



ROYAL FAMILY BUSINESS IN QATAR AND THE EMIRATES THROUGH SPORTS CLUB MANAGEMENT: "GREEN WASHING" OR A SUSTAINABLE MODEL? THE CASES OF FC BARCELONA AND MANCHESTER CITY

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ROYAL FAMILY BUSINESS IN QATAR AND THE EMIRATES THROUGH SPORTS CLUB MANAGEMENT: “GREEN WASHING” OR A SUSTAINABLE MODEL? THE CASES OF FC BARCELONA AND MANCHESTER CITY

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ABSTRACT

How can family business at an international level have an impact on state policies related to corporate social responsibility and democracy in the home country? Is this the strategy of Qatar and the Emirates through sports management? How will the responsible activities of FC Barcelona and Manchester City have an impact on social issues and on the brand images of Qatar and Emirates around the world? These questions are the point of departure for this comparative study of two of the most influential football clubs in Europe, where Qatar and Emirates have had a strong presence in the management and/or the sponsoring of these new sports brands over the past few years. The multicultural histories of these two clubs becoming corporate sports giants through the game of football are a key element in determining what kind of relationship these two football organisations have with global responsibility and sustainability. The purpose of this study is to try to understand what lies behind the new business strategy of these sports organisations and how the corporate cultural differences with Qatar and Emirates can be overcome with the emergence of a responsible vision through the activities of their foundations.

Key words: family business; global responsibility; sports management; football; sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The first part of this paper will consider the links of Qatar and the Emirates with European Sports Management, proceeding on to a comparative analysis of the key elements which are at the centre of the fundamental responsible principles and actions of FC Barcelona (Rabassó & Rabassó, 2013) and Manchester City. It is important to keep in mind the different approaches of these two sport institutions in relation to corporate social responsibility, as the national cultures

(Catalonia and England) are not the same. The fact that FC Barcelona is considered a symbol of Catalan identity highlights the necessity for this institution to reinforce its brand image through its responsible practices. Networking is, as a result, a common practice of the FC Barcelona Foundation with other global organisations (for example, the United Nations) and national foundations from different countries. The emergence of Manchester City as a global sports brand gave the opportunity to these institutions to sign the United Nations Global Compact¹ and to embrace caring for the game and caring for people, as sport has become a way to get close to the under-privileged.

The second part of this paper seeks to assess how these two clubs are building a sustainable and globally responsible sports organisation and how this can have an impact on the “cleaning up” of the irresponsible images of Qatar and the Emirates. These two countries have received a lot of bad press from the international mass media in relation to the poor labour relations developed in different sectors of their respective economies. “Green washing” (Horiuchi, Schuchard, Shea & Townsend, 2009) is a phrase used by the press when referring to the sports management and mass media operations carried out in the last decade through these sports clubs that are, today, global brands. This expression refers to the corporate marketing strategy and brand culture values many organisations develop through mass media and advertisement to give a responsible image concerning their practices and ethical behaviour. Many times this does not conform to the real profit oriented objectives these corporation have. Accountability and sustainable and responsible practices are *sine qua non* conditions to see if Qatar and the Emirates’ business strategy will be perceived as globally responsible. “Green washing” is understood in this paper as the result of bad sustainable practices and poor ethical behaviour conducted by Qatar and Emirates corporations and governments related to labour conditions, the respect of human rights and political freedom.

The responsible visions of Qatar and the Emirates created through their cultural institutions, foundations, universities and business leaders (Colliers International, 2014) are also important in linking their activities with those of FC Barcelona and Manchester City. Finally, the paper will put forward the possibility for this family business sports organisation (especially Manchester City, but to a lesser extent FC Barcelona, as this club is owned by its “*socios*” (Carter, 2006; Morrow & Howleson, 2014)) to have a real impact for global

¹ As the United Nations Global Compact website points out, www.unglobalcompact.org, UNGC is a call to companies around the world to align strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption, and take actions that advance societal goals. By November 10 2015, 8,383 companies from 163 countries signed out with 34,388 public reports engaging all the organisations for responsible actions.

change in Middle East societies and the Arab world as the responsible social activities of these sports organisations are becoming a role model for many of the people and corporations in these countries.

QATAR AND THE EMIRATES, EMERGING ECONOMIES PRESENT IN EUROPEAN SPORTS

Culture has been a driving force for change in the Middle East over the last few decades. The internet, sports and global tourism have also had a real impact on the social changes and the business diversification of Qatar and the Emirates (Michie & Oughton, 2005). Over the past 20 years, the House of Thani, the Qatar royal family for the last 150 years, has been very much involved in the art world, in addition to the cultural activities developed by the Qatar Foundation through its multiple universities embracing corporate and scientific responsible projects. Sports, culture, arts and technology are part of the Qatar New Vision 2030² which portrays a world of education for all, inviting students and people from all over the world to share and participate in many of the activities held by these new emerging economies. This country already has the most extensive collection of modern Arab art in the world³ as a way to place its wealth into activities which will attract global investors. The new emerging luxury sector of its economy attracts a global consumer class with high buying power for exclusive products and high quality services. Related to this new vision, sports have been another area where Qatar has been investing a lot of effort and money to improve its country brand image. Qatar Sports Investment (QSI) is a company founded by the Crown Prince and son of the current Emir, Sheikh Tamin bin Hamad Al-Thani⁴ (member of the International Olympic Committee), to invest in sports abroad. In 2014, QSI became the major shareholder of Paris

² QGSDP (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning (2011). Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016 (towards Qatar National Vision 2030) www.gsdp.gov.qa

³ Hassan bin Mohamed bin Ali Al Thani, Sheik Saud's older brother, owns more than 6,300 pieces of modern Arab art (Arabic- Iraqi paintings specially). Saud bin Muhammed Al Thani, another family Al Thani member, is also an art collector with many traditional art pieces, manuscripts, jewellery, carpets, and scientific instruments and so on. All of this is exhibited in the Museum of Islamic Art, the National Library, the Natural History Museum and other cultural institutions. The Emir's daughter Al-Mayassa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani is the most powerful woman in the art world today, as she has the economic resources and her commitment towards developing the art culture of Qatar is one of the most prominent and extensive in the Arab world. The Al-Thani family has spent around 1 billion on Western painting and sculpture over the last two decades and Qatari art buyers make up a quarter of the Middle East's 11 billion art market.

⁴ He is one of the wealthiest royal family members in the world with a personal fortune of about 2.5 billion dollars.

Saint-Germain (PSG). At the same time, his mother, Sheikha Moza bin Nasser, is the head of the Qatar Foundation, one of the major sponsors of FC Barcelona (the logo emblazons the club shirt) with a deal worth 171 million euros, the largest in football history.

Recently, there have been many changes in human resources management practices related to gender discrimination at the workplace in Qatar⁵. One of the most important corporations of the country, Qatar Airways has made important decisions to overcome policies that discriminate against women. International pressure has been exerted by mass media and other organisations⁶ to force the Qatari government to change their human resource behaviour related to female workers. In August 2015 Qatar Airways relaxed controversial policies on firing female workers when they became pregnant or were married within five years of employment⁷. Under the new regulations, women who become pregnant are offered temporary ground jobs and staff can also get married after notifying the company. The company has about 9000 cabin crew and about 7000 are women⁸. On the other hand, working conditions for most of the low paying migrant workers are still difficult. About 1.2 million foreign workers (94 percent of the two million residents are foreigners) come from poor countries or emerging economies like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and the Philippines. Qatar human resource management policies are based on the *kafala*⁹ (sponsorship) system which enables employers to arbitrarily prevent their employees from leaving Qatar and returning to their home country (Qatar Law No. 4, 2009). The consequence of this is labour exploitation, and bad living conditions are the norm in many working environments. Due to international pressure, the Qatari government, from September 2015, is planning to replace this arbitrary labour

⁵ See the Qatar's Fourth National Development Report. Realising Qatar National Vision 2030. The Right to Development published in June 2015.

⁶ The International Labour Office Governing Body, in the 324th Session in Geneva, on June 13 2015, presented a report of the Director General about discrimination at the work place in Qatar (GB.324/INS/7/9).

http://www.ilo.org/gb/GBSessions/GB324/ins/WCMS_376576/lang--en/index.htm

⁷ Chris Burns, 'Qatar Airways still faces heat on female staff discrimination', Equal Times, September 1st, 2015. <http://www.equaltimes.org/qatar-airways-still-faces-heat-on#.Vkn22zZdEcA>

⁸ Agence France-Presse, 'Discrimination at work. Qatar Airways will no longer sack cabin crew who become pregnant or marry', The Guardian, August 27th, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/aug/27/qatar-airways-will-no-longer-sack-cabin-crew-who-become-pregnant-or-marry>

⁹ See the Human Right Watch Report, country summary Qatar, January 2015, page 2. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/qatar_2.pdf

system by employment contracts which will protect foreign workers from abusive employers¹⁰.

The Abou Dabi Emir, Khalifa ben Zayed Al Nahyane, also president of United Arab Emirates, owns several football clubs around the world through his holding City Football Group (SWF Institute, 2008; Singh, 2008). His fortune is the second highest in the Persian Gulf and he is the 17th richest man in the world with \$19 billion in 2014¹¹. His interest in investing in international football started in 2008 as a way of promoting the brand image of the Emirates as a “sports country” (Madichie, 2009a). The Abu Dhabi United Group (ADUG) bought Manchester City for 259 million euros from the previous owner, the former Thai Prime Minister in exile, Thaksin Shinawatra (Rodenbeck, 2009). In May 2013, ADUG also bought a franchise football team in the United States, the New York City Football Club, a satellite club of Manchester City. In January 2014, ADUG bought the Melbourne City Football Club in Australia for US\$12 million. In May 2014, ADUG acquired its fourth football club, the Yokohama F. Marinos in Japan (Madichie, 2009b).

Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak, a top business manager in the Emirates, in 2008 became the chairman of Manchester City (UAE Yearbook, 2007a; UAE Yearbook, 2007b). In 2011 the club hired the former vice-president of FC Barcelona, Ferrán Soriano, who left the club after Joan Laporta finished his second term as president of the Catalan institution. Before going to Manchester, Soriano was the president of Spainair, a Spanish airline company. Today Soriano is the CEO of Manchester City as well as the president of New York City FC and Melbourne City FC. The links between these two, FC Barcelona and Manchester City, have become very close, as the royal families and the management teams, as well as some players (for example Yaya Touré), are interrelated in their activities. Soriano, like Khalifa Al Mubarak, was educated in top business schools around the world (Tufts University in Boston for Al Mubarak, ESADE in Barcelona for Soriano) so their corporate vision becomes crucial to developing a new responsible brand image for these sports organisations. The former FC Barcelona Sports “technical” director with Joan Laporta and Ferrán Soriano, “Txiki” Begiristain, a former player of Johan Cruyff’s Dream Team (the first Barcelona side to win the European Cup, in 1992), also moved to Manchester City in 2012 to take up the equivalent position he had held at FC Barcelona.

¹⁰ Staff writer, ‘Qatar said to agree changes to kafala system for foreign workers’, arabianbusiness.com, Friday, September 11 2015.
<http://www.arabianbusiness.com/qatar-said-agree-changes-kafala-system-for-foreign-workers-605876.html>

¹¹ See www.forbes.com for the list of the 20 top richest football team owners in the world.

The strategy of Khalifa ben Zayed Al Nahyane and Khalifa Al Mubarak towards international football is very similar to the one developed by the Qatari royal family. In the Emirates only 18 per cent of the population are national citizens.

With the 82 per cent of immigrants, the total population is only 2.6 million, with a very high income per capita (\$65,000) and a very low female population (24 per cent). The reputation of the Emirates concerning labour conditions has been severely criticised around the world due to the high number of work accidents, the lack of security and rest for its workers, the confiscation of their passports and the heavy debt many people accumulate due to the expensive and hard living conditions (small rooms, lack of drinking water and electricity in many houses, poor eating habits and insufficient health care) (Human Rights Watch, 2012)¹². Sixty-five per cent of their workers are Indians or Pakistanis who suffer discrimination as well as exploitation with long working hours and very little rest time. The consequence has been many riots led by overworked immigrants demanding more humane conditions and fairness in the workplace¹³. All of this is part of a larger negative image the Emirates suffered during the last decade, despite the efforts of many corporations to implement better working conditions to allow foreign investors to consider the country for their future business strategies¹⁴. International tourism has been another key factor in the development of the Emirates as an attractive tourist luxury destination. This is one of the main reasons why sports and culture have a key role to play in improving the brand image of the country. Local satellites of the Louvre, the Guggenheim and the British Museum have been included in Abu Dhabi's mega cultural projects, as well as many international sports events to attract the attention of global media. Art works of global artists, such as the Japanese Takashi Murakami or the French Louise Bourgeois, have been exhibited in Qatar as a part of sending a message to the world about the new funders of culture and sports entertainment in this part of the world (UAE Yearbook, 2008).

¹² "Hundreds of thousands of male workers – primarily from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh — migrate to Qatar to work as low-wage laborers on construction projects", (Human Rights Watch, 2012, p.2)

¹³ Seventy-one workers from Bangladesh demanding better wages, social benefits and living conditions were threatened with deportation to their original country after the riots. The government is not willing to negotiate not matter what and the priority is always given to the nationals. Many corporations are threatened by the authorities about the contracts signed with the foreigners. Human Right Watch and Amnesty International have been denouncing in their annual reports this situation. Reporters without Borders placed the Emirates as a country in the 114th position in the world for freedom of the press.

¹⁴ "Workplace injuries are the third highest cause of accidental deaths in Qatar." (Human Rights Watch, 2012, p.4)

FOOTBALL, BRANDING AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, TOOLS FOR BRAND COUNTRY IMAGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The business models (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010) of the two sport organisations selected for this study reflect the increasing concern about building up a globally responsible brand image (Betz, 2002; Lunn, 2002; Andreff & Staudobar, 2000). Each club will rely on its past and its environment to reinforce, through its media strategy, the strength and values of a corporate sports culture that wants to make a difference in relation to competitors (Amit & Zott, 2001: 511; Armistead & Clark, 1993; Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998)¹⁵. FC Barcelona puts forward the idea of being “more than a club” as it is an institution of the Catalan culture and identity. Manchester City looks at its surroundings and is trying to develop a sustainable model with the people and the social conditions of a province in England that has witnessed the impoverishment of a large part of the population and the privatisation of many of its social services and infrastructures under the dominance of a neoliberal model which has benefited, as in many other countries, only a minority.

These two sports organisations are part of a larger global sports environment where marketing and branding have provided corporations and an elite of top managers and shareholders with huge profits, taking advantage of deregulation, downsizing, outsourcing and the emergence of a productive majority in emerging countries (Brady, Bolchover & Sturges, 2008). Most of the workers in the factories of Asia for instance are sports fans of many of these football teams, so they become consumers buying their shirts and many of the items that bring a huge amount of money to these institutions. At the same time, a global consumer class (Jones & Ferguson, 1988; Baimbridge, Cameron & Dawson, 1996; Dobson & Goddard, 1996; Janssens & Késenne, 1987; Wilson & Sim, 1995; Gardner, Assadourian & Sarin, 2004; Nielsen, 2015) is willing to spend part of their revenue on many of the symbolic brands that surround the teams, as advertisements portray a picture of the world that conforms to the interest and objectives of the corporations operating around sports. Because of this, “green washing”¹⁶ could be the other side of a truly “responsible” strategy in the business environment of these sports organisations and the corporations that surround them. Michael Moore in his film *The Big One* asked Philip Knight, the

¹⁵ “A business model depicts the content, structure, and governance of transactions designed so as to create value through the exploitation of business opportunities” (Amit & Zott, 2001, p.515)

¹⁶ “Green washing” is understood as the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service.

founder and CEO of Nike, one of the main sponsors of FC Barcelona, if he could go with him to Indonesia to see the living conditions of the workers producing Nike shoes. Knight apparently did not even know about it and did not give much importance to the political and social conditions of the country. This is a clear example of how global corporations surrounding sports have been pressurised to become, like many financial managers, globally responsible against the abuses, crimes and unethical behaviour of the business environment for the last twenty years (Wells, 2001)¹⁷. An alienating “globalitarianism”, a new economic neoliberal ideology, as Paul Virilio pointed out (2000: 38), has become extremely powerful with the help of technology, branding and advertising. The global population has embraced sport as a highly entertaining way of life, and as a consequence, the overuse of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have become helpful tools for corporations as many people fall into the trap of over-consumption. The players of many of these football teams have also become money makers, participating in the marketing campaigns and the commercials that are posted all over the world on television channels, internet and public screens that are increasing exponentially in our cities.

Philip K. Dick anticipated in *Minority Report* a city environment where the ads were directed at people as they were wired or connected online permanently (Dick, 2002). This is becoming a common practice in our science fiction reality today as sports have a very important role to play in the “entertainment” industry, a great tool for global corporations to imprison former citizens in a new space of permanent consumption. “Green washing” becomes, therefore, another tool to give corporations a clean image for their practices. Consequently, our planet has been polluted physically (as most of the consumption products are not recyclable) and mentally (with the overuse of advertising, a kind of cultural terrorism our corporations practise on a daily basis over alienated audiences). Younger generations become amnesic about their local history and the contribution of their people through arts and humanities and yet most of the people have a very sophisticated knowledge about brands and football global “heroes” in a new branded world (a term used by Naomi Klein in *No Logo* (Klein, 1999) that has come to materialise the prophecies of dystopian writers like Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*), George Orwell (1984) and Ray Bradbury (*Fahrenheit 451*).

Before this apocalyptic global environment, a growing concern for sustainability and honest responsible behaviour from managers and corporations had become a demand from responsible consumers and civil society through NGOs and alternative media. The education of children through sports, with ethical values

¹⁷ See the top corporate criminal list in www.globalexchange.org

towards cultural diversity and environmental issues, had also become part of the discourse of responsible organisations. A “maternalistic” concern about people through “caring for children, caring for the world” gave sports organisations the possibility of contributing to global change with the actions all over the world by their foundations and corporate sponsors. Networking with other caring organisations¹⁸ is part of their strategy for improving the social and economic conditions of many people in different parts of the planet. In this part of the paper it is necessary to look at the values, actions and identities of these two football organisations to understand the true meaning and authenticity that lies behind their actions, and how the Qatar and the Emirates royal families can contribute to the well-being of the planet.

FC BARCELONA AND MANCHESTER CITY, TWO COMMITTED FOOTBALL TEAMS THROUGH THEIR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The histories of FC Barcelona and Manchester City vary as these two clubs have very different pasts concerning responsible actions. It is important to bear in mind the fact that FC Barcelona is owned by its almost 160,000 members (*socios*), who elect a management team every four years.¹⁹ The profits of this sports organisation are reinvested in the expansion of the club as the “owners” receive no dividend, and the management team is accountable to the *socios*. Qatar’s royal family does not own the team, as it does with Paris Saint Germain, so its interest to invest in the club is not only for economic profitability (as could happen with Qatar Airlines) but for building up their country’s brand image through sports. The FC Barcelona Foundation allows its corporate partners to contribute to the expansion and practice of corporate global responsibility with activities directed at local communities and children in many countries around the world. Children who project their lives onto the actions of their football heroes like Messi or Neymar, global sports role models who contribute also with their foundation to the improvement of the social conditions of poor people living in developing countries.

The FC Barcelona Foundation operates on different levels. A part of its activities is realised in Catalonia, in 60 schools and poor areas with cultural diversity and integration difficulties. Fifteen thousand students have participated in activities

¹⁸ Following the Blackwell Encyclopedia of Management, www.blackwellreference.com, a caring organisation is one whose values and practices are consistent with, and supportive of, an ethic of care. An ethic of care focuses on the self as connected to others, as Carol Gilligan points out in *In a Different Voice* (1982).

¹⁹ In the season 2013-2014, FC Barcelona had 153,458 members. 113,981 men (74,27%) and 39,477 women (25,73%). 59.948 lived in Barcelona and 80.130 in Catalonia. 13,380 lived outside Catalonia (ref. Memoria FC Barcelona, 2013-2014).

such as the “Barça Kids” project. The Foundation operates in 73 per cent of the territory. Sport is a great tool to educate children about responsible behaviour and giving them the motivation to become better citizens. The values promoted through its activities are strength, respect, team work, modesty and ambition. The activities of “*Joves Solidaris*” have involved 1,000 teenagers with more than 40 projects benefiting more than 100,000 children. More than 4,000 disabled children attended the FC Barcelona first team’s training session with more than 600 boys and girls meeting their heroes, the professional players. “Fútbol Net” has been teaching the Foundation values to 28,000 children in Catalonia and more than 100,000 around the world. The project “*Som el que mengem*” (we are what we eat) has promoted healthy eating habits to the 25,000 people (through access to the website someelquemangemfc.cat). For FC Barcelona, caring for children is a way of caring for the world from a responsible global perspective.

In 2014, FC Barcelona Foundation celebrated its 20th birthday. During these two decades this sport organisation has accomplished many responsible activities, most of them related to children and forging new alliances. On a larger scale, the

FC Barcelona Foundation is present in 70 locations and 30 countries around the world collaborating with other international organisations including UNICEF, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the International Olympic Committee, the *Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo* (BID), the *Fundación Leo Messi*, the *Instituto Proyecto Neymar Jr* (INJR) and the *Fundación Pies Descalzos* (founded by Shakira). Since its beginnings, the FC Barcelona Foundation can count more than 400,000 beneficiaries. The slogan “with values, you win” has been a driving force to involve boys and girls in education through sports with projects like FútbolNet which has had great success in Qatar, and also in other Middle East and African countries. The Caring Youth project has given teenagers the possibility to build up confidence, self-respect, creativity and entrepreneurship in many different places. The Foundation has a strong online presence. In the 2013/2014 season the Foundation Facebook had more than 515,000 friends, many of them caring for the activities and the values promoted by it.

FC Barcelona signed a six-year collaboration deal with Qatar Foundation in December 2010 worth 180 million euros (30 million every year starting in the season 2011-2012). The UNICEF logo was replaced by the Qatar Foundation logo on the club shirt, and two years later for Qatar Airways. The deal expires in 2016 and will probably not be renewed, as the brand image has suffered in the last few years due to international media accusations of Qatar financing terrorist groups, as well as the already mentioned exploitation of many emigrants living

there²⁰ and the corruption scandal that surrounded the election of Qatar for the World Cup in 2022. However, the Qatar Foundation excelled in higher education, sciences and community development, aspects that are also part of FC Barcelona activities. Founded in 1995 by the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the President is his second wife Mozah bin Nasser al-Missned. Half of the FC Barcelona *socios* agreed to end ties with Qatar (the Foundation as well as Qatar Airways), the sooner the better.

Manchester City has had a long history of struggle and recognition as an important team in England as their eternal rival, Manchester United, won most of the credit as the team of the city, and one of the best teams in England and the world of football (Shindler, 1998). For most of its supporters, following Manchester City has been like riding a gigantic 40-year roller coaster, as the club itself has repeatedly fallen, staggered, risen, and fallen even lower before rising once more (Shindler, 2012). The team was stricken by a disease that former player and manager, Joe Royle, termed “Cityitis”²¹, which can best be described as a fatal flaw all City teams have of shooting themselves in the foot and letting the fans down and in for another bout of depression; it is a kind of loser mentality that is aptly noted by the resonating phrase from City supporters, “typical City”, destined never to win, and always to lose out, and generally to United. In England following a football club is like being a tribe member, with rituals, songs and heroes²². To follow a football team is deeply engrained in British culture. It represents a need to belong, to belong to a club, to be part of a group. However, the Manchester City of 2015 is a club looking at financial security and a sustainable future. The supporters now are not only the 40,000+ from the local areas around Manchester who regularly attend the games; they are from all corners of the world. This is because the English Premier League has become a global brand, a global product, worth billions of pounds.

MANCHESTER CITY’S NEW BUSINESS AND RESPONSIBLE STRATEGIES

The overhaul of the club since Sheikh Mansour took over the reins in 2008, has been phenomenal. The colour blue hasn’t changed, but it is now synonymous with success, stability and perhaps more importantly, sustainability. All the reports from the City camp talk about the sustainable business model. But is there more to the investment? Why would a multi-billionaire Arab prince take over a relatively unsuccessful English football club? On a wider view the Arab

²⁰ More than 2,000 workers have died because of the heavy and unhealthy working conditions in the last few years building the infrastructures for the 2022 World Cup.

²¹ Colin Shindler, *Manchester City Ruined My Life*, Ch1.

²² ‘The Soccer Tribe’ by Desmond Morris, an analysis of the psychology and behaviour of sports fans.

states are taking over the sporting world in a big way — from TV sports rights (Bein sports) to hosting the World Cup in 2022, the Qatar F1, cycling and the prospective Olympics bid, plus the investment and partnerships at FCB, PSG, Malaga FC to name a few. According to the BBC, the purchase of City is simply one more acquisition and investment aiming to see the country through the inevitable post gas and oil period — when the current source of wealth runs out²³. The list of business deals, acquisitions and constructions around the globe as well as in the home UAE states of Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, is phenomenal — a new Louvre museum, a new Guggenheim, hosting a whole range of major sporting events, negotiated sponsorship and sports club deals from Melbourne to New York, via Milan, Manchester, London, Paris and Madrid.

When Sheikh Mansour bought the club, his advisor, Sulaiman Al Fahim, arrived from Dubai and made his boisterous comments that the new owner had unlimited wealth and could buy any player he wanted (Conn, 2013: 89-90). Al Fahim's bold and boisterous statements, bordering on arrogance, did not reveal Abu Dhabi in a positive light, and the current Chairman Kaldoon Al Mubarak was sent to replace him²⁴. Oil has generated incredible wealth into the UAE — an estimated 2.7m barrels a day, at \$100/barrel, means the country with a population of a mere 400,000 is earning something like \$100 billion per year — and this is just the oil, not the investments (Conn, 2013: 84). Al Mubarak has many functions today, and running Manchester City FC is only a minor role. Perhaps most interestingly, he chairs the EAA (Executive Affairs Authority), which provides key strategic advice to the Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohammed. One of the EAA's roles is to generate a vision for the country's development as far ahead as 2030. Put simply, this involves providing a brand image for Abu Dhabi through its diplomatic and international relations, such as its ties with the United Nations. The role is similar to that of a PR/image management consultancy. In a nutshell, the person responsible for the image of Abu Dhabi is also responsible for the image of Manchester City. Al Mubarak is at pains to point out through his interviews with City TV²⁵, City's in-house media channel, that when Sheikh Mansour purchased City, it was a private investment; he used his own personal funds, and the Abu Dhabi government did not buy Manchester City.

²³ Ben Smith writing for BBC Sport online, 24 November, 2014
<http://www.bbc.com/sport/0/football/30180206>

²⁴ Kaldoon Al Mubarak is a visible symbol of the reliability and assertiveness the club had been lacking for so long. Born and raised in Abu Dhabi, he studied in Boston before starting to work for the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

²⁵ Chairman interview appeared on City TV 19 May 2014 at 7.11pm
<http://www.mcfc.co.uk/citytv/interviews/2014/may/khaldoon-interview-i/>
<http://www.mcfc.co.uk/citytv/Interviews/2014/May/Khaldoon-Interview-II>

The Sheikh is first and foremost a fan of football; so, when the chance to buy a PL club arose, he could not resist. The Sheikh is already involved with Al Jazira FC in Abu Dhabi, but City is the real deal so to speak. Al Mubarak is clear and consistent on this point and cites the letter of introduction made available to City supporters at the time²⁶ that Sheikh Mansour is a football fan with a keen eye for business, and buying City offered a perfect investment opportunity in a growing football market:

He (Sheikh Mansour) is an astute businessman; he also believes you can create a value proposition in football that has not yet been accomplished... It's a great ride, a great journey, but there is also a business sense that we can create a franchise, a business, over years, which will create value and reap a long-term return (Conn, 2013: 91).

What is clear is that Manchester City has become a vehicle for the values of Abu Dhabi. The Chairman says that buying the club has brought so much more media attention than any of the other multi-million pound deals in which the Sheikh or the country has been involved. With the estimated £1 billion invested by Sheikh Mansour so far in the club, the measurable return recently published in *El Sport* indicates a fan base growth of 523 per cent — the highest of any club, doubling that of Bayern Munich (Jefferson, 2015)²⁷.

The City Of Manchester Stadium, built by the City Council, using £127m of public money, was one of the few positive points about the club when Kadoon Al Mubarak flew in to investigate what the Sheikh had actually bought. City did not have to spend anything on the stadium. The fact that the Council had a sustainable legacy for its Commonwealth stadium made the investment put into building it (with public money and lottery funding) worthwhile. The now named Etihad Stadium is surrounded with advertising to persuade viewers to ‘Visit Abu Dhabi’ where ‘tourists are welcome’ and to fly with Etihad Airways direct from Manchester. It is not aimed at the average spectator at City — it is aimed at the global audience. So if there is no success on the playing field, there is no audience for the ads — alongside the global brands Nike, Hays Employment, Nissan, there is a range of Abu Dhabi companies present: Etisalat, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa telecom company; the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix; Abar, an oil and gas investment company; and simply the country itself — Abu Dhabi, which ‘welcomes travellers’; and of course, you can fly there with Etihad Airways, itself

²⁶ Sheikh Mansour's « Letter of Introduction » available online : <http://www.mcfc.co.uk/news/club-news/archive/2008/september/a-letter-from-sheikh-mansour> (September 2008)

²⁷ “It is suggested that City have gained 72.5m more fans in China, 34.6m in Indonesia, 24.5m in Mexico and 10.1m in United Kingdom.” (Jefferson, 2015)

owned by the Al Nahyan family of Sheikh Mansour, as all state enterprises, which paid £350m for the ten-year deal to have its name on the shirts, the stadium and the new Academy. Interestingly, the Sheikh turned down the chance to buy the stadium outright and instead agreed to double the £2m per year fee paid to the council in order to allow the name to be changed to the Etihad Stadium - the naming rights of the stadium belonging to the City Council. Sheikh Mansour has his country's airline sponsor his own personal club.

Manchester City's business model, according to the Chairman, is on target and will break even by 2014, and be making a profit by 2015 because the investment is sustainable. The Council also entered into a deal with Mansour's Abu Dhabi United Group to build 6,000 new homes in a £1 billion deal. This is taking football to a new level as the Sheikh enters into a social redevelopment beyond sport. Sir Richard Leesen, the Manchester City Council leader said, "The planned transformation of the eastern edge of the City Centre is the single biggest residential investment Manchester has seen for a generation"²⁸ (Jupp, 2014). As David Conn points out, all this investment from an Abu Dhabi based multi-billionaire prince is set against a backdrop of a city where rate capping, cuts and a huge public spending decrease have decimated the city and its services over the past 10 years.

The English Indices of Deprivation published by the government in 2010 and due to be updated for the summer of 2015, ranks Manchester as the fourth most deprived local authority in England. So as the Commonwealth pool remains open, and the City Academy sets to flourish, local parks and pools are left unattended and closed (Conn, 2015: 321-2). The area of East Manchester has been a difficult area to invest in — even after the 2002 Games. The areas are poor, and with the recent recession, employment high. Thirty-two per cent of the population receives a welfare benefit of some kind, which is double the national average (for Manchester, as a whole, the figure is 22 per cent) (Conn, 2015: 323). The Abu Dhabi United Group investment really is welcome news for the city; and the revival package proposed by the Abu Dhabi United Group would appear much more savoury than the Super Casino project applied for and sanctioned by the City Council in 2008, which was thought better of by the then Labour government. The Sheikh, an extremely rare visitor to Manchester, has decided to pump £1 billion of his own personal wealth, whatever his motives,

²⁸ "Building thousands of quality new homes will be a fundamental part of our growth story and will deliver significant socioeconomic impact. We look forward to working with Abu Dhabi United Group to create a world-class exemplar of regeneration. ADUG, through Manchester City Football Club, has come to know Manchester City Council's vision for regeneration and its ability to deliver major initiatives effectively" (Jupp, 2014).

into one of the most deprived areas of England (Conn, 2013: 93)²⁹. Information taken from the website of the Urban Planning Council of Abu Dhabi certainly reads like the template for the transformation of Manchester City FC. The key word is sustainability — social, economic, social and cultural, with a plan of action to 2030³⁰.

Mansour confirmed he had a long-term vision for the club³¹. From a business perspective, in Mansour’s and Al Marabek’s world, everything is planned. The aim when taking over was to turn City into a successful team capable of regularly challenging for football’s biggest prizes. This required an initial investment of millions to refurbish the training facilities, set up a real business-like organisation, a professional company. Al Marabek was astounded at the lack of a human resources department or a financial officer, though the club employed 130 staff. The 2014 Annual Report³² states that City now employs 112 playing staff and 202 commercial and administration staff. City is also a global company today and worldwide employs 412 employees, with offices in New York, Melbourne and Kuala Lumpur. The business model by definition, therefore, is one of sustainability. It is an organic organisation and people-oriented, in typical Arab management style (Lewis, 2003). In his book, Lewis claimed that in order for the Western style management model to continue to succeed economically, it needed to adapt and adopt some of the values of the Arab, and Asian world

²⁹ Al Mubarak says quite clearly that the City investment is “telling a lot to the world about how we are...the true essence of who Abu Dhabi is and what Abu Dhabi is about. There is almost a personification of the values we hold as Abu Dhabi, with the values of the club and the values we would like to stick to. This is something new, something we didn’t really plan for, but is becoming an important part of this. The values are loyalty, commitment, discipline, long-term thinking...look at everything we do in Abu Dhabi; the respect side of it, the appreciation of history, understatement.”

³⁰ The UPC has developed the Abu Dhabi 2030 Urban Structure Framework Plan to optimize the city's development through a 25-year program of urban evolution. In doing so, it is laying the foundations for a socially cohesive and economically sustainable community that preserves the Emirate's unique cultural heritage. This foresight to plan for infrastructure ahead of time is a key example of visionary governance. See QGSDP (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning (2011), www.gsdp.gov.qa.

³¹ “[Chairman] Khaldoon [al-Mubarak] has spoken publicly about a 10-year horizon for the development of the club,” he said. “That kind of horizon has to be based on solid foundations and has to contribute to the soul of the club. The kind of investments we are making today will pay their own dividends over time through the club's performances. That will be its own reward.” July 1, 2009 <http://www.theguardian.com/football/2009/jul/01/sheikh-mansour-manchester-city>

³² Manchester City FC Annual Report 2013-14
:http://annualreport.mcfc.co.uk/?utm_source=vanity%20url%20for%201314%20annual%20report&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=1314%20annual%20report

in particular, with growing feminine values in masculine oriented societies³³. He probably never anticipated the arrival of the actual ownership of Western institutions and companies and football clubs to the extent we are seeing. Today everyone at City is involved, and has a deep sense of loyalty to the club. The old staff members were kept on and the fan-base harnessed into feeling a part of the project when Mansour took over. The fans have been involved via Twitter in voting for the man of the match in real time, to voting for the player of the month and contributing to the website. The fans were treated as valued members — first time ticket buyers were called up by an after-sales service to ask how the experience had been. Mansour and Al Marabek, and the then heads of football development (Cook and Marwood), certainly understood that without the fan base there is no football club (Conn, 2009)³⁴.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between Qatar and Paris Saint Germain (Dietschy, 2002) is not studied in this paper as the deal between the royal family and this Parisian sports organisation is more recent (Deloitte, 2015). It will be necessary to wait a few years to see how the very recent responsible actions of this new French football brand will have become more international and whether there is an increase in the number of global supporters. The idea of linking the PSG with the city of Paris is at the heart of the Qatar royal family's business strategy to expand in Europe (Kuypers/Szymanski, 1999). The Qatar royal family not only has the interest of investing in European sports, but also in recruiting coaches and players from European teams for their national sports competitions and the national team³⁵. This kind of strategy has allowed Qatar's sports and national teams to gain world recognition as well as international coverage, which reinforces the country's brand image in the Middle East and around the world.

Once the activities and commitments of the royal families from the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have been referred to as responsible corporate actions and behaviours, it is important to keep in mind the original purpose of this work, which is to try to determine whether the activities of the Qatar and Emirates

³³ See Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, <http://geert-hofstede.com>, and refer to Middle East Countries.

³⁴ "(The vision for the club) has to be based on solid foundations and has to contribute to the soul of the club. The kind of investments we are making today will pay their own dividends over time through the club's performances. That will be its own reward"

³⁵ It is the case of most of the players and the coach, Valerio Ribera (former coach of FC Barcelona and the Spanish national handball teams) defending Qatar's colours in the last world handball championship held in Qatar in 2015. The same is true of Raul González, the most emblematic player of Real Madrid, and Xavi Hernández, the greatest national FC Barcelona player in history, both hired by Al Sadd team for the 2015-2016 season.

royal families are honestly related to becoming responsible global leaders in countries with a long history of injustice, inequality and lack of democratic principles (Human Rights Watch, 2015)³⁶. The practice of global responsibility from the Qatar and Emirates elites would anticipate the emergence of an economy of “well-being” in the Middle East and not simply an economy of production and consumption of manufactured goods and “consent” (in reference to Noam Chomsky’s findings about the role of the media in developing a kind of thought control over the masses as the democratic systems do not prioritise the needy, with the expectation of voting for irresponsible leaders unconcerned with others)³⁷. If “green washing” has become a trade mark of many corporations dealing with corporate social responsibility, it is important to keep in mind the amount of control mechanisms and access to information we have today. This is a crucial factor considering the “true” social behaviour of many corporations, as media and the organised civil society (NGOs for instance) put strong pressure for accountability and ethical behaviour on these very same organisations Qatar and the Emirates operate. The fact that FC Barcelona is not renewing its sponsorship deal with Qatar in 2016 reflects the need for these two countries to make rapid change as the world media highlights immediately any wrong movement. If the oil industry is in a progressive recession, the only alternative for these countries is to clear the bad reputation related to CSR they have accumulated over the past decades with actions that make a clear statement about an emerging caring economy and solidarity. From this perspective, “green washing” does not seem an alternative for the royal families of Qatar and the Emirates to obtain sympathy from international public opinion (Advance Agenda, 2014). The responsible practices of sports organisations like FC Barcelona and Manchester City are factors to consider for the implementation of radical change in these societies in transition today.

³⁶The regulations governing the kafala (sponsorship) system, which operates in all of the states of the Gulf Cooperative Council, ties a foreign worker’s residence and work permit to his or her employer, or “sponsor,” and restricts a worker’s ability to change employers, on penalty of deportation. The initial purpose of the kafala system was to make Gulf nationals responsible for the conduct of the foreign workers they employed.¹⁷ Although it is not

codified into the UAE’s 1980 Labour Law, various Ministry of Labour resolutions outline the process for obtaining and transferring work permits for migrant workers (Human Rights Watch, 2015, pp.21-22)

³⁷ Mark Achbar, a Canadian filmmaker, analyses Chomskys’ ideas in *Manufacturing Consent. Noam Chomsky and the Media* (1992).

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