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## **Passion as former of choice: Analysis of the relationship marketing of Gremio Esportivo Brasil**

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## **PASSION AS FORMER OF CHOICE: ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP MARKETING OF GRÊMIO ESPORTIVO BRASIL**

### **Resumo**

O presente artigo visa analisar as estratégias de marketing de relacionamento empregadas pelo Grêmio Esportivo Brasil, com vista a avaliar os efeitos na conversão dos torcedores em sócios. O estudo também pretende analisar os efeitos que a aplicação do marketing de relacionamento pode gerar na retenção dos sócios e verificar a efetividade da estratégia utilizada na transformação dos torcedores atitudinais em torcedores comportamentais. Para alcançar os objetivos foram utilizados como instrumentos de coleta de dados entrevistas semiestruturadas com três dirigentes do clube e aplicados questionários a 181 associados, selecionados aleatoriamente. O estudo consiste em uma pesquisa cuja abordagem é mista. Trata-se de uma pesquisa que se classifica com relação aos objetivos em descritiva. Com relação aos procedimentos consiste em um estudo de caso e levantamento. Foi possível constatar a baixa percepção dos dirigentes do clube acerca das ferramentas do marketing de relacionamento, o que dificulta na conversão de torcedores em sócios. Além disso, se percebeu que o clube carece de monitoramento das estratégias de marketing implementadas.

**Palavras-chave:** Marketing de Relacionamento; Marketing Esportivo; Lealdade.

### **Abstract**

This article aims to analyze the relationship marketing strategies employed by Grêmio Esportivo Brasil, in view of assessing the effects on the conversion of the fans in affiliates. This study also aims to analyze the effects that the application of relationship marketing can generate in retention of members and verify the effectiveness of the strategy used in the transformation of attitudinal fans in behavioral fans. To achieve the objectives were used as instruments of data collection semi-structured interviews with three club directors and were applied questionnaires to 181 members, randomly selected. The study consists of a search which approach is mixed. This is a survey that ranks over goals as descriptive. Regarding the proceedings consists of a case study and research survey. It was found the low perception of the club leaders about relationship marketing tools, which hamper the conversion of fans in affiliates. Furthermore, it was realized that the club has an insufficient monitoring of the implemented marketing strategies.

**Keywords:** Relationship Marketing; Sports Marketing; Loyalty.



## **1 Introduction**

According Hutt & Speh (2011), relationship marketing is centered on all activities related to the establishment, development and maintenance of successful exchanges with customers and others. In football, relationship marketing is used to convert transactional exchanges between club and fans in collaborative exchanges.

Unlike a traditional exchange relation, a relationship between club and fan is not affected by the variable competition, since is assumed that the fan will not exchange club even if it is unhappy, however, it may fail to take advantage of the services offered by the club, not necessarily meaning an end to the club-supporter bond, a successful exchange, however, can start (or restart) a collaborative relationship.

Participative, motivational and financial support are the basis for the interest of the club in maintaining a social relationship. As to the member, the possibility of using the benefits from the association, the recognition and support to the organization are some of the main reasons to keep the monthly fee on-time.

With this study, sought to propose ideas that will add to the knowledge gained with the marketing strategies used by the club with the view to contribute to the development of knowledge in an area that is little studied in the up-country. As for academia, this research will be relevant to the extent that uses relevant theoretical frameworks to solve a practical problem, which involves the management of a small-town club.

This article sought 1) analyze the relationship marketing methods currently used by Grêmio Esportivo Brasil, to assess the effects on the conversion of the fans into associates, 2) evaluate the effects that the application of relationship marketing can generate in the retention of members and 3) assess the effectiveness of the strategies used in the conversion of attitudinal fans into behavioral fans.

At the end of the research, is expected to identify a list of variables and circumstances that can influence the conversion of attitudinal fans of a football club into associates, and thus favor the choice of new relationship marketing strategies by the leaders.

As regards the structural part of the work, it is divided into five chapters besides the present. The next section deals with the themes sports marketing, relationship marketing and loyalty. In the third section are presented the methodological procedures used for the development of research. The subsequent section adheres to the presentation, discussion and analysis of data. The fifth chapter is destined to the final considerations. At the end, the references used in the article are listed.

## **2 Theoretical framework**

This section refers to the different theoretical and conceptual approaches that guides the work, dealing with the following themes: sports marketing, relationship marketing and loyalty: historical and conceptual evolution, whose the basis authors are Tucker (1964), Wakefield & Sloan (1995) Neal (1999), Oliver (1999), Parvatiyar & Sheth (2000) Christopher, Payne & Ballantyne (2002), Melo Neto, (2003), Kotler & Armstrong (2005), Cobra (2008), Hutt & Speh (2011), Kotler & Keller (2012), Niver (2013), Elberse (2014), Gaspar et al. (2014), Mullin, Hardy & Sutton (2014).

### **2.1 Sports Marketing**

In the definition utilized by the American Marketing Association (2013), marketing is described as “a set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and



exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large". "[...] The aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous.", seeking the facilitation of exchanges between supplier and customer (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 5).

According to Cobra (2008), the role of marketing is to manage the demand for goods and services, stimulating their consumption by its intrinsic characteristics, meet the needs and desires of customers. Its essence is the process of exchange, in which two or more parts offer something of value to the other, in order to satisfy their needs and desires.

On the vision of Kotler & Armstrong (2005, p. 3), the marketing is understood as "social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want by creating and exchanging products and values with others."

Conceptually, marketing is any strategy used to promote something, its utilized in any type of business and is employee in order to facilitate the sale process, attract new customers or divulge something.

In the sports context, marketing gets the naming of "sports marketing" and has the following definition:

Sports marketing consists of all activities designed to meet the needs and wants of sports consumers through the exchange processes. Sports marketing has developed two major thrusts: marketing of sport products and services directly to consumers of sport, and the marketing of other consumer and industrial products or services through the use of sports promotions. (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014, p. 11).

As noted by the authors, sports marketing is subdivided into two areas by scholars: marketing of sport and marketing through sport, they are better conceptualized by Niver (2013) that defines the first as advertising and promotion of sports as a whole, and the second as the use of a sport or a sports figure to promote a product.

The purpose of sports marketing is directed to the establishment of a differential able to approach the consumer to the brand and product image with a low risk, lower cost and higher margin of success (Melo Neto, 2003).

The use of the brand related to the team for the promotion of products is already used by several sports teams, mostly European, which is highlighted the English club Manchester United Football Club, which is treated as a trademark by its leaders, according Elberse (2014), the value of its franchise in 2014 was of approximately two billion dollars, making it not only the world's most valuable football franchise, but also the most valuable in sports in general, numbers that are reflected in the field, allowing a consistency of results in the last 20 years, due to the amount generated by the use of the trademark, thus making it a world reference in sports marketing.

According to the authors Morgan & Summers (2008) apud Gaspar et al. (2014), the main characteristics that differs the sporting goods of others are basically the existence of high fluctuation in consumer demand for the sport, the intangibility, ephemerality, subjectivity, perishability and inseparability. Also, one must consider that the consumer experience occurs simultaneously with the production and consumption; with the publicly consumed product, and that customer satisfaction level is affected by their social life; there is a lack of control over the composition of the primary product; having universal appeal, reaching widely different aspects and approaches of consumer's personal life.

According Gaspar et al. (2014) the application of sports marketing in the country is getting up, as representative events with international recognition had Brazil as host country, as with the World Cup in 2014 and Summer Olympics Games (2016), which corroborates on the development of a promising future in the coming years.



As to the application of marketing strategies to attract new fans, it is worth to notice that does not reach its full effectiveness if only objectify an increase in membership. To be able to establish a long-term relationship between the club the new and existing members, is necessary to apply strategies known as "relationship marketing", which aims the attraction and, especially, the retention and maintenance of the consumer.

**Table 1: Recent national studies on the subject sports marketing**

Authors	Year	Objective
Zucco <i>et al.</i>	2015	Build and empirically test a model to explain the factors that influence the perception of sponsorship in the sports fans.
Minotti <i>et al.</i>	2015	Compare the similarities and differences between the marketing strategies of the NBA and LNB, with base and influence of its main stakeholders.
Garcia <i>et al.</i>	2015	Explore new sources of recipe, known as marketing innovations, of Sport Club Corinthians Paulista, from 2007 to 2012.
Ferreira & Medeiros	2015	Analyze the sports marketing proposal developed by Intelli Group opposing the management actions with people's perceptions about the brand and sports marketing in general.
Mielli & Mantovani	2014	Identify the relationship between the attitude and the involvement of the viewer with the 2014 World Cup held in Brazil.
Cardoso & Silveira	2014	Introduce the adoption of associate fan strategy as innovation with direct impact on billing of Brazilian football clubs.
Silva <i>et al.</i>	2014	Understand how the association of a brand to a football club is affected by the momentary condition of the team, and if the feeling that the fans have for the club influences the image of the advertised brand.
Fleury <i>et al.</i>	2014	Investigate the relation between the fan's presence in the stadium, which the involvement of fans with their football club, and its influence on the purchase of official products of the 12 largest Brazilian brands of football clubs.
Fleury, Brashear-Alejandro & Feldmann	2014	Present some theoretical considerations about the concepts involving the compound of sports marketing.
Butier & Levrini	2013	Identify key factors that influence low-income fans to purchase official textiles and licensed by an elite club of Brazilian football, apparently unviable for their purchase capacity.
Mazzei <i>et al.</i>	2013	Evaluation of scientific literature in sports marketing in Brazil.

Source: authors (2016).

As shown in Table 1, the researchs on sports marketing theme is very recent and is in its early stage in Brazil, still a field to be fully explored and investigated (Mazzei et al., 2013). In the search for recent articles, of the last four years (2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016) in national journals database (Spell) classified according to the QUALIS CAPES in A1, A2, B1, B2 and B3, where was filtered the keywords "sports marketing", there was only eleven (11) publications, indexed mostly in the magazine PODIUM Sport, Leisure and Tourism Review (72.7%) and the other articles in the magazine Revista Eletrônica de Estratégia & Negócios (9.1%), Future Studies Research Journal: Trends and Strategies (9.1%) and Revista Brasileira de Marketing (9.1%). It is worth noting that by the end of June 2016 were not found any works with this theme. Such researches has associated the theme "sports marketing", as shown in the table above, with the club performance, creation of management models, analysis of marketing strategies, retention and conversion of fans into associates and bibliometric studies of the area.





## **2.2 Marketing of relationship**

According to Christopher, Payne & Ballantyne (2002), one of the characteristics that differs relationship marketing of marketing, is that the former has greater focus on strategies to retain customers. Parvatiyar & Sheth (2000), and Hutt & Speh (2011) complement this statement to identify the purpose of relationship marketing as the development and maintenance of successful exchanges with customers and others, with a view to the long-term, it is used in the search for the consumer's loyalty and fidelity to a product or company, so that in the future there may occur a continuous repetition of exchanges. Keller and Kotler (2012) corroborate with this view, characterizing the relationship marketing as a tool utilized in order to build a long-term relationship between consumer and supplier in order that this one may profit and keep your business.

Relationship marketing in football seeks to integrate the associated in club day-to-day, and the satisfaction of this one, tends to increase the chances of staying on membership and ensure the club an increase in its variable income. The appreciation and recognition of the associated as a club patrimony establishes fidelity that is independent of the results of the team on the field. The participation of the associate in the organization's daily may lead to a sense of relevance and loyalty to the club, as the entity may benefit from word of mouth marketing from this satisfaction.

## **2.3 Loyalty**

### **2.3.1 Loyalty History**

According to Oliver (1999), the 1970s marked the beginning of modern characterization of loyalty, began to be considered not only as the successive repeat of purchases as was previously described, but as a behavioral attitude of the customer. Oliver (1999) also mentions that in the 1990s "began to appear cracks in the dynasty of satisfaction surveys", the time when companies started to stand out the loyalty in management decisions because of the importance found in the maintenance of trade, motivating, therefore, to a number of new studies on loyalty, this scenario which extends to the present day.

### **2.3.2 Definition of loyalty**

Oliver (1999) states that loyalty is a sense of deep commitment of the consumer to buy again the same product/service consistently in the future, even under the influence of marketing efforts with potential to cause a change in their purchasing behavior. Neal (1999) is emphatic by stating that loyalty is the proportion which a customer chooses the same product or service.

Tucker (1964) believes that when analyzing loyalty should not be take into consideration what the consumer thinks, he says that his behavior is the full statement of what is brand loyalty.

In the perception of Oliver (1999), loyalty is divided into four stages, where the first three are characteristics of an attitudinal consumer and the last one is of a behavioral:

- Cognitive loyalty: First phase of loyalty, where product attributes available to consumers indicate which brand is preferable to its alternatives. In this state of consumption, the transaction is a routine, therefore, there is no measure of satisfaction.
- Affective loyalty: Second stage of loyalty, related to the sympathy with the brand, is developed through constant accumulation of satisfactory use situations. While



cognition is directly target of counter argument, the affection is not easily removed. However, as the cognitive, this form of loyalty remains subject to exchange.

- Conative loyalty: Third phase of loyalty, related to motivation, is reached after repeated episodes of successful affection towards the brand. Conation, by definition, implies in a repurchase of a specific brand.
- Action: Deeper stage of loyalty, is related to the action of rebuy, is achieved when there is in the consumer a desire to overcome any obstacles that might prevent the purchase.

For Wakefield & Sloan (1995), loyalty in sports is defined as a devotion to a team, that develops over time. For these authors, a loyal fan will not leave the club even after repeated cases of dissatisfaction.

The fan loyalty is firm in the association between him and the club, the maximum demonstration of loyalty of a sports consumer. By signing the association, the club will guarantee that your consumer will have bigger presence in the stadium, will share part of their monthly income with the organization and disclose, even involuntarily, the brand of the club.

### **3 Methodology**

This research is defined by a quantitative and qualitative approach, developed through case study with descriptive character and survey research. To obtain the data and information, this study occurred through a literature review and the application of a questionnaire with 181 members and associates, and was realized interviews with three officers of the club Grêmio Esportivo Brasil.

In qualitative research "the natural environment is the direct source for data collection and researcher is the key tool" (Kauark, Manhães, & Medeiros, 2010, p. 26), while the quantitative approach "considers what can be quantifiable, which means translate into numbers opinions and information to classify and analyze them." (Kauark, Manhães, & Medeiros, 2016, p. 26-27).

Regarding the instruments of data collection, these consisted of interviews and application of questionnaires. According to Gil (2008, p. 109), the interview is a "technique in which the researcher presents himself to the investigated and makes him questions, with the purpose of obtaining data which interests to the research". The questionnaire is a "investigative technique that consists of a set of questions that are submitted to the people for the purpose of accumulate of information about his knowledge, beliefs, feelings, [...] present or past, etc." (Gil, 2008, p. 121).

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Pelotas/RS, site of the club, in the months of April and May 2016, with three leaders of Grêmio Esportivo Brasil: two ex-presidents and current leaders related to the areas of marketing and legal department of the association and one leader on the communication of the club, both referenced in the data description as E1, E2 and E3. The questions were designed with the intention of identifying the relationship marketing strategies employed by the club to attract new members in order to allow comparison between the responses of associates. The interviews were recorded in multimedia resource, with duration of approximately 77 (seventy-seven) minutes and transcribed to perform the triangulation of data.

The quantitative questionnaire, which consists of 15 questions, was applied to a sample of 181 associates of the club randomly selected via the Internet through Google Forms tool, during the month of May 2016. It was considered a reliability level of 95% with an error margin of 7.15%, in an universe of about 5,000 associates, in order to analyze the reasons that led fans to join the social plan. It is underlined that the instrument was previously tested in a



deliberate sample of 10 associates known of the authors. The purpose of the test was to evaluate the response time of the associates and receive feedback regarding the same in relation to the quality and complexity of the questions, and identify possible errors. Validated, the instrument was submitted to the response of the sample population.

Finally, in relation to the objectives to be achieved, is proposed the Table 2, which aims to demonstrate the methodology and characteristics of the work.

**Table 2: Methodology and characteristics of the work**

<b>Research objectives</b>	<b>Source of data collection</b>	<b>Aspects addressed</b>	<b>Systematization of information</b>	<b>Ground rules for analysis</b>
Analyze the relationship marketing methods currently used by Grêmio Esportivo Brasil, to assess the effects on the conversion of the fans into associates	Conducting interviews with key informants and a questionnaire with associates.	Generalist approach about relationship marketing and customer retention (associates).	Tables and descriptive analysis.	Parvatiyar & Sheth (2000) Cristopher, Payne & Ballantyne (2002)
Evaluate the effects that the application of relationship marketing can generate in the retention of members	Application of questionnaires to associates.	Customer retention (associates).	Tables, figures and descriptive analysis.	Oliver (1999) Cristopher, Payne & Ballantyne (2002) Kotler e Armstrong (2005)
Assess the effectiveness of the strategies used in the conversion of attitudinal fans into behavioral fans	Conducting interviews with key informants and a questionnaire with associates.	Behavior, satisfaction, customer loyalty (associates).	Tables, figures and descriptive analysis.	Oliver (1999) Cristopher, Payne & Ballantyne (2002) Kotler & Armstrong (2005)

Source: authors (2016).

Thus, as shown in Table 2, in order to systematize the information, will be presented figures and tables from each objective proposed by this work, and a group of authors who served as basis rules for analysis.

## **4 Analysis of results**

This section presents the historical context of the organization, the object of study, the sports club Grêmio Esportivo Brasil, as well as the survey data and main inferences, distributed into two subsections.

### **4.1 The club in the perception of directors**

Founded on September 7, 1911, with the name of Gremio Sportivo Brasil in the city of Pelotas/RS by Breno Corrêa da Silva and Salustiano Brito, the club is known nationally as "Xavante" (name that was the source to create the club mascot, an Indian Xavante), is known also as "Rubro-Negro" in reference to the red and black colors, predominant in its uniform.

The club has accumulated relevant achievements during its history, as it was the first champion on Rio Grande do Sul championship, in 1919, over the Grêmio Foot-Ball Porto Alegrense in Porto Alegre, by defeating in 1950 the Uruguayan team that would be the world champion on the same year, and when achieved the third place in the Brazilian championship





in 1985, after eliminating in the quarterfinals the Clube de Regatas do Flamengo, team that was Brazilian champion in 1983 and led in the field by Zico, greatest player in the history of sports club of Rio de Janeiro. Currently, the club is more recognized nationally by the passion of its fans for the club, which supports it in any circumstances.

On 15 January, 2009, however, the club was marked by an accident with the bus of the delegation, which killed the trainer Giovani Guimarães, the players Régis Gouveia, and the biggest idol and scorer in the history of the club, the Uruguayan Claudio Milar. The accident, which shocked the country, disrupted the club, which was demoted to the second division of the regional championship in that year, returning to the elite of this championship only in 2014, since then the club has acquired consecutive ascents, reaching currently the second division of the national football championship and remaining in the first division of regional championship.

According to data released by the organization in June 2016, the club had 5,000 members, of which 91.8% are compliant. The interviewed E3 believes that the decrease on the number of associates in recent years, are due primarily to three factors: the economic crisis which the country faces, the interdiction of the stadium since February 2015 and the ease, convenience and lower cost of watching the games on television.

E2 and E3 believe that membership fluctuates due mainly according the club performance at the regional or national championships, stating that is not related to strategies applied in order to retain the associated. Respondents emphasized that the increase in the past two years occurred due to the positive performance of the club in the field.

In the perception of E2, that relationship should be different, and the club should try to reduce the dependence of the results to keep your associates. It became clear in the interview the placement of respondents E2 and E3, believing that it is necessary that the club formulates new strategies that show the value of the association to the fans.

The club has four modes of association: (1) the mode "Sócio Xavante Torcedor", whose contribution is R\$ 60.00 (sixty reais) per month and destined for fans seeking access to games with a lower value that is charged for the ticket; (2) "Sócio Xavante Sempre" with monthly fee of R\$ 50.00 (fifty reais), indicated for underage fans; (3) "Sócio Xavante Cadeira Cativeira" with the rate of R\$ 130.00 (one hundred and thirty reais) per month, which guarantees access to social chairs of stadium on game days and (4) "Sócio Xavante Colaborador" in R\$ 19.90 (nineteen reais and ninety cents) per month, which gives the possibility to the associate to use the advantages and promotions offered by the other plans, but does not allow free access to the stadium on game days.

Regarding the perception of managers about relationship marketing, Table 3 presents the findings of the interviewees.

**Table 3: Perception of interviewed about the relationship marketing**

<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Vision of the interviewed</b>
<b>E1</b>	[...] Relationship marketing are all actions that the club will do to [...] reach their target audience. [...] is to make the club relates to your target audience. [...] strategies that the club will adopt mainly [...] to present the institution to its stakeholders. [...] the form that the club will organize and take care of your image.
<b>E2</b>	I think the relationship marketing is directly linked to the partner's call to this membership base, the relationship of club with the associates and particularly what we (the club) has to offer to the partners in addition to the result on the field, the presence in the games, of course, to principle, in my understanding is what keeps the social plan today, [...] I think we (the club) had to work harder for the partner was not there as [...] is today, depending almost exclusively of the result of the game. [...]From there who is on membership base, the vast majority came from the result on the field when in fact, the result on the field should come packaged by strong partner's membership.

**E3**

The perception I have of relationship marketing is not only involving Brasil (the club), but my professional activity, that I hold for over 26 years ... I think today the market with the current crisis, demands that thou goest beyond to create an innovation, that thou goest beyond create a good publicity, you must first take a commitment to the customer outcome that you serve... I think that today, the network that is more or less it, is a big differential in sense to add value to you, an opportunity, in negotiations and have an opportunity to buy or sell. I see the relationship as the main factor today, even directed the marketing for that may through this network that you create, with different segments and different people to achieve the goal. I think this has an importance, especially in the current market.

Source: authors (2016).

Through the analysis Table 3, it is noticed that the perception of E2 about relationship marketing is the closest to the findings of Parvatiyar & Sheth (2000) and Hutt & Speh (2011). The vision of E1 is more general and presents a concept more approximated to the central concepts of marketing (Kotler & Armstrong, 2005). In the case of E3, it was realized that the respondent failed to formulate a consistent concept on the subject and their perception not converged with the study of the fundamental authors.

**Table 4: Marketing strategies and actions aiming the relationship developed by the club**

Interviewed	Vision of the interviewed
<b>E1</b>	Principal among them [...] sites and social networking, also invests in advertising campaigns in conventional vehicles. [...] the marketing strategies [...] are geared [...] to fans have the understanding that he as associated guarantees a monthly income will enable the investments that the club has done in recent years. [...] The associated pays 60 reais a month and the ticket value is also 60 reais, so, with a monthly fee he watches four games and with a ticket he watches one, then it is a matter of cost-effective to the fan and to the club. [...] Make the associated to understand that he [...] is who will keep the club with your financial operation in a way [...] less defective.
<b>E2</b>	I think much of what we (club) had of increase in membership is the result on the field. I do not believe that acts a significant percentage of the associated adhesions due to marketing strategies. With the arrival of the "X" (responsible for marketing department and owner of third party company) improved a lot of things [...] in relation to the relationship, the contact with associates through social networks, the site of the club, a direct mail which is made through cadastral information. [...] It seems to me that there is still lacks of something that calls the associated beyond the field result.
<b>E3</b>	Approaching the fans through his passion, awakening his passion for the club with promotions that gave to him a profit opportunity. [...] looking for promotions, things that encourage him to join the social plan, but mostly, rescue his passion for the club is a differentiator at a time that are not winning on the field, because when you're winning on the field, all flows to the natural, now when you're not winning, you have to find mechanisms to associates helps you. We have social networks, which provide an almost daily interaction with the fans.

Source: authors (2016).

When asked about the marketing strategies used by the club, as shown in Table 4, E1 and E3 mentioned that the main strategy used by the club currently is the interactivity with fans through social networks. E1 also cites the that is used traditional media for divulgation (radio, newspapers and television) and E2 reports that is realized direct mail using the data of the fans, obtained at the time of the association.

The marketing strategies of the club are made by a third party company that provides free promotion service to the club under contract, as inform E2 and E3. The interviewed E1 mentions that the club has a marketing department, which the owner of the third party marketing company participates. The E1 and E3 respondents said that the marketing department of the club also receives ideas originated from other sectors of the club and of the



fans, while the third party company has the responsibility over the improvement of such ideas, competing to the marketing and administrative departments abide by them, implement them or not.

According E1, the marketing strategies currently applied by the club are made in a widespread way, but believes it would be more effective if they were targeted. The respondent E2 corroborates this view by stating that the analysis of the socioeconomic profile of the associate could generate improvements in the marketing strategies of the club, as well as the use of surveys to measure the associate satisfaction. These statements run counter to the thinking of E3, which believes that strategies must be formulated in general, without trace any profile of the associate profile.

As for the marketing information system (MIS), all interviewees have ratified that there is a database with basic information about the associate, which are acquired by completing the registration form at the time of the association. According E2 and E3, such information is used for sending promotions to members via direct mail and in the contact with them. The interviewed E1 believes that the data from the cadastral associate database can trace the associated profile, but such data are not used for this purpose. E3 reports that the club not does surveys to trace the associated profile for lack of financial resources, preventing the club from hiring a company to conduct this research. For the respondent, the club is in a difficult financial situation, however, in the future, if the club stabilizes it, considers essential to carry out such research.

**Table 5: Monitoring of the *marketing* actions versus the satisfaction of the associates**

Interviewed	Vision of the interviewed
E1	Do not, never seen, nor had access to none of this, do not know if the "X" (responsible for department marketing and owner of third party company, service provider in that area) do externally, but here at the club since I'm [...] inserted in the marketing department to give aid, it does not have anything formal with statistical data.
E2	I believe it is not done, it is much more made by the manifestation of sampling in social network, direct contact with the public and fans, but certainly something in this direction is made by the "Company Y" (third party company of marketing area that provides services to the club), to know the audience that's being hit and how could satisfy or improve the relationship with the club with it.
E3	Yes, by the participation of "X". Today in this attempt to professional management, we have a person there (in the club) that makes this [...] analysis, the monitoring that goes on every day and we act as a supervisor.

Source: authors (2016).

According to the analysis of Table 5, the interviewed E3 cites that exists a measurement of the associate satisfaction with the marketing strategies applied by the marketing sector of the club, which then relays this information to the third party company in charge of the club's marketing to analyze it. Interviewees are unanimous in mentioning that the club does not assess formally the effectiveness of strategies due to the lack of carrying out survey of the expectations of the associates.

According E2 and E3, there is the informal measurement of the variation of the size of the membership base, through the analysis of data in the general cadastral database. E1 confirms this information. Mentions, also, that it is impossible to quantify accurately the number of fans of the club, preventing the use of a statistical method to evaluate the variation of the membership and data respective to the conversion of the fans. This perception, and without the use of marketing surveys makes fragile the effectiveness of marketing strategies in the process of making managerial decisions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2005).



## 4.2 Perception of associate

Regarding the characterization of the sample of 181 respondents, associated supporters of club Grêmio Esportivo Brasil, 76% are male and 24% female. From the randomly selected sample population, the majority, 33% of respondents are young people aged between 18 and 24 years old. The remaining respondents were organized according to age group: 8% under 18, 19% between 25 and 30, 21% are aged between 31 and 40, 9% between 41 and 50 and 10% have more than 50 years.

Concerning the social plan, 75% are classified as "Sócio Xavante Torcedor," with monthly fee of US\$ 18.31 (R\$ 60.00); 14% "Sócio Xavante Sempre," monthly fee of US\$ 15.26 (R\$ 50.00); 10% "Sócio Xavante Cadeira Cativa" monthly fee of US\$ 39.68 (R\$ 130.00) and 1% "Sócio Xavante Colaborador" with monthly fee of US\$ 6.07 (R\$ 19.90)<sup>1</sup>.

As regards the association time, 42% are associated for more than six years, data which reveals fidelity of almost half of the sample, even with the bad results of the team between 2009 and 2012; 33% are associated between one and three years, which matches with access to the third division of the national championship and third places achieved in the regional championship in 2014 and 2015; 22% have become associates between three and six years ago, during the time where the club ascended to the first division of the regional, and only 3% are associated with less than a year, showing that access to the second division in the national games has impacted only a little on membership, unlike the perception of interviewees.

From the analysis of the frequencies, shown in Table 6, were identified that only four alternatives were below the arithmetic mean. The results showed that the highest mean is related to a benefit to the club "became associate to financially help the club" (average 4.62), in sequence, the three biggest averages are related to benefits to the associated himself "became associate because considers go to the stadium a good leisure option" (average 4.15), "became associate to have free access to the games" (average 4.06) and "became associate, because considers that the value of the monthly fee is more worth than the ticket" (average 3.76). The lowest average alternatives, "became an associate with some influence of the media" and "became associated because of club performance on the field" show aversion of the associate to be framed in characteristics that are commonly referred to attitudinal fans.

A curious fact is found relative to the alternative "became affiliate under influence of other people", where 65% of the members consider that were not influenced by others in their decision to become associate. At the same time, was noticed a contradiction in the answers, because, of these, 68% answered "Family" or "Friend" alternatives in the question "How do you has obtained knowledge about the social plan?" which makes an incoherency on the answers, data that supports the theory that fans consider this hypothesis as pejorative, having aversion to any signs that may characterize them as attitudinal fans, even if it is true.

It is worth noting that 82% of associates responded that there was no influence by the results of the club on the games and only 9% believe that influenced somehow on the decision to become associated.

<sup>1</sup> For conversion of the dollar, we used the "currency converter" feature. Dollar quotation day R\$ 3,2744, retrieved Sep 11, 2016, from: <http://g1.globo.com/economia/mercados/cotacoes/moedas/>.





Table 6: Reasons for the fans to become affiliates

Reasons for the fans to become affiliates											
Scale items: Became a affiliates because...	I strongly disagree		I disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		I agree		I totally agree		Medi -a
	1		2		3		4		5		
	A. F.	R. F.	A. F.	R. F.	A. F.	R. F.	A.F.	R. F.	A.F.	R. F.	
...considers go to the stadium a good leisure option.	9	5.0%	6	3.3%	22	12.2 %	55	30.4 %	89	49.2 %	4.15
...with some influence of the media	68	37.6%	50	27.6 %	21	11.6 %	30	16.6 %	12	6.6%	2.27
...to join the crowd	48	26.5%	32	17.7 %	22	12.2 %	33	18.2 %	46	25.4 %	2.98
...under media influence	111	61.3%	46	25.4 %	15	8.3%	5	2.8%	4	2.2%	1.59
...to assist successful players	82	45.3%	35	19.3 %	40	22.1 %	15	8.3%	9	5.0%	2.08
...to attend national competitions	64	35.4%	31	17.1 %	34	18.8 %	31	17.1 %	21	11.6 %	2.52
...the club of the club	110	60.8%	39	21.5 %	17	9.4%	12	6.6%	3	1.7%	1.67
...to have free access to the games	16	8.8%	12	6.6%	12	6.6%	47	26.0 %	94	51.9 %	4.06
...to financially help the club	3	1.7%	3	1.7%	8	4.4%	32	17.7 %	135	74.6 %	4.62
...considers that the value of the monthly fee is more worth than the ticket	20	11.0%	15	8.3%	24	13.3 %	51	28.2 %	71	39.2 %	3.76

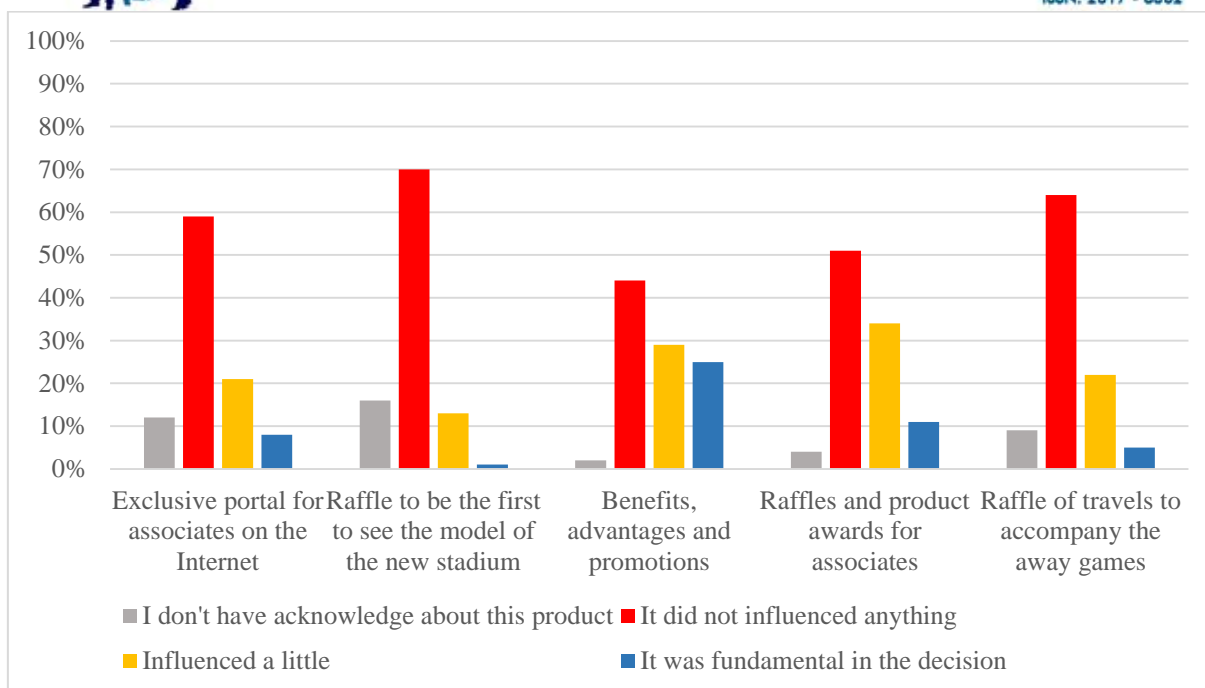
Note: A. F. – Absolute Frequency

R. F. – Relative Frequency

Source: authors (2016).

Between relationship marketing strategies analyzed, it was found that the highest percentage of members considered that was not influenced by these in their decision to join in the membership. Among the strategies analyzed, stands out "Benefits, advantages and offers", where the portion that was influenced of this share was 25% who consider it important and 29% who answered that there was some influence, against 44% who said they did not suffered any influence. The interviewees E2 and E3 are aware of the importance of this action, they commented that offering discounts on partner networks is a necessary strategy to enhance the social plan, so that the club does not become dependent solely on results on the field for the retention of associates.





**Figure 1. Influence of marketing strategies Gremio Esportivo Brasil in the conversion of associate**  
Source: authors (2016).

Through the above, it is identified that a portion of the associates are unaware about the marketing actions employed by the club in their direction, this occurs due to the club not perform any satisfaction surveys of associates and about the effectiveness of the strategies, as confirmed by the leaders, preventing them of become aware of this fact. It also demonstrated, in the exposed data, that if the club utilizes the analyzed strategies with view to the conversion of the fans, they are not being effective.

## 5 Final considerations

This study was conducted with the objective of analyzing the relationship marketing methods currently used by Grêmio Esportivo Brasil, to assess the effects on the conversion of the fans into associates, evaluate the effects that the application of relationship marketing can generate in the retention of members, and assess the effectiveness of the strategies used in the conversion of attitudinal fans into behavioral fans. Through the data analysis, it is considered that both goals were achieved.

It has been found that the club is currently experiencing a professionalization stage, which directly affects its marketing department, which is in the structuring phase and applying marketing strategies in a professionalized form, although incipient, despite the awareness of the leaders of the importance of these on the retention of members. It was noticed, also, that the club suffers negative influence by the scarcity of financial resources and physical space currently, preventing them from giving a greater focus on creation and implementation of new strategies.

It was found that the marketing strategies currently adopted by the club have no expression in reference to behavior of the fans in the decision to associate, which suggests that his main motivation for becoming an associate is the feeling of loyalty towards the club. However, is important to emphasize that marketing strategies are relevant in order to create value to the social plan.



The club has a representative membership base with more than six years of association (about half of total number of associates), showing great loyalty to the organization, may include such fans to the stage of "action" proposed by Oliver (1999), deeper stage of loyalty.

The results were relevant in order to enable to have a sense of the importance of relationship marketing given by management, to identify the strategies that are currently being used and to evaluate the perception of associate on this phenomenon. In practice, this research is relevant to the club, because it shows the reasons why a supporter joins to the association and draws a profile of the associate of the club.

The study limitations are given due to the lack of robust secondary information about demographics and psychographic data of the associates and the lack of preliminary studies with the club.

It is recommended for future studies, the proposition of models of marketing strategies to the club, as is perceived a lack experience of leaders in relation to the theme, as well the realization of levy of psychographic data of the fans. In addition, are suggested the application of the study in potentially larger samples, using resources and technical statistics more robust, in order to contribute to advances in comparative research, including among clubs in the region. Another possibility is the inclusion of other stakeholders in the research, citing potential supporters, opinion makers, members of the local community in order to achieve broad diagnosis of reality about the relationship management of the club front the fans.

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