worldwide industry. Most countries compete against each other for the right to hold sporting events including the Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, America's Cup and other such events principally for financial development purposes (Ben Sulaymen et al., 2013, p 20). There is an absence of transparency and accountability in this worldwide game with an inclination for corruption (Jennings, 2011). Transparency International believes that if the organization that runs football is seen to be corrupt, everyone loses. Therefore, FIFA needs to confirm that the Qatar choice was free from bribes and corruption. The continuing allegations of corruption have promoted FIFA's sponsors to speak out. Some FIFA sponsors including Sony, Adidas, Hyundai, Kia and Coca-Cola have needed clarifications from FIFA. These associations pay upwards of a 720 million USD for the advantage to be connected with the World Cup (Transparency international).

Emirates Airline, an official sponsor, reported it would not renew its sponsorship when it terminated toward the end of 2014. Sony, which had signed a contract with FIFA in 2005 for a reported 277 million USD, decided not to renew its contract (Roberts, 2015). In recent years, the researcher observed that the FIFA corruption issue has been covered from media all over the world, and this issue may harm FIFA's reputation, especially among partners and stakeholders. Yet, there still remains a lack of reputation studies regarding sports associations. This study looks back into the roots of the FIFA crisis. It drives its importance from the fact that few studies have examined the managing of sports associations such as FIFA. Therefore, the research question is as follows: How is FIFA managing the corruption crisis in order to avoid damage to its reputation?

Specifically, we seek to determine how FIFA uses communication strategies to manage its reputation, examine the effects of the FIFA corruption scandal on partners' relationships and document the timeline of the FIFA corruption crisis. In the present study, investigating the characteristics of FIFA media discourse and communication strategies may help both marketing responsibilities and Public Relations Practitioners in FIFA to rebuild their reputation. The study examines FIFA's reputation management by evaluating news releases via the FIFA website, statements, FIFA officials' interviews with media and explores excerpts from international media coverage of the crisis.

Definitions and Conceptual Background

There is debate in the literature about how to define corporate reputation from the perspective of different disciplines (Helm et al., 2011). It is a collective representation of a firm's past actions and results that "describes that firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders" (Fombrun et al., 2002). The definition of corporate reputation's definition is based on assessments of the social, financial and environmental impacts of the corporation across times (Barnett et al., 2006). The Reputation Institute describes a reputation risk as "a negative event that will reduce the perception of you delivering on expectation" (Reputation Institute, 2015).
Corporate Reputation Management

Management of the corporate reputation of a major association is the challenge that most practitioners of public relations (PR) face in their professions. PR experts are responsible for changing the reality by using strategies and practices in order to enhance reputation (Morley, 2002). "A good reputation has both intangible and tangible advantages", and it is necessary to build good reputation to manage an association through extreme times (Doorley & Garcia, 2011, p 4). Organizations defend against anything that harms their reputation, because good reputation provides more esteem to their products or services (Eccles et al., 2007). Current reputation measurement tools consist of quality of management, financial performance, quality of products and services, transparency and validity (Kunle & Ganjyu, 2013)

Companies must understand how their performance and reputations are influenced by inter-associational interdependence, and they need to understand how they can manage this interdependence (Barnett & Hoffman, 2008). Crisis communication studies in public relations

benefit firms from both sides—“theoretically and pragmatically”—and thus have different in methodological implications (Avery et al., 2010)

In a survey of 107 football fans in Egypt, it was found that corporate image has a direct positive effect on intention to purchase, and sports fan involvement has a direct positive effect on perceptions of corporate image (Ibrahim, 2011). In a case study, a Swedish tobacco firm endeavors to handle a major crisis to explore how associations are involved in crisis communication; the study showed that a relationship in crisis is related to different partners and diverse types of crisis (Svensson, 2009). Through in-depth interviews with players, clubs' officials and supporters, leading to the design of a survey instrument completed by 842 supporters of two expert Norwegian football clubs, researchers found that fans that have a strong emotional attachment to their club have a stronger perception of the club as a brand and support brand extension (Abosag et al., 2012).

Ali et al. (2015) suggest that there is need for practitioners to develop and manage the reputation of their associations through the use of research evidence from various countries.

International Association Reputation

Although there is a rapid growth in the number of studies in the area of corporate reputation, academic studies in the field of the international sports associations have so far been limited to the area of reputation management. Walsh et al. (2011) analyzed the image-repair discourse after a photo was published of the American swimmer Michael Phelps allegedly smoking marijuana. The study found that when a client's actions are undeniable, they should respond quickly and honestly. "The tour de France and major league baseball are among the prominent victims of image problems created by use of performance-enhancing drugs" (Stoldt et al., 2012, p 38). The United Nations is berated for the failure of its peace-keeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to protect civilians; also, large dam projects in the 1960s and 1970s hurt the reputation of the World Bank (Johnstone, 2010). International organizations' (IOs') reputations must comply with international law. It is an important facet of a IOs' legitimacy (Daugirdas, 2015).

In the following, some case studies investigated international association reputation. Eisenegger and Kunstle (2011) examined the effects of the financial market crisis on reputation dynamics in the global bank sector for the period from 2002 to 2011. Results confirmed that successful reputation management must always keep three reputation dimensions in mind; functional reputation, social reputation and expressive reputation. Weber et al. (2011) analyzed Citibank's responses to the company's financial crisis; findings indicated that Citibank used corrective action strategies to prevent the crisis from happening again. Angelovska (2015) suggested some considerations that Apple might take to enhance its reputation; e.g., it should increase its focus on communication and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

In a case study of crisis communication strategies of British Petroleum PLC (BP), the researchers found that “BP's crisis communication was a weak link in its crisis management strategy” (Valvi & Fragox, 2013). In a study to observe Japanese investors' perceptions of auditor reputation, the researchers found that Japanese investors did not respond to negative or neutral

reputational information arising from news announcements concerning Olympus' auditors for affiliated firms (Frendy, 2014).

FIFA Associations and Confederations

FIFA was established on May 21, 1904 in Paris by delegates from Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. With 209 member associations affiliated with FIFA today, FIFA supports the associations financially and logistically through various programs and grants (FIFA.com). "FIFA, its members and the confederations are the original owners of all the rights emanating from competitions and other events coming under their perspective jurisdiction, without any restrictions as to content, time, place and law. These rights include, among others, every kind of financial rights, audiovisual and radio recording" (FIFA statutes, 2014, p 54).

FIFA reputation crisis

The following quote by Benjamin Franklin clearly summarizes FIFA's reputation crisis: "It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation and only one bad one to lose it."

Timetable of FIFA's reputation crises

FIFA's reputation crisis is not related to the corruption scandals that happened in May 2015, but it has been engulfed in crisis over the past few years.

November 2010 British media began an investigation and declared that two members of FIFA's executive committee were suspected of "selling votes." FIFA suspended 6 involved members from their obligations (Kong & Lin, 2011).

February 2011 FIFA's ethics committee maintained three-year and one-year bans forced separately upon executive committee members Amos Adamu and Reynald Temari for ruptures of FIFA's code of ethics after a Sunday times examination into wrongdoing amid the World Cup 2018 and 2022 bidding campaigns (The Independent News).

May 2011 FIFA suspends presidential candidate Mohamed Bin Hammam and vice president Jack Warner pending an examination into allegations that they had offered bribes to members of the Caribbean football union: "FIFA sponsors Coca-Cola, Adidas, Emirates and Visa raise concerns about corruption claims surrounding officials" (Espn staff).

December 2012 FIFA declared in a media release that Mohamed Bin Hammam, FIFA's executive committee member, has resigned from all of his positions in football (FIFA.com).

September 2013 Amnesty International uncovers alleged human rights abuses on World Cup construction projects by releasing a report that details "an alarming level of exploration" (ABC News).

June 2014 Secret payments helped Qatar win the World Cup 2022. There were millions of files leaked to the Sunday Times, and "the documents expose ... Qatar's amazing victory in the race to secure the right to host this event" (Clavert & Blake, 2014).

September 2014 Michael Garcia, the previous New York district attorney who is head of the investigation of FIFA's ethics committee, is believed to recommend sanctions against a few of people included in the convoluted offering process (The Guardian News).

November 2014 In an attempt to deal with corruption allegations surrounding the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bidding race, FIFA presented "a criminal complaint against certain individuals involved with the Swiss authorities" (The Guardian News).

December 2014 FIFA's executive committee consistently supports recommendation to publish report on 2018/2022 FIFA World Cup offering process (FIFA.com).

May 2015 Swiss police made attacks at the Baur au Lac hotel in Zurich, where FIFA authorities were staying before the presidential election. The seven FIFA authorities were captured after the US Department of Justice issued a 47-count indictment charging 14 defendants with racketeering, wire fraud and money laundering (BBC.com).

June 2015 The investigatory chamber of the Ethics Committee takes note of the FIFA president's publication. The chamber had begun and proceeded with its mandatory alongside the adjudicatory chamber of the Ethics Committee of consistently (FIFA ethics committee

milestones). Sepp Blatter the president of FIFA announced his resignation in a conference in Zurich. He said a special election would be held shortly (Espn staff).

By analysis of all the crises that are mentioned above, we can say that in its relation to FIFA's responsibility, questions arise about who is responsible for an organization's reputation. Roper and Fill (2012, p. 53) suggested that everyone in an association has a responsibility to manage and develop an association's reputation, and there is no formal department that has this mission.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does FIFA's spokesman deal with the reputation crisis?

RQ2: What media are used by FIFA to manage the reputation crisis?

RQ3: What are the communication strategies used by FIFA?

RQ4: How do FIFA sponsors interact with the reputation crisis?

The Study's Methodology

The case study method is suitable for this study to understand the reputation crisis in depth (Yin, 2009, p. 19). In the following section, this study analyzes FIFA's responses to the corruption crisis. The case study method was used to investigate communication strategies that were used by FIFA, usage of media in managing FIFA's reputation, and the effects of crisis on FIFA's partners; the researcher evaluated excerpts of media stories, press releases and reports that were published on the official website of FIFA. Results demonstrate that there was lack of FIFA's media coverage about the crisis, especially on the official website. In order to document FIFA's communication messages during the crisis, the researcher depended on various tools in data collection—e.g., the press conference that was held on 27 May 2015 at the home of FIFA from the media, documents that were published on FIFA website about that crisis, press releases and some of the media coverage of the crisis on the press websites (e.g., BBC, The Guardian, ABC).

Findings

FIFA's spokesman deals with the reputation crisis

To determine how FIFA's spokesman dealt with the reputation crisis, the researcher watched the press conference that was held by FIFA on the morning of Wednesday 27 May 2015 after Swiss authorities arrested officials on corruption charges. The researcher determined that FIFA Director of communication and public affairs (Walter De Gregorio) presented several messages as follows:

The general secretary and president are not included in this procedure. FIFA World Cup in 2018/2022 in Russia and Qatar will continue as arranged. There will be no re-vote -- Sepp Blatter is not involved embroiled in this scandal he is the president but not included.

Also, "Sepp Blatter will acknowledge what is going to happen. He is more stressed than yesterday but relayed". The previous messages confirmed that there were no changes about FIFA World Cup organization in both countries—Russia and Qatar—despite that the scandal is about bribes that are related to buying the rights of marketing the sports events.

We are suffering under the circumstances. It is a difficult moment for us. Blatter is not dancing in his offices. It's a chock that (the captures) happened today but it's not a surprise that it happened. It is a hard time –not pleasant to be here.

Another excerpt states: "At the same this useful for FIFA, this is great. It confirms we are in the right track. It damages, it is difficult, yet it is the best way to go and we are prepared to go the way we begun four years ago and nothing will stop us". This discourse has a defensive message, especially about the FIFA president. He motioned that Sepp Blatter is not responsible for the crisis and that he was doing his work. In hindsight, a different expression would probably have been more useful to respond to press questions. There were some contradictions in the speech. Also, the procedures that FIFA started four years ago were not clear. Perhaps the spokesman meant the reform procedures, but he should explore this.

“For this situation, FIFA is the harmed side and this drive to the way that there were no hunts in the workplaces of FIFA". De Gregorio also affirmed, FIFA general secretary Jerome Valcke and President Sepp Blatter were "not included" in the crisis. No suspensions would be made at FIFA at right now.

De Gregorio confirmed that this was not the responsibility of FIFA and defended the president of FIFA, despite recognizing the crisis on the association reputation.

The FIFA presidential election will happen as planned and won't postponed. The Garcia report, which was dispatched by FIFA to investigate charges of corruption in world football, "will be distributed" for the general public. However. No time frame was given - Russia and Qatar will look at the hosts for the 2018 and 2022 World Cup, respectively.

This message tended to show FIFA transparency, as declared by the publication of allegations of corruption.

FIFA statements

FIFA published a statement on its website on 27 May 2015 under the following title: "FIFA is fully cooperating as injured party in the actions by Swiss authorities". By analyzing this statement, the researcher found that FIFA failed to communicate the procedures that were taken to avoid this crisis for a number of reasons: 1) the statement began with a weak introduction as follows: "FIFA welcomes actions that can help contribute to rooting out any wrongdoing in football". In the second paragraph, it pointed to the event of arrest without clarification that there

were FIFA officials that were involved, that is, the statement used the synonym (individual), as follows: "firstly, the arrest of six individuals this morning in Zurich concerns investigations by the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of the State of New York". Describing 'six individuals' could be interpreted to mean that they are normal persons and not officials. 2) Regarding the file of the 2018/2022 FIFA World Cup, the second paragraph of the statement pointed out that this file was investigated by the Attorney General in November 2014. 3) The third and final paragraph concentrated on the announcement of open criminal proceedings against persons unknown in relation to the 2018/2022 FIFA World Cup.

After Blatter's win in the re-elections, he wrote a letter to thank FIFA's members for their trust, and he said in the final paragraph "I'm proud that even in a time of crisis our organization is able to continue operating so smoothly and to provide a solid base for football". Although FIFA's crisis was related to corruption, Blatter insisted on showing that the association is able to continue; the researcher thinks that these words have emotional appeals, as he did not mention the methods that FIFA will use to face the corruption allegations.

FIFA usage of mass media to manage the reputation crisis

Blatter delivered a speech about the reputation crisis on 28 May 2015 in the opening ceremony of the 65th FIFA congress. Blatter said: "Activities of people have demonstrated to bring disgrace and humiliation on football and demand action and change from every one of us. We not can permit the reputation of football and FIFA to be damaged anymore. It has to stop here". Also, he confirmed: "I know many individuals hold me responsible. I cannot monitor everyone all the time. If people want to do wrong, they will also try to hide it." (FIFA.com).

Blatter sent a message to the public confirming that FIFA is not responsible for the crisis. He used emotional appeals to persuade others about this when he said that he could not monitor everyone. According to this result, it is apparent that it is important to present evidence of transparency.

FIFA president Blatter was re-elected to a fifth term, and he said in a media release on 29 May 2015 that:

Events of this current week have thrown a shadow on football and our congress. However, the blameworthy ones -if a confirmed guilty ones- if an affirmed liable ones - if an affirmed liable – are people, it's not the whole association! Presently we all together, need to repair the change. Quickly! I'm approaching you to return FIFA in good shape. You are FIFA and FIFA needs you. (FIFA.com)

In this statement, Blatter tended to use the word "if". He still denied the crisis and the event, and all that he made was a relationship between the crisis and individuals; indeed, he refused to acknowledge the relation between the organization and the crisis, despite that the crisis has had a great affect on the whole association—not only the officials—because the effects extend to the brand of (FIFA) and its relationships.

FIFA used various media to manage the damage of its reputation; firstly, it used press interviews with FIFA officials. For example, there was an interview that was held between Prince Ali Bin Al-Hussein of Jordan and BBC; Prince Ali said that "We can't proceed with the crisis in FIFA", "FIFA needs initiatives that administer controls and protect our national associations" (BBC news).

This statement confirmed the contradictions in the crisis speech and the weakness in managing FIFA's reputation; the matter pushes the global public to ask how FIFA is responsible for leadership despite that Prince Ali Bin Al-Hussein has a position in this organization?

Secondly, FIFA published via its official website some remarks by FIFA president Blatter and Domenico Scala. Sepp Blatter mentioned that FIFA takes basic administrative reforms. Scala also supported these reforms but did not show details about these reforms. During the meeting that was held on 20th August 2015 with its sponsors, FIFA reassured its obligations with transparency and reforms with its partners.

Thirdly, FIFA published media releases via its website on 11 August 2015 about the appointment of De Carrad as independent chairman to guide reforms; he said: "It is essential for the future of global football to restore the integrity and reputation of its representative body. As the independent chairman package of credible reforms working agents from inside of football and more extensive society ...". All of the above statements reflected FIFA's target of reform, and suggest that the association used media to inform its public about this objective to gain their support and to retrieve reputation.

Communication strategies and managing FIFA's crisis reputation

By analysis of FIFA's messages during the corruption crisis, which has been raised in May 2015, most messages denied that FIFA was in crisis. Denial strategies target to construct a crisis frame; these kind of strategies endeavor to remove any connection between the organization and the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

FIFA Director of communication and public affairs (Walter De Gregorio) focused on both a "Deny strategy" and "Defense strategy" in the press conference because he said more synonyms; e.g., "the president is not involved; Blatter is not dancing in his offices; there's no responsibility of FIFA; and Garcia report will be published for the general public".

Blatter, in a speech given on May 28, 2015, which was the second day after the arrest of the individuals, depended on the "Avoiding strategy". Although FIFA admitted to the crisis effects on reputation, the president insisted that he was not responsible for the crisis.

The researcher has found that FIFA tried to avoid problems by using a kind of neutral speech. Also, FIFA used the "Reform strategy" because Blatter has talked about reform procedures without details about these reforms. In general, using communication strategies in the reputation crisis was weak. If FIFA had good PR practitioners, maybe they would have used better strategies that explained the procedures and used some logical appeals to persuade the stakeholders about the crisis.

FIFA sponsors and the reputation crisis

FIFA has numerous stakeholders worldwide. Sponsors are the most important partners of FIFA. They have the largest amount of relationships with FIFA and all of its events, and they also play a wider role in supporting the advancement of football around the world. FIFA sponsors were affected by the corruption crisis. There are a few sponsors that gave feedback on the crisis, and this put FIFA under pressure because Charlie Scharf, the head of the leading FIFA sponsor Visa, directed a strong attack on Sepp Blatter. He said: "FIFA's response to the corruption crisis had been 'wholly inadequate'" (The Guardian News). This statement confirmed that FIFA failed to persuade its partner about the efforts to manage the crisis; also, it means that it has a lack of communication activities to keep its relation with the sponsors. "We see the stewardship of our organization, our brand, and our customers with the most significance and attempt to hold ourselves to the highest measures" (The Guardian News). This statement showed that the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsor is built on both mutual trust and good reputation.

So, damage to the sponsor's reputation may have an effect on the contract of sponsorship. Charlie Scharf also said:

We trust two things need to happen to ensure valid reform. First, an independent, outsider commission drove by one or more impartial leaders is basic to figure changes. Second, we trust no significant change can be made under FIFA current administration. Football itself is an extraordinary game with which we are glad to be related. We need to be proud to be connected with FIFA, trust and anticipate to working with them to that end (The Guardian News)

Although Visa is a FIFA partner, it presented a reform plan to rebuild its partner reputation. It is suggested that FIFA as an international organization should be interested in its partners, especially sponsors, if it intends to take reform procedures in the future.

Coca Cola, a World Cup sponsor since 1978, has affirmed in a letter to the International Trade Union Confederation that it wrote to FIFA calling for an autonomous commission to undertake root-and-branch reform drove by "one or more prominent, unbiased leaders" (Theguardian.com). In a press interview with BBC, Coca Cola said: "We trust that building this independent commission will be the way for FIFA to approach its change process and is important to construct back the trust it has lost." Also, Coca Cola said: "We are requiring this methodology out of our profound responsibility to ethics and human rights and in the interest of seeing FIFA succeed" (Dan, 2015).

By analysis of the previous statement, the researcher found that Coca Cola lost the trust of FIFA, so it insisted on confirming the importance of the reform process; this finding is consistent with Visa's speech about the urgent need to reform FIFA, and it is also consistent with a study (Ibrahim, 2011) that proved that there are several aspects the sponsors take into their consideration to sign the contract with an organization (e.g., history of organization, publicity of the sport, success of the sport, and the mutual benefit between the sponsor and the organization). Adidas commented on the crisis as a FIFA partner and said: "The adidas Group is fully

committed to creating a culture that promotes the highest standards of ethics and compliance, and we expect the same from our partners". Also, Adidas said: "We can therefore only encourage FIFA to continue to establish and follow transparent compliance standards in everything they do" (Adam, 2015). Adidas's statement was consistent with other FIFA's partners including Visa and Coca-Cola about the crisis. Adidas confirmed that FIFA must keep ethics, compliance and transparent standards. This came after the following day of the crisis outbreak.

Gazprom is a worldwide energy organization. Its main business lines are geological investigation, production, transportation and storage. It holds the world's biggest natural gas reserves. The company's ratio in the global and Russian gas reserves makes up 17 and 72 per cent separately (Gazprom.com). It is striking that all of FIFA's sponsors called for FIFA reforms except for the Russian energy giant Gazprom representative who reportedly said the following: "sponsorship agreement isn't influenced by the circumstance around FIFA". The spokesperson, Sergi Kuprianov, added, "this situation can not affect it" (Stein, 2015). Russian president Vladimir Putin also said that the US probe is a "blatant attempt to extend its jurisdiction" as Russia prepares for 2018 World Cup (Aljazeera news).

Discussion

This study highlights FIFA's usage of mass media in managing its reputation crisis, which happened at the end of May 2015 by the arrest of 14 officials of FIFA. The study investigated how FIFA's spokesman dealt with the reputation crisis. The results showed that the most messages that were sent by FIFA concentrated on using a "Denial strategy".

The spokesman tried to persuade the public opinion that Sepp Blatter was not involved in the crisis. He failed to use the suitable words to edit his speech, as he said that Blatter was not dancing in his office. According to this result, this research suggests that FIFA should rebuild its communication and generate a crisis plan. Also, FIFA should be more transparent by announcing the facts to its stakeholders and depending on a good public relations spokesperson who has communication skills, especially since FIFA is considered an international organization.

On the other hand, the study examined FIFA usage of mass media to manage the crisis. The results found that FIFA depended both on press releases and public speeches. It denied its responsibility about this crisis. There was a lack of electronic media usage, especially that it has an official website; it published via its website some press releases and one video of its press conference. In general, FIFA has failed in its media usage, and there was less usage of a communication channel compared with press conferences.

According to this result, FIFA should rebuild its media and public relations. Practitioners should benefit from social media (Twitter and Facebook) to highlight FIFA's efforts worldwide and its social responsibility. All these efforts will help in its reform strategy in the future. Also, FIFA should change their communication leadership or modify its performance by monitoring media content. Not following newsfeeds was a serious mistake for FIFA; monitoring news can allow the organization to clarify facts and avoid rumors.

This study analyzed FIFA's communication strategies to manage its reputation during the crisis; according to the results, FIFA used several strategies, and a denial strategy was the

communication strategy most used in managing the reputation crisis. Both of the communication director and FIFA's president used it. They asserted that there was no crisis. This result is consistent with Valvi and Fragkos (2013) in a study which approved that crisis manager in British Petroleum (BP) confirmed that there is no crisis and blamed some person outside the organization. BP's crisis communication was a weak link in its crisis management strategy. This result is also consistent with Weber et al. (2011), who approved of Citibank's use of denial strategies in managing its reputation.

This study also investigated FIFA partners' feedback after the crisis happened. The findings indicated most of the sponsors' dissatisfaction about the crisis. The crisis will affect the sponsorship relations among FIFA and their partners; the contracts' renewal processes depend on the changes inside FIFA, including serious reforms and more transparency. The researcher thinks that the crisis will affect sponsors' reputations as well, since the main element in a contractual agreement is trust and since most sponsors lost their trust. Raising sponsor sales is not the final target, but there are also intangible targets such as raising brand awareness among clients and enforcing the company's image.

One of the most striking findings in this study is that the global energy company Gazprom told a newspaper that the crisis did not affect its relationship with FIFA. In general, FIFA failed in managing its reputation during the crisis and did not clarify the procedures that it will take to initiate reform strategies. There were limitations in using mass media, especially new technology; therefore, FIFA should establish a new independent department for reputation management.

Limitations and future research

It is important to note that this study highlighted how FIFA managed its reputation after the corruption crisis. The study used a case study as a qualitative methodology; usage of this kind of methodology limits the ability to generalize our findings. It will be necessary to survey the sports audience (e.g., football fans in Europe, sponsors, football associations) about FIFA's reputation after the corruption crisis. It would be interesting to measure sponsors' brands after the crisis. Marketing researchers should perform studies on FIFA's brand reputation in the minds of football fans. Based on the findings, FIFA might take steps to rebuild its reputation.

FIFA's future reputation depends on its ability to concentrate on media usage, especially to increase an awareness of the international society about its roles in the field of sports. Yet, it must also increase its focus on CSRs and human rights issues, as there were more than 1,400 laborer deaths in Qatar's hot, unsafe building. However, depending on both communication strategies and CSR activities alone are not enough, and FIFA also needs to integrate its communication efforts by improving its brand and leadership.

Note:

FIFA partners are defined as follows: sponsors (e.g., Adidas, Coca-Cola, Hyundai, Visa, Gazprom) who support services and products for the entire event's operations, and endeavor to

achieve marketing goals by raising their brands' awareness among millions of football fans worldwide.

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