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## **MECHANISM OF SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE MARKETING OF SPORTS INDUSTRY BRANDS**

**Summary.** *Introduction. The article raises the actual issue of the transformation of social responsibility of brands under external pressure from society, which is manifested in the shift of emphasis from conceptual principles to the achievement of business goals with the tools of social responsibility. The social responsibility of sports industry brands was chosen as the object of research due to the dualistic nature of sport, which can be both a product and a tool of social responsibility. The subject of the study is the mechanism of socially responsible marketing, as the latter provides prospects for solving the problem of balancing the goals of social impact and commercial goals.*

*The purpose of the article is to justify the mechanism of socially responsible marketing of sports industry brands.*

*Research materials were scientific works in the field of social responsibility, in particular, in the sports industry, and the author's own research. The main methods used in the work are structural-genetic and morphological analysis and synthesis, comparison, generalization, logical and graphic methods.*

*Results. The article states the problem of increased risks of mistrust and dissatisfaction on the part of stakeholders due to the interweaving of social*

*responsibility and commercialization in the activities of brands, in particular, in the sports industry. It is hypothesized that strategic responsibility as a part of the brand development plan based on the implementation of an improved mechanism of socially responsible marketing will allow to reconcile the company's economic goals, the wishes and expectations of stakeholders and ensure the long-term interests of society. Based on the analysis of the components of the existing mechanisms of social responsibility, their connections and the specifics of sports, the key requirements for the mechanism of socially responsible marketing of sports industry brands were determined. The essence of the mechanism of socially responsible marketing of sports industry brands is revealed and its structural scheme is proposed. The main operating principle of the improved mechanism has been defined, the formation and implementation of which will allow sports industry brands to achieve commercial success while positively influencing society and the environment.*

*Prospects for further research – the systematization of socially responsible marketing tools and the development of standardized criteria for measuring the impact of social responsibility initiatives in the sports industry.*

**Key words:** *social responsibility, stakeholders, strategic responsibility, marketing, mechanism, brand, sport.*

**Formulation of the problem.** Over the years, the rethinking of business philosophy and principles has turned into sustainable trends of implementing social initiatives of enterprises in their development strategy. The specifics of various markets, industries and areas of business leave a unique imprint on these processes, causing scientific and practical interest. The relevance of socially responsible marketing is also determined by the growing consumer demand for ethical business practices, the increasing significance of social responsibility in brand reputation and the formation of consumer loyalty. In these conditions, there is a shift in emphasis from conceptual principles to achieving business

goals with social responsibility tools in the mechanisms of social responsibility implementation. Altruism yields to external pressure and corporate social responsibility is formed under the influence of customer feedback, government orders, public perception, etc. [1].

The sports industry is especially sensitive in this sense, because on the one hand, sport acts as its system-forming element (starting with the promotion of physical culture and ending with the production of sports goods), on the other hand, it is used as a programmatic component of social responsibility of enterprises of various industries. Therefore, there is a tendency to decrease the ethical, positive use of sports to solve various problems of society. Philanthropy and broad opportunities for social influence are increasingly replaced by attempts to solve organizational problems, which affects the legitimacy of the sports movement and undermines trust in social responsibility [2]. This requires a review of the current mechanisms of social responsibility in order to strategically balance the social and business components in the activities of enterprises, in particular, the timely coordination of goals, ethics, strategic development guidelines, etc. with the expectations of stakeholders.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The mechanisms of formation and implementation of social responsibility were studied by foreign and domestic scientists, whose work formed a solid foundation for the development of strategies that integrate ethical practices into business operations. T. Bondaruk and I. Bondaruk [3] reveal the essence of the organizational and economic mechanism of social responsibility and prove that the economic basis of the mechanism of regulation of social responsibility of business consists of state regulation, joint regulation and self-regulation of social responsibility of business. O. Popadiuk and O. Luchyk [4] summarized the main provisions regarding the formation of the principles and mechanism of social responsibility in the conditions of strategic management of the enterprise. M. Buhaieva and V. Ryban [5] substantiated the content and sequence of stages of

formation of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) mechanism in the enterprise management system. A. Goswami, K. O'Brien, K. Dawson, and M. Hardiman [6] based on the definition of the mechanisms of corporate social responsibility and its relationship with the variables of micro-organizations, suggest using appropriate programs to improve the perception of social responsibility. H. Tian and Y.F. Jiang [7] studied the dynamic mechanism of corporate social responsibility practice. O. Getman and K. Kosohor [8] proposed a generalized mechanism of social responsibility for domestic enterprises based on the experience of foreign practices. Van der Merwe J., Al Achkar Z. [9] raise the issue of implementing mechanisms of CSR for the implementation of responsible data use. At the same time, in the current conditions, insufficient attention is paid to the mechanisms of socially responsible marketing, the very nature of which, according to the model of G. Lantos [10], is able to ensure the balancing and coordination of the economic goals of the company and the long-term interests of society. Since marketing has completely proven the success of consumer research for the effective operation of companies, a similar focus on the expectations of a wider group of stakeholders, taking into account the specifics of the sports industry, can reduce the growing gap between society and business.

**The purpose** of the article is to substantiate the mechanism of socially responsible marketing of sports industry brands.

**Materials and methods.** Research materials were scientific works in the field of social responsibility, in particular, in the sports industry, and the author's own research. The main methods used in the work are structural-genetic and morphological analysis and synthesis, comparison, generalization, logical and graphic methods.

**Presenting main material.** The specifics of the sports industry and the features of social responsibility in this area were studied in detail in [11], at the same time, the evolution of the sports industry makes adjustments to the

activities of organizations and their social responsibility. Thus, volunteer-run sports associations that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century have grown into international sports federations – highly professional organizations, the largest of which employ up to 700 employees (e.g., FIFA). While the primary role of such organizations is to develop their sport internationally, many are increasingly becoming more business-oriented and commercializing their events. For some, organizing events has become the main activity and a real business with the participation of numerous commercial partners [12]. On the other hand, companies of various business spheres, using event marketing as a promising component of CSR programs, often turn to the organization and support of sports events, which are organic information sources for news stories and publications in the media [13]. The interweaving of social responsibility and commercialization increases the risks of mistrust on the part of stakeholders, can lead to corruption, bribery, misconduct, etc. For example, in the public sector of the sports industry, there are known cases of protests against spending public money on stadiums, and not on social security [14].

In this aspect, strategic responsibility, which includes ethical and altruistic, becomes a part of the company's development plan [10] and is implemented with the help of socially responsible marketing, which involves building a system of the company's market activity based on the balancing and coordination of such factors as the achievement of economic goals companies, meeting the needs of consumers and ensuring the long-term interests of society. This is a kind of applied embodiment of the concept of corporate social responsibility, focused on the formation of long-term partnership relations with its consumers through the satisfaction of their needs and interests in a way that will have a long-term positive effect both for their well-being and the well-being of society as a whole, as well as for the financial and market position companies [15]. The determination of the main components of the mechanism of socially responsible marketing of brands in the sports industry is based on the content of

the social responsibility of these brands, formed in the specific conditions of the industry, takes into account the results of previous studies [3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16-18] regarding structural and logical schemes of similar mechanisms, principles, motives and tools. The mechanism of social responsibility should take into account not only the interests of stakeholders, but also the specifics of the company or organization in the sports industry, in particular, quasi-markets, because the activities of, for example, a manufacturer of sports nutrition, a fitness club and a football league are fundamentally different. At the same time, the impact of sports brands on society can contribute to sustainable development, inclusive growth and positive economic, social and environmental outcomes [19]. A dualistic approach to sport allows us to understand and use it in two different but interrelated ways: as a product and as a tool of social responsibility (Table 1).

*Table 1*

**Theoretical and functional analysis of sport**

Parameter	Sport as a product	Sport as a tool of social responsibility
Essence	Refers to the commercial aspect of sports, including sporting events, merchandise, equipment, media rights and related services. Focused on making a profit, satisfying consumer demand and providing entertainment and leisure	It involves the use of sport as a means to achieve wider social goals such as community development, health promotion, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Focused on using the power of sport to solve societal problems and promote the common good
Aims	Revenue generation (increased sales of tickets, merchandise and media rights). Market share (expansion of market coverage and customer base). Consumer satisfaction (increasing brand loyalty)	Social impact (improvement of health, education and community cohesion). Inclusiveness (promoting diversity and inclusion in sport and society). Ecological development (solving environmental problems with the help of ecological practices in sports operations)
Values	Economic value (direct financial benefits through sales, sponsorship and media rights). Market Performance (success is measured by revenue, market share and profitability)	Social value (indirect benefits such as improved health care, social cohesion and environmental protection). Impact indicators: success measured by social impact indicators such as health outcomes, participation rates and environmental indicators
Stakeholders	Consumers: fans, athletes,	Communities: local residents, schools,

	sponsors, media, etc. Businesses: Sports teams, leagues, equipment manufacturers, broadcasters and retailers, etc.	non-profit organizations and marginalized groups, etc. Government: Politicians, health organizations and environmental groups, etc. Employees and volunteers: those involved in the implementation of CSR initiatives, etc.
Marketing strategies	Branding and promotion, product differentiation	Target marketing, educational campaigns, etc.

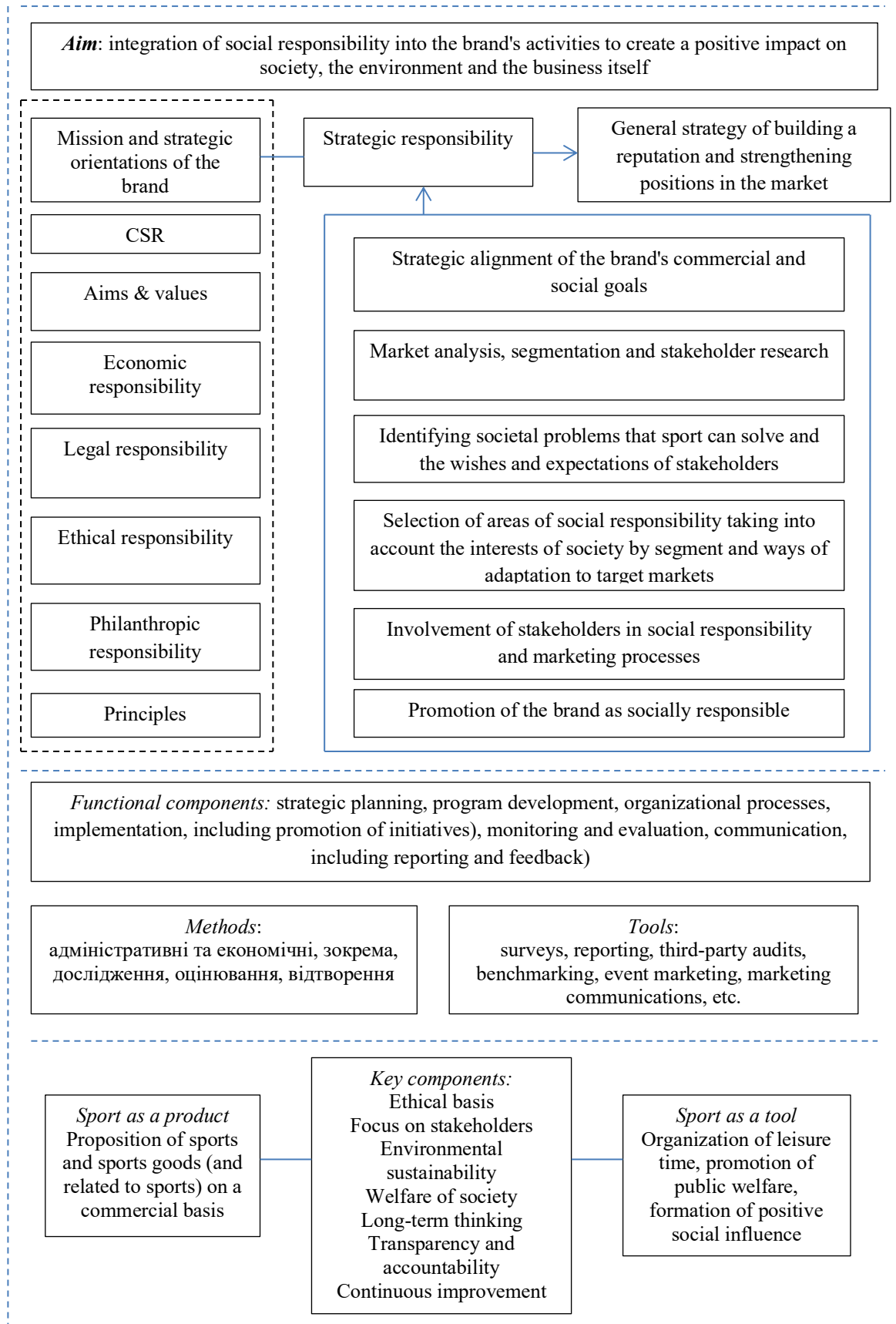
*Source:* generated by the author

Therefore, it is necessary to form a mechanism that balances between sport as a product and sport as a tool of social responsibility, for which it is assumed to combine commercial goals with the goals of social impact. This integrated approach ensures that sports brands can achieve profitability while making a positive contribution to society and the environment. Based on [3, 20] and taking into account the specifics of the sports industry, it can be stated that the mechanism of socially responsible marketing in the sports industry is a system of organizational and economic measures aimed at the interaction of all participants of the sports industry through the formation of partnership relations of brands, society and the state, and as well as determining their needs and desires and integrating all areas of their activities to meet these needs while simultaneously improving the well-being of the entire society, improving the environment and developing the brand itself.

The mechanism of socially responsible marketing of sports industry brands can be defined through a series of interrelated steps and practices that ensure alignment of a brand's marketing efforts with its social responsibility obligations (Fig. 1).

The components of corporate social responsibility, which are the basis of the mechanism of socially responsible marketing, acquire a strategic direction due to marketing research of society and segmentation of stakeholders in order to further satisfy their needs and expectations.





**Fig. 1. Structural diagram of the mechanism of socially responsible marketing**

Source: developed by the author



The business block is consistent with the tasks of socially responsible marketing, whose competence is strategic responsibility, which, according to G. Lantos, provides support for the implementation of social programs and projects within the scope of achieving strategic business goals. That is, the company participates in them not only because it is good and noble, but also because, in the short or long term, these actions will bring positive results in the form of improving the market and financial condition of the company, and therefore, the rights of the owners of the company will not be violated. The goals and objectives of the brand are correlated with the Sustainable Development Goals. Common values correspond to the concept of socially responsible marketing, that is, ethical and altruistic responsibility based on voluntariness. Personalized values and motives for the implementation of social responsibility are formed under the influence of external and internal factors.

Building strategic accountability begins with strategically aligning the brand's commercial and social goals to create a holistic strategy that leverages the strengths of both. A strategic plan should integrate CSR initiatives with marketing and business strategies. The choice of social responsibility directions is carried out taking into account the interests of society by segment. Collaboration with stakeholders is essential for co-creating CSR initiatives and marketing campaigns. Products and services should not only satisfy consumer requests, but also contribute to the achievement of social and environmental goals. To build trust and credibility, all marketing communications must be transparent, honest and consistent. Measurement and reporting involves establishing key performance indicators and metrics to measure the success of CSR and marketing campaigns, as well as publishing transparent and comprehensive CSR reports. The key components are implemented depending on the nature and function of the sport and the brand itself. For example, a brand that produces eco-leather balls participates in charity events - it donates a certain number of balls for free to boarding schools. Or a sports school organizes a

sports event to promote a healthy lifestyle, the winners can get the opportunity to train for free at this school. Brands in the sports industry can also partner with other companies to sponsor events and initiatives, and create videos that feature players, team managers and staff working in the community. In essence, the mechanism of socially responsible marketing reflects a company's desire to do the right thing while doing well in the market. This approach ultimately improves the reputation and long-term sustainability of the business.

**Conclusion.** Therefore, marketing activities have far-reaching consequences and can create positive social impact, build trust and contribute to a better world. In the period of active manipulation of sports as a direction of implementation of pseudo social responsibility, brands of the sports industry can use their market power to stimulate positive social changes, while achieving commercial success through the implementation of the mechanism of socially responsible marketing. The proposed mechanism of socially responsible marketing involves balancing sport as a product and sport as a tool of social responsibility, which will allow brands of the sports industry to achieve commercial success, while having a positive impact on society and the environment. This approach ensures that the brand's marketing efforts are not only profitable, but also meaningful and beneficial to all stakeholders. Prospects for further research are the systematization of socially responsible marketing tools depending on the function of sport and the characteristics of stakeholders, as well as the development of standardized indicators and frameworks for measuring the impact of social responsibility initiatives in the sports industry.

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