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MASTER'S THESIS
IMC IN EUROPEAN FOOTBALL FOR TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS: BRAND AWARENESS AND CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR.

Ljubljana, July 2022   CLARA LAPOIRIE

AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The undersigned Clara Lapoirie, a student at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics, (hereafter: FELU), author of this written final work of studies with the title "IMC in European football for tourism organizations: Brand awareness and consumption behavior.", prepared under supervision of William Gartner.

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ABSTRACT

Football is one of the most viewed and played sports all around the world, and its distribution was heavily augmented through various media channels worldwide. In recent years, global tourism brands have emerged thanks to advanced technologies, allowing people to travel frequently and at ease. Considering the global appeal of tourism and football alike, this thesis addresses the use of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) opportunities that tourism brands leverage upon through football, with a focus on the customer's perception.

As a primary data collection method, netnography was used to address customer's perceptions of said sponsorship. This was then complemented by a survey to compare the results. This gave both football fans' and non-fans' perspectives, as well as the semiotic analysis of official videos to understand better the short- and long-term customer relationships that the brands are willing to build between the tourism and football industries. Additionally, future trends and opportunities will be addressed via three expert interviews, each focused on different aspects of the technology sector, in order to gain insights on IMC possibilities.

The findings navigate through the intricate perceptions and bias that exist in customer minds who have a divided opinion on football sponsorship.

On the other hand, companies have their reasonings to continue this trend for over the two decades of sponsoring football ecosystems ranging from tournaments and arenas to clubs and players – and there is no slowing down. The research dives deeper into understanding these intricacies and explores this phenomenon from a multitude of angles.

Keywords: Tourism, Football, IMC, Sponsorship, New Technologies

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IMC – Integrated Marketing Communication

PSG – Paris Saint-Germain (football club)

VAR – Video Assistant Referee

ALL – Accor Live Limitless

INTRODUCTION

Football is a modern team sport, the rules of which were written at the end of the 19th century. While the games from the middle age had almost completely disappeared at that time, football was played at the private prestige schools by the sons of the English nobility (Kitching, 2015). From the 1850s/1960s, rules, such as the interdiction of using the hands or the offside, started to be implemented. For example, the Football Association (FA) drafted the rules of the game in November 1863 (Kitching, 2015). The English Cup of football was created in 1870 when the sport started then to be a competition that each team had to win against their opponents (Kitching, 2015).

The sport then spread to all social classes thanks to the societal transformations led by the industrial revolution (Sandvoss, 2004). People had more time that they could dedicate to leisure and hobbies. Furthermore, evolution and advancements in terms of communication and transport brought by the industrial revolution allowed the teams to move to compete with each other, and the scores to be published in the newspapers. Eventually, the sport was deemed professional recognition in the 1890s (Kitching, 2015).

Football was added to the Paris Olympic Games in 1900 (the second modern Olympic games), representing the first international football competition (International Olympic Committee, n.d.). After that, the FIFA (Fédération Internationale du Football Association) was created in Paris in 1904 as a framework for the international organization and development of the sport (FIFA, n.d.-c).

After World War I was over, the first ever football World Cup was held in 1930 to further cement football's independence and professional status (FIFA, n.d.-c). Globally, football was democratized through different continental associations and the International Association FIFA (Sandvoss, 2004). The sport continued to adapt itself to the societal changes, particularly with the consumer society, and gained exponential popularity over the years. Quite early, football crossed the English borders, to Scotland but also to the British colonies in Africa and Asia, as well as Latin America and continental Europe, becoming a national sport in numerous countries. Of all nation states analyzed by Babbel (2021), three in four countries have football/soccer as the top sport. Its success probably resides in the simplicity of its rules, which would explain that it became a more global sport than cricket, for example, and football is also easy to play anywhere (Sandvoss, 2004; World Atlas, n.d.). This globalization happens from the different stakeholders: the production of football (the players) and its distribution (the worldwide broadcasting) (Sandvoss, 2004). Therefore, we can see globalization in terms of football development but also in terms of club ownership (Hill & Curtner-Smith, 2014; Dima, 2015).

In the 1950s, the stadiums were covered in advertisements and by-products that were introduced, for the first time allowing brand association and recognition possibilities for the companies - as explained by Jürgen von Einem, former head of Bayer's sport and sponsorship department (Sandvoss, 2004). Perhaps the most important milestone in the history of the place of football in society came with the introduction of television in the decades 1950s-1960s. With the popularity of television growing in households and meeting hubs thanks to the advancement in technology and the economies of scale it brought, there came an economic logic to associate with television content, especially with live media, which sports such as football became a major part of. The broadcasting rights thus have had a huge impact on the club's revenues; and added a new edge to the social dimension since football not only concerned the players and spectators in the stadium but went beyond to a global audience to the tele-spectators enjoying the sport from the comfort of their homes and work. Tom Glick (former COO of City Football Group) affirmed that sponsoring the football industry is a "great way to engage the consumer or engage somebody that's running a business", thus creating a valuable proposition for both the spectators and businesses alike (CNBC International TV, 2017).

As the eras progressed, the sponsorship involvement took much deeper roots. What was once headlining an event, became multi-dimensional engagement in the total ecosystem – from that of jersey branding to that of stadiums. This even spread out of the realm of staying within the sport itself, to finding newer avenues to generate revenue (for example, the FIFA gaming franchise with EA Sports since 1998 created a new generation of audience and engagements). With technological progress and new consumer touchpoints, this is evolving rapidly. A company is looking to "achieve the objective that the sponsor has […] no longer just about a name on a shirt or a sign in the stadium. Ultimately, we are progressing to more complex business objectives, more subtle business objectives often, or helping partners to position themselves. We are looking to connect and partner with companies who have business objectives that we can tackle, who have an alignment of culture, of purpose", as affirmed by Tom Glick to CNBC International TV (2017).

The global spread of football in terms of audience is shown by the FIFA report for the last World Cup in 2018, there is audience from all over the world, also influenced by the number of inhabitants in each region of course. The same is shown in the respective reports of the UEFA Champions League 2017-2018 with an audience of 2 billion people (UEFA, n.d.) and the UEFA Euro 2020 with an audience from 229 territories (UEFA, 2021b).

Even more recently, another layer was added with the introduction of Internet and social media. Not only advertisements were put all around the playing field, but also on the players. Jersey sponsorship, for example, appeared in the 1970s (Suh, Pedersen, Lee, Williams & Pedersen, 2020). The introduction of football on television and on the social media participated in the democratization of the sport, especially when the games are not only

broadcasted in the domestic markets anymore, but all throughout Europe and worldwide, allowing a much wider audience and a potentially untapped fanbase.

Football became famous in terms of viewership and practice unlike other sports such as Cricket and Rugby in the UK and in the Commonwealth, or even Handball that remained very Europe-centered (World Atlas, n.d.). It is also remarkably interesting to note how much colonialism and history in general influenced the development of these sports, particularly how Cricket spread in the British former colonies and Rugby in other countries of the Commonwealth such as Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (World Atlas, n.d.).

Due to its globalization, football tends to be perceived as a potential source of money, which participates in the success of sponsorship, according to von Einem (Sandvoss, 2004). Nowadays, clubs get their incomes essentially from broadcasting rights, commercial rights, and hospitality, for example (Dima, 2015; Callejo & Forcadell, 2006). These incomes artificially change all the sports performance and results (Pawlowski, Breuer & Hovemann, 2010). Clubs with higher incomes, particularly coming from participation, sponsorship and investment tend to achieve better results on the field, one of the reasons being that the higher incomes allow the club to have more budget to outbid other clubs for players. For example, with the money that the state of Qatar is investing in Paris Saint-Germain, the club could afford for example Mbappé and Neymar the same year (2017) for around 400 million euros, among many other players. These players are indirectly bringing revenue to the club in the form of broadcasting or store incomes, but also by increasing the overall brand value that can be translated to future revenue. Additionally, if these players perform well, they could lead the club to do better in the competitions, giving them more visibility and participation, eventually leading to a higher return from the broadcasting rights.

From the company's point of view, using football to leverage visibility allows them to target a wide audience at once when they would have to spend more time, energy and money targeting each specific market. This also allows for greater uniformity for the brand to be associated with specific clubs and a greater brand recollection. The globalization of football enables companies to use the sport's mediatization of football to target big markets such as Asia. As Tom Glick affirmed (CNBC International TV, 2017), there is a need for global partners but there is also a lot of potential in local partners: "We have partners who […] have a global ambition and global activation. And we have others, like Mundy pharma who's focused just on Southeast Asia, a few countries in a football rich part of the world, 600 million people in Southeast Asia. And we're helping them with a very specific consumer healthcare product there.

This research will focus on the sponsorship relations between the European football world and tourism companies. To do so, different research methods were employed with the aim to answer the following research question:

"How do tourism organizations leverage IMC in the football ecosystem and how is it perceived by the consumers."

The first section deploys the ground knowledge for the analysis by building its theoretical framework. Then, the second section will discuss different methods used to provide a thorough answer to the research question. The main concepts used in the analysis were, therefore, explained such as IMC and the new technologies. Indeed, the new technologies play and will continue to play a major role in football and the way it is consumed: "It will be both [in the stadium and in virtual reality]. And, for sure, the best way to experience a football match is live and in arena, but not everyone can get here. We have to continue to work hard to make this environment better and better and better for our fans who come, on a match day. But we're very fortunate to have hundreds of millions of fans around the world and our opportunity to improve their experience is also there. So, virtual reality will improve, what you can do on your mobile device […] and the stadium experience, and I think everything will grow if we get it right.", as affirmed by Tom Glick to CNBC International TV (2017).

Lastly, the analysis uses the findings gathered through different methods and analyses within the lenses of the theoretical framework to answer the research question. While netnography will help understand the effectiveness of the marketing strategies of a wider audience and its perception by the football fans, the survey will analyze the brand recognition of the sponsoring brands amongst football fans and non-football fans, as well as the effect these strategies have on their way of consuming. Finally, the interviews will bring some future perspective to the research, especially in the context of how emerging technologies will create new possibilities for user engagements. The research will end with its limitations and potential research avenues, as well as a conclusion of the different findings.

1   LITERATURE REVIEW

This section aims to address the key concepts that are relevant for the general understanding of the topic by giving theories and definitions from the academic literature. The concepts of IMC and its application to tourism and sport are developed with the objective to serve the research question, as well as the new technologies and the opportunities it could bring to IMC and marketing through football in the future.

1.1   Integrated Marketing communications (IMC)

1.1.1   The origins of IMC

Communication is the way in which humans express their thoughts to each other. Consequently, the receiver of the message has to understand it from his end as well and vice versa when he or she responds. This is an essential part for dialogue to happen (Holm, 2006). As a result, communication is also essential between a company and its customers. Communication is for them a tool to influence and persuade, change the customer's behavior (Fill & Duncan, 1999). In this section, the foundation of communication theories will be set as they are the basis for a deep understanding of IMC.

Shannon & Weaver (1949) address a logical explanation of the concept of communication. First, the sender sends an "encoded" message (signal) to the receiver, meaning that he or she expresses what he or she wants to say with his own words or expressions (there is a high chance that anybody with the same thought would express it differently). There are different channels of communication: voice, body expression, or written messages. The message then arrives to the receiver who must decode the message based on his experience or his knowledge of the sender. This decoding phase can also be unique to each receiver. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that in the signal state, perturbations can occur to the encoded messages, which some researchers (Shannon & Weaver, 1949) call "noise" and that will possibly distort the message before it is decoded by the receiver.

Shannon & Weaver (1949) identify three layers of problems that can occur in communication which are gathered and explained in Figure 1:

Figure 1: The different layers of communication

Technical problem: are the encoded signals transmitting the message in an accurate way?

Semantic problem: is the sender transmitting precisely his means?

Effectiveness problem: does the transmitted message reach the desired outcome once at the receiver's hands?
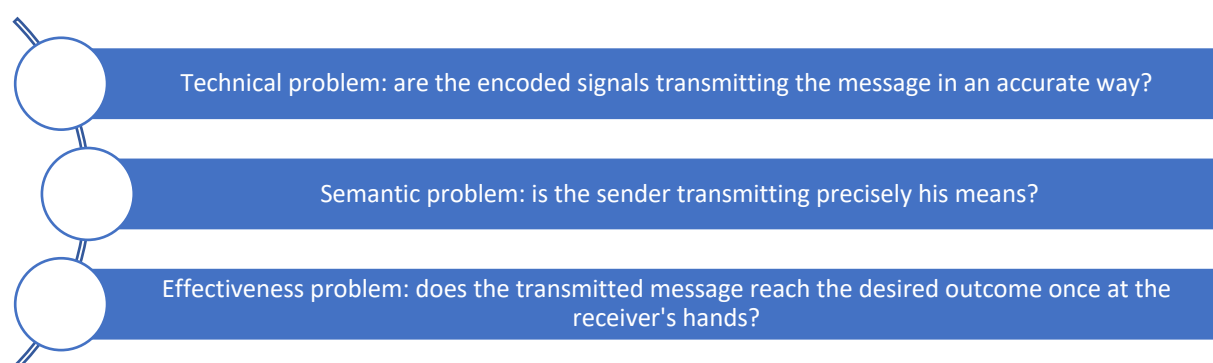
Source: Adapted from Shannon & Weaver (1949).

Consequently, it is assumed that the different parties must (informally) agree on the meaning of the different symbols for communication in general to be efficient. Therefore, it is important that the educational field is also aware of that and sets the grounds for a common

understanding of communication theory, of the meaning of each signal. This is even more important nowadays in the globalized world we are experiencing and where a cultural and linguistic aspect is added.

Kotler, Dubois & Manceau (2003) affirm that the general purpose of marketing is in a way delivering to people what they need and want through an exchange of goods, services, and products between people (trade). This exchange has, as generally assumed for this research, a value measurable by evaluating the balance of the costs and benefits of this exchange for each party. From that point of view, it is understandable that the role of marketing is to increase the value of the product in the eyes of the customers through different marketing tools, making its cost more acceptable (Holm, 2006).

A long time before the concept of IMC appeared, the idea of integration in the advertising and marketing sphere can be found in theoretical writings. Since the 1930s, Spotts, Lambert & Joyce (1998) were already affirming that marketing activities have to be aligned to the other activities of the company, a statement reinforcing what Levitt (1960) had already several decades before.

Then, around the 1990s, integration in marketing became a free-standing discipline. The notion itself of IMC appeared at the end of the 20th century. Very little research has been done on that topic and the first one registered was published in 1991 by Caywood, Schultz, and Wang. Although, throughout time, it has become an important part of the development of marketing as a discipline (Kitchen, 2003), it still seems to be difficult for all researchers to agree upon one definition of IMC which is to the disadvantage to the implementation of IMC as a discipline (Kitchen & Schultz 1999; Low, 2000; Duncan & Mulhern 2004).

1.1.2 Definition

IMC as a concept emerged in the 1990s and is therefore quite recent compared to other marketing strategies.

Kitchen & Burgmann (2010) worked on the critical analysis of the past definitions of IMC that they gathered in Table 1. They mainly explain the new concepts introduced by the different authors throughout time. Therefore, for the present research, IMC will be considered with the new aspects added by the American Marketing Association (2007). As implied by the authors (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010), the "latest definition" embeds the previous definitions and adds new aspects to them.

Table 1: IMC definitions

Author and Year	Concepts Introduced
Caywood, Schultz, and Wang (1991) and Caywood, Schultz, and Wang (1991b)	• Coordination and consistency of messages and communication channels (one sight, one sound) • Use of a variety of communication disciplines to work in synergy based on a comprehensive plan • IMC as a concept
Schultz (1991)	• Inclusion of consumers, prospects • Behavioral responses • Nurture relationship and customer loyalty • IMC as a process
Duncan and Everett (1993)	• Profitable relationships expanded audience scope from customers to other stakeholders
Nowak and Phelps (1994)	• Reinforced notions of consistency, coordination, and behavioral response
Schultz and Schultz (1998)	• Strategic business process • Expanded notion of brand communication • Measurability • Specified the multiple markets more explicitly, inclusive of external and internal audiences
Schultz (2004b) and American Marketing Association (2007)	• Strategic business process • Extensive brand communication • Evaluation and measurement • External and internal stakeholder groups • Long-term brand value focus
Kliatchko (2005)	• Process and concept • Audience-focused • Communication program • Result-driven

Source adapted from Kliatchko (2005: 21)

Source: Kitchen & Burgmann (2010).

Definitions of IMC have also evolved throughout time, and so did the general understanding of the concept although the main ideas remained similar. For example, the audience is not only the consumers anymore but a wider range of stakeholders the marketing communications should be targeted, and the definitions are leaning towards long-term strategy building with terms such as brand identity, brand personality, and relationship building (Kerr, Schultz, Patti, & Kim, 2008).

1.1.3 The concept of IMC

IMC can be described as reassembling the different forces of the marketing mix by using the characteristics of the products, but also of the brand. The main goal is to create a synergy between all the communications of the company, adapted to the new communication tools and technologies. IMC is used to smoothen the message understanding of the customers and to avoid confusion for them (McGrath, 2005; Stewart, 1996; Duncan & Everett, 1993). Therefore, IMC is meant to strengthen the customer-company relationship, hence the importance for the companies to keep the contact points with their customers (Gylling & Lindberg-Repo, 2006; Schultz & Kitchen, 2004; McGrath, 2005).

One can also observe the same description with Smith, Berry & Pulford (1999) who defined IMC through three main aspects. Firstly, the company using IMC has and keeps control of all its marketing communications. Indeed, it allows to remain on top of what is being done in terms of communication. The second layer is that thanks to the control the company has over its communication, it can ensure consistency in the message delivered (also in terms of brand personality and brand positioning). As a result (and third and deepest layer), these IMC-driven decisions are positively disrupting the relationship between the company and its customers in an efficient, effective, and economical manner.

Smith, Berry & Pulford (1999) further explain the different aspects IMC can be applied to the different layers of marketing communications:

- The communication objectives are aligned with the general objectives of the company as an organization (vertical integration of the marketing communications) and with the other departments of the company beyond marketing (horizontal integration of the marketing communications).
- The promotion objectives are aligned with the other elements of the marketing mix: product, price, and place.
- The 12 communication tools are used in a consistent way (consistent communications mix strategy)
- The creative design is made in accordance with the positioning of the product in order for the communication to be consistent and is also directed toward integrated marketing communication in an efficient and effective way with the different economic tools that are at hand.
- Finally, further than internal strategies, the communication of the company and its employees towards the external environment must be consistent as well with the previous points.

For a healthy balance for the company, integrated marketing communications should not be at the expense of the other objectives of the company and vice versa, they should be able to coexist. "Other objectives" are numerous, such as profitability, growth, and competition. Naturally, the emergence of the new technologies played a key role in these areas, particularly in terms of differentiation from the competition where a lot of doors opened up (Porter, 2001). In a sense, these technologies led to a shift of the customer's focus from the quality of the product to the price, disrupting the market structure. Furthermore, there are other market factors to consider when planning marketing strategies such as environmental and other trends that the companies should not underestimate when preparing any type of marketing communication.

Several researchers in the literature acknowledge that IMC is efficient also in terms of return on investment (ROI) (Holm, 2006; Reid, 2005; Duncan & Mulhern, 2004; McGoon, 1999). Although not stated by the authors, this enhanced ROI can be explained by the IMC strategy

strengthening the relationship the companies have with their customers and therefore their purchasing behavior will be positively affected (Andrews & Shimp, 2017), bringing more income to the company. It is also generally acknowledged that if the IMC is successfully implemented, the revenues engendered can be more important than the cost of the implementation of the technique.

McGoon (1999) states that a very little number of companies are completely integrated in terms of marketing. The literature shows as well that IMC will only work to its fullest if the entire company understands the core concept of IMC and its implementation. Duncan (2005) even explains that without that, there will be difficulties in the integration of the company's marketing. Of course, things have changed since this research was made, and now, almost 25 years later, IMC has become more common.

Both analyses of IMC from Johnson & Schulz (2004) and Kitchen & Schultz (2001) come to the same conclusion: the importance of the focus on the customer rather than the product associated with a better understanding of the customers through market research, as well as a better understanding of their motivations linked to each specific behavior.

Knowing the customers better can translate into, for example, separating them into different categories (ex: age, gender) to target each segment with dedicated communications. This technique, however, should be modernized given the constantly evolving demographics and sociographies. In other words, companies must make sure their way of analyzing data is not outdated. Furthermore, nowadays, technologies allow communication to go not only from the company to its customers but also from the customers to the company (Smith, Gopalakrishna & Chatterjee, 2006), which is essential for the company to evolve and make the products evolve as well.

In their analysis of the integrated communication model of Nowak & Phelps (1994), Kitchen & Burgmann (2010) show that the coordinated marketing communication campaigns (the company's "one voice approach") and the integrated advertisements are both behavior-oriented (the company wants to change its customer's behavior through sales & promotions and direct response advertising) and oriented on the image (working for example on public relations and brand advertising to enhance the company's image) by making use of marketing strategies and tactics targeting the market, the message itself and the media the message is sent through to the market (Nowak & Phelps, 1994).

Technically, the companies can also either have one IMC for all its markets or, to the effects of glocalization, adapt their IMC strategy to where the products are being sold. However, it can fail in the sense that pure glocalization can lose the core concept of IMC since glocalization is an adaptation of the brand and products to the location of sale, as opposed to IMC encouraging companies to choose a brand image and identity and stick to it. For example, brands such as Danone or Mikko are sold under different names around the world.

Therefore, IMC is not without any barriers, such as the need for cultural understanding, but also a fear of change or the fact that IMC is difficult to measure. More generally, as stated by Kitchen & Burgmann (2010), there is no one clear way to implement IMC, hence the concept itself can be ambiguous its understanding can be different even though Schultz's version (2007) has been adopted by the American marketing association.

PR is different from Marketing in the eyes of a lot of practitioners. However, IMC suggests that both areas must be aligned. Indeed, recently, various research on IMC have shown that IMC is accepted among marketing and PR practitioners (Kitchen & Eagle, 2002; Reid, Johnson, Ratcliffe, Skrip & Wilson, 2001; Kitchen & Schultz, 1999; Kitchen & Schultz, 1998; Schultz & Kitchen, 1997; Miller & Rose, 1994). However, as such, it is not yet known if IMC will ever emerge as a theory or if it is a concept that needs to be linked to other communication concepts to produce a different theory.

One of IMC's aims is to create synergy among the different marketing elements in order to achieve short- and long-term returns (Madhavaram, Badrinarayana, & McDonald, 2005). Other benefits of an IMC approach are greater consistency among the various communication messages and functions, cost savings, easier working relations between different departments, and better utilization of media and promotional mix elements (Pickton & Broderick, 2005).

1.1.4   The impact of marketing tools on IMC

In customer-focused marketing strategies, it is primary to know the customer and his needs. However, customer data is becoming more and more precious and valuable throughout the years. To take an example, a supermarket chain will be reticent to give its customer's data to the brands it sells (Coca-Cola for example) because thanks to this data, Coca-Cola could go directly to the customers without going through the supermarket company. To solve that problem, Schultz (1996) proposed that all parties would benefit from shared data about the customer. Nowak & Phelps (1994) state, among others, that there is much more to customer data than his address and name. Indeed, there is the psychological aspect behind the customer behavior that is to analyze, jointly with demographics, to understand customer's loyalty and attitude towards buying. This has as a goal to enhance customers loyalty thanks to a better understanding.

The tools to achieve that customer loyalty are several types of promotion actions. McGrath (2005) gives the example of "PR campaigns, TV commercials and magazines". But more importantly their use in the context of IMC is the key to a "good" customer relationship nowadays, as explained by numerous authors in the past 20 years. Indeed, all aspects of marketing must be coordinated and integrated (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010). This would also mean an important engagement from the top management as they are the ones that know

the brand the best. More generally, the entirety of the company had to be familiar with how IMC works and how it should be implemented otherwise both the relationship between the product brands and the brand itself will end up damaged (Reid, 2005; Pickton & Hartley, 1998).

The usual marketing methods are the 4Ps and the creation of a database (Schultz, 2004). It is admitted that when it comes to creating a communication campaign, marketers have an important set of tools at their disposal, which allows them to make efficient communication activities. According to Blythe (2006), the promotional tools can be divided into advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and personal selling.

There are many ways communications mix or promotional mix are displayed. Here is the very visual explanation given by Jim Blythe (2006):

Figure 2: Promotional mix
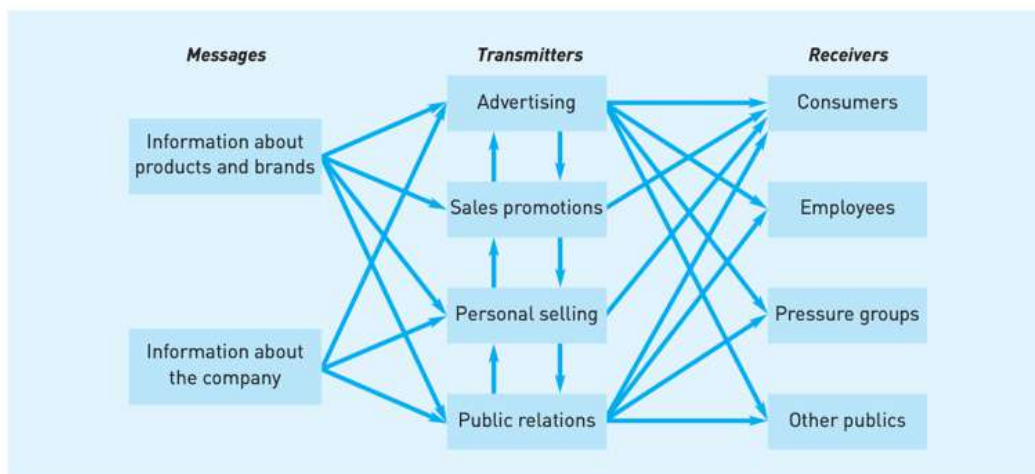
Source: Blythe (2006)

Both advertising and public relations are used to transmit messages regarding the product and/or the company to consumers, employees, pressure groups, and other public. Sales promotions give information about the product and the brand to consumers, and finally, personal selling is used to give information about the product and the brand and/or the company to the customers.

Communication is genuinely a human-oriented concept. Therefore, communication is also at the very center of human interactions (Duncan, 2002). It is therefore logical that companies use strategic tools to plan better communication and gain competitivity, since it is their main way to interact with customers and to lead a sustainable business in the long term.

To define their strategies, companies have a lot of tools at their disposal: the positioning of the company in terms of identity, profile and image are important to determine, for the company to earn and keep its competitive advantage (Holm, 1998).

However, from the root, very little education is provided about IMC and strategic marketing communications in the general fields of study. This topic is only available in very specific academic programs and there is a gap between marketing professionals and the academic world (Holm, 2006). By introducing IMC as a concept into the educational systems, this marketing strategy will enter the work market in a global way. As an example, only 3% of the time in the investigated schools and institutes in Sweden is dedicated to the theory and methodology of IMC (Holm, 2006) and the programs dedicated to marketing teach very little about leadership and management. Being aware of this gap and treating it is also primary for the future usage and development of IMC (Kerr, Schultz, Patti & Kim, 2008).

1.1.5   Models of IMC

Beyond all these elements of description and analysis of IMC, researchers have created several models for the implementation of IMC.

1.1.5.1 The establishment of IMC – Fill (2002)

Fill (2002) states four major steps in the establishment of IMC. Fill (2002) for example gives four steps of the implementation of IMC. His literature on IMC was gathered by Kitchen and Burgmann (2010) in the following steps:

- Focus on the promotional activities, give them consistency
- All sections of the company have to be aware of this consistency as a goal, which leads to the third step:
- This involvement of the whole company implies a change in its values.

Then only, IMC is fully integrated into the company (the "ultimate stage" of the road towards IMC).

1.1.5.2 The four stages of IMC – Schultz & Kitchen (2000)

Like Fill (2002), Kitchen and Schultz (2000) have identified four stages of IMC. The first step of the journey towards IMC being "tactical coordination of marketing communications", through the redefinition of their scope, the application the information technologies, and lastly, the financial and strategic integration (in other words, IMC). Their research resulted in finding out that most of the companies are to be found in either the first

or the second stage, some others are currently in the third stage and a very small number of companies are in stage four.

Figure 3: IMC – A 4-stage model
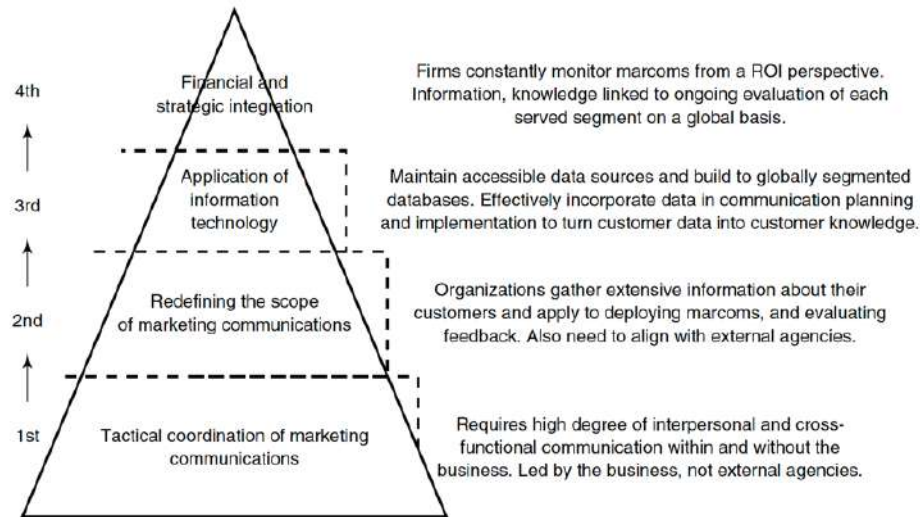
Source: Kitchen & Burgmann (2010) from Kitchen & Schultz (2001)

Kitchen & Burgmann (2010) also give an analysis of Schultz's work on IMC and the 4-layers model his work gave as a result. This model is as well accompanied by a paragraph for each step, making the process clearer to the reader (Figure 3). Kitchen & Burgmann (2010) point out that it is primary for companies to have resources to satisfy the four elements because if not, they will have to multiply the communication agents.

It is of common understanding that IMC is leaning towards a long-term brand identity (the company's tools to build a brand image) for both the products and the company, although all models mentioned are very theoretical and give very little practical evidence. There is a general uncertainty regarding IMC as a discipline and researchers are hesitant to affirm that IMC is a new discipline or if IMC is just a derivative of already existing disciplines (Spotts, Lambert & Joyce, 1998; Hartley & Pickton 1999). There are indeed arguments for both sides, which shows that both hypotheses are not mutually exclusive.

Furthermore, there are other debates about the acceptance of IMC. Indeed, some authors do not position themselves on the necessity of using IMC for companies. There can be several reasons for that (Kerr, Schultz, Patti & Kim, 2008):

- The said researchers consider the debate over the importance of IMC irrelevant or they do not consider this topic relevant to their own research.

- Although these researchers acknowledge the importance of the discipline, the debate can be considered irrelevant in the sense that there is not necessarily a sense to not be in favor of marketing communications integration (Hutton, 1996).
- Some researchers, such as Schultz (1996) affirm that regardless of the companies' strategy to implement IMC or not, consumers (and other stakeholders) automatically do the integration themselves in a sense that they are able to "connect" the different communications they see.

The rising demand engendered by World War II led to a focus on the product from the companies and their marketers, rather than on the consumers before the rise of competition shifted the focus away from the product to the consumer. Indeed, the products should be adapted and developed knowing and understanding the customer's needs (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010). But throughout time, marketing has evolved a lot. As an example, in 20 years in the USA, the share of the marketing budget allocated by companies to advertising considerably dropped, going from 75% to less than 25% (Kitchen, 2003). Nowadays, the other main allocations of communication budgets are trade promotions and consumer promotions (ibid.). Therefore, marketing budgets have drifted away from mass media and the other "traditional" marketing channels we used to see. In that way, the emergence of social media in the last decades also participated in turning IMC into a commonly used and efficient marketing method, with a drastic change of the concept of media in its globality.

People's way of consuming, for example their beliefs and preferences, became more individual and less of a mass phenomenon (Eagle & Kitchen, 2000; Kitchen, 2003). For example, it is easily acknowledgeable that social media and all the algorithms linked to it brought people out of this situation where everyone was always seeing the same advertisements at the same time (ex: TV advertisements). The personalized advertisements one can see on social media, although a lot questioned regarding data protection, broke the glass between the customer and the company and the uniformity of advertising. Through the Internet, advertisements are now smartly targeted in order for the audience to feel special because these platforms know their needs the best.

1.1.6   The role of the new technologies

As a result, the new media technologies changed considerably the concept of communication as a discipline and therefore the understanding of IMC is constantly evolving. As mentioned in the previous sections, the markets are disrupted, the economy is more global, meaning companies from everywhere are selling products to people from everywhere, and the consumption patterns are changed for a more and more individualized consumer behavior.

Furthermore, communication being based on sound (TV, Radio, Internet), image (TV, newspaper, Internet) and writing (Newspaper, Internet), technologies have a major role to

play in the evolution of the communication media (Holm, 2006). Even though the new technologies became global in about 20 years of time, communication is still not entirely digitalized. This intentional exchange between two parties (Engel, Warshaw & Kinnear, 1994) was naturally changed by the computer systems appearance for more direct and targeted communication.

Internet and the numerous digital tools that the consumers now allow everyone to have more and more information about the brands and the products. By using that, companies can easily make a competitive advantage because it would be keeping control of the information the customer has access to, although other sources on the Internet can help the customer to build a more critical opinion. These digital tools can also be used to communicate directly with the customer. We now have a lot of companies using social media through community managers (particularly Twitter with companies like Evian, Actimel, Netflix).

1.1.7   The influence of the Internet on the Industry structures from the point of view of the 5 forces of Porter (2001)

Internet and its apparition influence numerous aspects of our everyday life. Holm (2006) therefore decided to use Porter's 5 forces theory and adapt it to the impact the Internet has on the industry

- In terms of competition: the competitors and the (standardized) products are becoming more similar, the only differentiation points possible then becomes price; the number of competitors increases thanks to lesser entry barriers.
- The barriers to entry are reduced, especially through the internet, an efficient entry door for new competitors from everywhere. As a result, all the traditional channels are eliminated (e.g., phones companies, banks, taxis)
- The customers have a higher power due to the increase of the available products and an easier comparison between products for example. Furthermore, it is thanks to the internet easy to switch between suppliers, both in terms of time and financial cost.
- Lastly, internet technologies also help the market and the sector in general with potential technological ameliorations.

This evolution in people's way of consuming, along with the appearance of the new technologies lead to the necessity of companies to consider an outside-in approach in which the message takes a central role (Buttle, 1995; Scott, 1994; Stern, 1996). The receiver also has an important role as in decoding the received message or deleting potential noises from the message. Furthermore, beyond the content of the message, the decoding is also influenced by other factors that the literature divided into 4 categories: historical (1), external (2), internal (3) and future (4) which the marketing communications must understand (Finne & Grönroos, 2013).

Over time, the customer acquires more knowledge about the market and its products and does not need the companies to send information to him anymore. He has all the information at hand to make informed purchasing decisions. Therefore, the companies have been adapting their marketing strategies and adopted the outside-in approach for example, a rather customer-focused strategy bringing a new point of view in the creation of IMCs (Kerr, Schultz, Patti, & Kim, 2008). As previously mentioned, the differentiation point of the companies is not their product anymore but their relationship with their customers.

As defined by Finne & Grönroos (2013), relationship marketing focuses on both the sender and the receiver rather than the traditional approach focused on the sender. For instance, when traditional inside-out communication is compared to the relationship between a company and a passive receiver, the outside-in approach focuses more on communication with equal levels, both parties (the company and the customer) being active (Grönroos & Lindberg-Repo, 1998; Lindberg-Repo, 2001; Finne, 2004). Researchers also insist on the importance of the receiver being considered an active participant in communication (Christensen, Anthony, Berstell, & Nitterhouse, 2007), making the main goal of relationship marketing the enhanced commitment of the consumer by considering his situational (internal or external) factors and his time (history and future) factors.

The traditional perspective on IMC is to integrate the five sources of messages: planned marketing communication, product messages, service messages, unplanned communication, and absent communication (Finne & Grönroos, 2013; Duncan & Moriarty, 1997; Grönroos & Lindberg-Repo, 1998). This gives a guideline to the organizations willing to implement IMC.

1.1.8   Conclusion on IMC

As a conclusion, IMC is closely linked to the world of today which is more and more globalized, as well as the appearance and evolution of the new technologies that both led to a more individualized consumption pattern. Moreover, Holm (2006) affirms that IMC is for companies the only strategy for them to keep growing in this permanently changing world. Indeed, communication is a very complex concept and the traditional literature on marketing tends to see and display marketing as a sequential linear system (Holm, 2002)

Although the definitions of IMC are numerous, some aspects of the concept of IMC come back often, as summarized in the 5 following points:

"

- *The communication effort should be directed at consumers in order to affect behavior.*
- *An outside-in approach should be utilized, that is, start with the customer first when developing a communication strategy.*
- *A well-established relationship between the company and the customer is necessary.*

- *To deliver a message correctly all communication activities should be included with contact points integrated into the strategy.*
- *To create a competitive brand, coordination between the communication disciplines is needed."*

(Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010)

Just like it can be applied to other industries, tourism organizations can use IMC to leverage awareness about their product or destination.

1.2   Sport and tourism

Tourism has been an existing phenomenon for a long time and has more recently become one of the biggest industries. Tourism, therefore, plays a major role in a lot of countries' economy (Fazele, Habib, Akbar, Taghi & Afsane, 2011; Dębski, 2013). Tourism has benefits on different levels: the local economy (the neighborhood, the city), the national economy but also the destination itself in terms of promotion and awareness (Švajdová, 2019).

On the other side, sport is also an emerging industry in the professional world. Therefore, it is very interesting for countries to try to conciliate both and use sport as a factor of attraction for tourism (Fallahi, Hassani & Karroubi, 2013) so that both industries can "help" each other (Esmaeili, Ganjuei & Tojari, 2016). Both dynamic sectors are particularly profitable for the private sector (Gaye, 2003) and their combination is often referred to as "sport tourism" (Higham & Hinch, 2002). Some studies affirm that sport tourism is the main part of the tourism sector (Kim & Chalip, 2004).

1.3   Sport, tourism and IMC

As many other industries, (sport) tourism is a sector where IMC is of key importance and therefore where the communication activities should be coordinated (Kulluvaara & Tornberg, 2003). Consequently, tourism companies should make use of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing to advertise the product, the brand and even the company (Esmaeili, Ganjuei & Tojari, 2016).

One of the models that can be used for marketing communications is the ACCA model (Esmaeili, Ganjuei & Tojari, 2016). First, the **awareness** of the customer must be caught, which leads to a better **comprehension** of the product from the client. It becomes then the role of the marketers to transform this curiosity in **conviction**, calling to his **action** of buying the product.

According to a study conducted by Esmaeili, Ganjuei & Tojari (2016), on sport tourism in Iran, Table 3 was made to understand the role of each type of communication for each step and for each type of communication, which tool plays the most important role.

Table 2: Role of each communication type

Awareness	Public relations	Television
		Internet
	Advertising	Exhibition
		Seminar
		Internet
Comprehension	Sales promotion	Discount coupons
	Personal selling	
Conviction	Personal selling	
	Direct marketing	
Action	Personal selling	Presence selling
	Direct marketing	Catalogs
		Kiosk
		Internet

Source: Esmaeili, Ganjuei & Tojari (2016)

It is interesting to notice that advertising plays only a minor part for all four steps. Furthermore, the Internet has a quite important role in every step.

It is important here to specify that the example given is only based on one country, Iran, which means that it does not necessarily reflect the truth in other countries. However, those results still have a logic beyond being only applicable to Iran in particular. For example, advertising and public relations are more efficient than sales promotions when it comes to triggering awareness in clients, especially through television (Esmaeili, Ganjuei & Tojari, 2016). In the same way, sales promotion has the advantage of engendering a quick response from the customer and therefore adds this notion of urgency and a better stimulation (Esmaeili, Ganjuei & Tojari, 2016). A more personal interaction between the company and the customer allows a better understanding of his needs and convince him and lead him to take an action faster (Herrera, Lopez & Rodriguez, 2002).

As mentioned in the previous section about IMC, the apparition of the new technologies changed the functioning of marketing (Sahin & Sengün, 2018; Tichaawa & Mhlanga, 2017), including in the marketing of tourism destinations where social media in particular has a prominent role in the marketing of destinations and is widely used by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) (Švajdová, 2019). It is for these organizations a very important resource guaranteeing access to a very important audience in terms of volume (Hays, Page & Buhalis, 2013). Historically, people tended to travel more after the second World War, because they could not travel for so long and the political situation was making them want to change air. Logically, one could suppose that the situation will be the same in terms of

tourism demand when the complete reopening of tourism after the pandemic of Covid-19 will occur.

Social media plays a particularly important role in tourism (Lim, Chung, and Weaver, 2012) since people are able there to share their travel experiences, pictures, memories, and anecdotes, without forgetting the (positive or negative) traditional word of mouth (Kavoura & Stavrianea, 2014). According to their research from 2014, word of mouth and social media play an important role in the research for a destination (respectively 45% and 38% of the respondents). The marketing tool used while on vacations is social media where 85% affirm sharing their experience, as well as feedback (approximately 40%). These trends are also underlined by Ndizera (2018).

In the same idea, the research made by Ndizera (2018) shows that broadcasts, advertisements, billboards, and posters are not really relevant when it comes to raising awareness in the tourism industry.

From that same research arises a new point - customer loyalty. Indeed, people tend to not repeat their trip with the same supplier if they are looking for better service. For example, all respondents staying at the 5-star hotel affirm their intention of coming back to the hotel although the price is higher than other establishments. On the other hand, people staying at lower-ranked hotels are more sensitive to the price. Lastly, consumer promotions play a significant role in catching the customer's attention or even entertaining word of mouth. (Ndizera, 2018).

From the tourism industry's point of view, the companies have in all logic to differentiate themselves from the competitors within the same destination but also work together to differentiate the destination from the other competing destinations (Gorlevskaya, 2016).

When reaching the decline stage, destinations can now make use of these marketing techniques to attract new clients, both in terms of volume and in terms of what the tourists are looking for in the destinations (rebranding). Some of the most successful marketing tools for tourism destinations are, according to Švajdová (2019), advertising, personal sale, lobby, fairs, and exhibitions, sponsoring, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relation, or internet marketing. To do so, marketing is indispensable but beyond that, (tourism) companies have to understand the impact the marketing actions have on their customers for continuous improvement (Ndizera, 2018).

Airlines also are very interesting in using football in their IMC strategies as each football spectator is a potential traveler (Bridgewater & Chance, n.d.). Middle Eastern airlines such as the Dubai-based Emirates, the Abu Dhabi-based Etihad and the Doha-based Qatar Airways are using football as an important marketing tool (Al Masari & O'Connor, 2013) and to strengthen their brand (O'Connel, 2011). Indeed, Al Masari & O'Connor (2013)

explain that the airlines can use football to promote their services as well as the destination. With that, they aim to carry more passengers by raising their awareness through multiple communication tools.

1.4   New technologies

1.4.1   Immersive technologies

Immersive technologies or Extended reality (XR) is a generic term to address technologies where data is represented and projected. (Milgram, Takemura, Utsumi & Kishino, 1995; Milgram & Kishino, 1994). In these extended realities, the consumers interact with a fully artificial environment (Kwok & Koh, 2020) until a point where the difference between both environments is difficult to distinguish (Suh & Prophet, 2018).

VR (Virtual Reality), for example, is an immersive technology through specialized helmets or headsets where people interact in a digital world that feels like a natural surrounding (Slater & Sanchez-Vives, 2016) thanks to visual, auditive and sensitive/motion modules (Pellas, Dengel & Christopoulos, 2020). For a deeper understanding, Boyd & Koles (2019) define Virtual Reality in the following words:

"Virtual reality incorporates computer-generated, interactive and highly vivid environments that enable the user to achieve a state of immersion through the ultimate experience of telepresence, and facilitate engagements in human encounters that are multi-sensorial, dynamic and resemble the user's perception and understanding of the real world."

In other words, it is creating a virtual environment close to the actual environment to facilitate human interactions.

On the other side, AR (Augmented reality) is "blending" the natural environment and virtual elements (Klopfer, 2008). In other words, it works like a digital layer added to the natural environment (Mystakidis, Christopoulos & Pellas, 2021). AR can be applied in marketing in the sense that it takes the form of virtually added content into the customer's "real world" (Rauschnabel, Babin, Tom Dieck, Krey & Jung, 2022). AR must combine the real and virtual environments, propose a live (in real-time) interaction, and be developed with 3D technologies (Mekni & Lemieux, 2014).

1.4.2   Blockchain and metaverse

Metaverse can be defined as a "parallel" world allowing an immersive interaction with a digital environment (Mystakidis, Christopoulos & Pellas, 2021).

For example, the airline company Qatar Airways launched early 2022 "QVerse", a "new virtual reality experience" on the company's website (Qatar Airways, 2022b). Indeed, people can now visit some sections of the customer's experience, from their computer being immersed as if they were there. From boarding to the in-flight experience, the customer can feel like he is on the plane already. From a purely marketing point of view, we can imagine that this is part of the company's positioning as a pioneer in the metaverse while allowing customers to make informed decisions.

1.4.3   Existing technologies in football

The current technologies in football are mainly meant to help the referees through instant video replay (Spagnolo et al., 2014) for the game flow to remain and the decisions to be the fairest. The following section aims to give the example of use of new technologies in football, both for the game and out of the game.

1.4.3.1 Goal Line Technology

The Goal Line Technology is a method used to verify the accuracy of a goal or not that was implemented in 2012. The technology allows an immediate response to whether the goal has actually been scored or not to the referee (within a one-second time frame). Concretely, the field referee has a watch which vibrates and shows when a goal has been scored (Spagnolo et al., 2014).

1.4.3.2 Video Assistant Referee

Video Assistant Referee (VAR) has been used since 2018, is a technology aiming to help the referee for more accurate decisions. Accordingly, VAR is another match official that is not based on the field and that can suggest the field referee to do a review of the action. The technology can only be used in a definite list of situations: Goal/no goal; Penalty/no penalty; Direct red card; Mistaken identity (Spagnolo et al., 2013). The VAR technology is used to verify or correct decisions taken by the referee and does not aim to replace the referee. If there is a doubt about the decision, the VAR is a video replay of the action from different angles helping the referee to make a decision that only he has the end word on. Only when the referee's decision is clearly proven wrong by the video, the said decision should be changed. The referee can ask through his microphone to change the angle and/or speed of the replay to make a more accurate decision.

1.4.3.3 Virtual replacement perimeter technology

Virtual replacement perimeter technology is a technology used in football for marketing purposes. It is the technology allowing a brand to be shown on the fence of the stadium in real life, another brand in a certain broadcasting region and another one in a different broadcasting region (Mishra, 2021). This brings the possibility of targeting the advertisement to the audience through a camera that is able to read the position of the fence and possibly any object on the way between the camera and the fence. That way, the "new logo" is added on top of the stadium logo with the perfect measures. This technology is also used to display content on the ground of the stadium before the game.

The theoretical framework gives the map to explore the research with a more holistic approach, which will enable to address the research adequately throughout the analysis by using different methodologies.

2   METHODOLOGY

Methodology in the context of research is defined by the journey, or the means used to reach an objective (Dann, Nash, & Pearce, 1988). When undertaking research, the researcher must use accurate research methods to the topic, as the chosen research method(s) determine how the data shall be collected, and more importantly which information is going to be looked at (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

A simple categorization of research methods would encompass qualitative data and quantitative data. However, there can be more layers to the different research methods, including a mix of the said methods. On the one side, one can easily acknowledge qualitative notions where it is difficult to have totally objective research. Indeed, the variables can be measured concretely and produce objective outcomes because the elements are quantifiable when non-objective elements are qualitative factors to the research (Lodico, Voegtle & Spaudling, 2006; Thomas, 2010). Other researchers (Jennings, 2009; Walliman, 2006) add that there are two main elements that researchers should treat when it comes to qualitative research: the research design and research method(s) that are going to be used in order to gather data.

Through the development of this research paper, the author had relatively advanced knowledge regarding Football and how tourism industries explored marketing potentials but had limited knowledge of new technologies and their future trends and implementations. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the future trends and their implementation in football had to be acquired first. While there are already quite a few examples showcasing that technological progress has been used in the development of football (Goal line Technology, VAR, …) (Spitz, Wagemans, Memmert, Williams & Helsen, 2021; Ugondo & Tsokwa, 2019), these emerging areas needed further inspection with experts' opinions through semi-

structured to unstructured interviews in both formal and informal settings, thus resorting to a reliance on some qualitative methods.

The first phase of this research will therefore be exploratory, with the goal to put some structure on the already existing knowledge on football and its marketing, and to gather strong evidence on new technologies and its future trends with how they can be implemented in the football context. Once this knowledge proves to be evidently sufficient, the second phase would explore is the in-depth research with clear goals, guided by results from the first exploratory data. These "phases" of the research are deeper explained by Firmin (2008) and can be summarized in the following layers model:

Figure 4: The different phases of the research
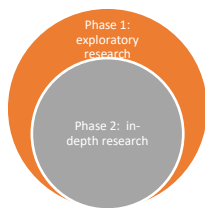
Phase 1: There is none or already some existing knowledge which still need to be further explored. This first phase is meant to look at already existing evidence and academic resources, as well as to deepen the knowledge on the topic. In other words, this phase can be considered as "surface-level" research.

Phase 2: The knowledge about the topic is already quite advanced and still improves with the reading of different resources. During the in-depth research phase, different methods are used which allowed the researcher to put the data more into perspective and interpret it better. This phase also has more direction and a clear objective in the data gathering: address the research question.

Source: Based on Firmin (2008)

The exploratory research here was internet-based background research on tourism and its marketing as well as football, its history, and its marketing throughout time, complemented by the notion of emerging technologies. Afterwards, 'netnography' (analysis of interactions on social media) will be explored to understand the peoples' perception of football sponsorship – screening and analyzing comments and perceptions of football sponsorship, mainly on the popular forum Reddit, will allow the research to understand better how the sponsorship is deeper than just a name on a jersey and how it is concretely developed. This will be complemented by a survey directed to football fans and non-football fans alike, that will allow further understanding of whether the perceptions from the netnography correspond or not, followed by a few interviews with experts around emerging technologies. The survey will also analyze if the IMC strategies implemented by the major tourism brands have a true impact on football fans. Finally, the interviews will aim to gather the opinion of technology companies on future trends of football marketing. Figure 5 aims to explain the journey toward the different methods.

Figure 5: Research method
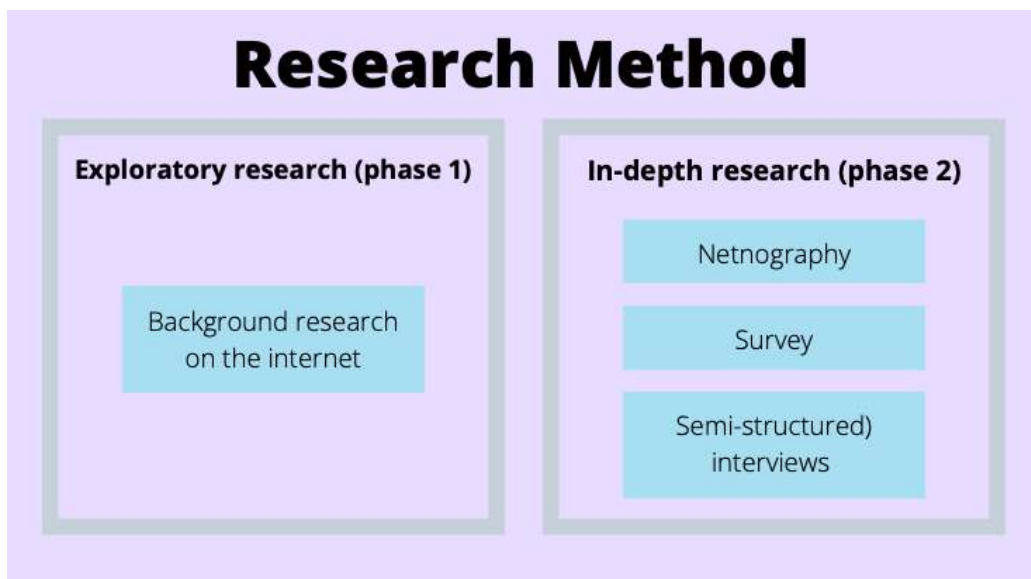
Source: Own work

This section aims to explain the methodological choices that have been made in order to serve the research question from multiple angles.

2.1   Research design

A research design describes how the research study will be undertaken (Berg, 2009). It is therefore very important to have a well-prepared research strategy to avoid any possible complications during the research process. For example, a problem that is recurrent is the access to key resources. Whilst it is relatively easy to access academic articles, thanks to university libraries, it can be harder to reach people or companies for interviews, or to gain solid answers through the right survey audience. By analyzing these possible obstacles for the smooth progress of the research, such complications can be reduced or eliminated although it is impossible to avoid all kinds of obstacles in the research process (Berg, 2009).

A mixed method between qualitative and quantitative data analysis seems the most appropriate for the topic. Indeed, qualitative data analysis focuses on analyzing behavior than simply coding quantified data. The behavior analyzed here is the effect of IMC of tourism companies for football fans. Here, qualitative research method will allow the researcher to have a deeper understanding of IMC implementation by tourism companies and their application in football, how the IMC is perceived by fans around the world. Furthermore, the use of qualitative methods through the survey will allow the research to be based on numbers as well, with the quantification of the survey data.

A mix of methods therefore needs to be applied in this research to gather both qualitative and quantitative data, in order to have a broader vision of the topic. This mix of data collection methods is called data triangulation (Bryman, 2003; Hussein, 2009; Bryman, 2012; Loseke, 2013) and allows the researcher to have a broader insight into the topic (Berg, 2009). Analyzing reality only through one data collection method can lead to a biased vision of the reality (Franklin, 2013). As a comparison, a set of different cameras and viewpoints are necessary to obtain a 3D visualization of a monument.

Through the different sources of data collection across exploratory and in-depth research, the aim is to get a broader understanding. As previously explained in Figure 5, each of the used research methodologies is adding layers of understanding to the research and tackling the research from multiple viewpoints. Moreover, particularly for steps 1, 2 and 3 (Figure 5), research can also help to redirect the following research into an improved and smarter research conduction framework that serves the research question better (Arnold & Fischer, 1994).

In this research, the ground knowledge will be acquired through academic secondary research. Throughout the process, the analyzed articles will help design a survey aiming to answer concrete questions that the literature might not answer. Kalaian (2011) explains that the survey method is the most efficient research strategy when it comes to analyzing a phenomenon's understanding by the general population. Therefore, the aim of the survey is also to analyze and understand the link between the variables and look for correlations (ibid.). Of course, the survey must be very well prepared for the questions not to be biased and to get the most genuine answers from the respondents without influencing their critical thinking (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2008).

Finally, the results from the survey will help understand if the literature really reflects reality. Independently, research interviews on the new technologies will draw bridges between new technologies and football, as in how these technologies can be implemented into the football world. From this research, the interview of technology knowledgeable people will help get their insight on the future trends of new technologies in football marketing with the survey results as a background.

It is important to add here that the steps described in Figure 5 do not essentially need to be done in a chronological order and it can even be benefiting to the research to see these research methods as interactive and go back and forth between them. The various research methods will be further described in the following sections.

2.1.1   Exploratory research

Exploratory research (phase 1) is meant to have a first knowledge in the form of literature review on marketing as a discipline, with particular attention on IMC as a marketing tool.

Then, a focus will be put on the application in the tourism field before analyzing the new technologies in football.

IMC has been researched a lot before, in a lot of different contexts. However, as seen in the literature review, it is difficult to take out one clear definition of IMC from the already existing literature, preventing it from becoming a paradigm. Furthermore, it is very difficult to evaluate if IMC really influences the consumers since the whole concept of IMC is a very qualitative concept. Consequently, there is very little literature aiming to test the effectiveness and efficiency of IMC, especially in the tourism/football area. Therefore, this research is aiming to address this gap in a tourism and football context and to draw some future trends. To understand both the marketing and the technology aspect of this research, exploratory research is necessary through the study of academic articles on both concepts.

2.1.2   In-depth research

2.1.2.1 Netnography

Netnography is a variant of ethnography related to the internet (Hogg, Folkman Curasi & Maclaren, 2004; Kozinets, 2002). In other words, it is the analysis of individuals' behavior, ethnography, as explained by Kozinets (2010) with data being gathered through the internet.

The use of netnography here aims to understand social interactions in football and tourism marketing. More concretely, how does tourism IMC set by tourism companies through football marketing implement in people's mind and does it influence people's awareness of the said tourism companies? This phenomenon is also very dependent on geography: a company mediatized through football will not have the same effect on people all around the world, depending on several factors. For this research, netnography is a very important part of qualitative research (Bowler, 2010) and a fast way to gather this data (Kozinets, 2002). Indeed, it is important in the present research to understand the various social phenomenon that links tourism, marketing, and football together, with the influence of social media (Langer & Beckman, 2005).

The specificity of netnography to perform data gathering through social media is very important since nowadays social media represent a big part of the companies' marketing, especially in the football world where the use of those platforms is prominent. As a result, the information is directly available without any need for direct interaction with the tenant of the observed data (Nelson & Otnes, 2005), and more importantly, when on social media, the observed people's thoughts are not influenced by the researcher and his own experience but by many other factors from the internal and external environment (Fine, 2001).

In the first stage, various posts on social media (particularly Instagram) were analyzed to review the marketing strategies behind the relationship between football and tourism. In particular, the Instagram profiles of 5 football players were analyzed to understand better how the brands and the clubs go beyond their core communication and humanize their communication through players to influence their audience.

This served as a foundation for the next stage which consisted in garnering the audience's opinions on the different brands and forms of sponsorships in football through more interactive platforms such as Reddit and Twitter. For example, 13 posts and their comments were analyzed on the platform Reddit.

2.1.2.2 Semiotic analysis

The concept of semiotics was first mentioned by Charles Sanders Pierce (Sobur, 2009). Semiotic analysis is the analysis of content based on signs, which can be divided into signifier (what is shown) and signified (what is perceived) (Vera, 2014).

Based on this definition, several videos were analyzed to understand better how companies are using IMC and the visibility offered by football to raise awareness. The videos, either posted on the channel of the company or of the club were analyzed with particular attention to how the brand and the club are displayed in the communication. Lastly, one of the videos is made by Qatar's DMO Visit Qatar and was analyzed for a deeper understanding of the link between the several stakeholders in tourism.

2.1.2.3 Survey and questionnaire

Given the topic of this research, a survey based on a questionnaire will be the main method of data collection. Indeed, football is a quite common topic and consequently, its marketing is known by the general audience. As a result, it is easy to collect data from the general population about football and its marketing. To design the survey questionnaire, the previous literature review was used to target the questions better and get easily to the most useful data and make the most of the survey to serve the research question correctly.

Beforehand, a pilot test was conducted with a few people, in order to assess the validity of the survey. The introductory text of the survey aims to make people feel that anyone can answer the survey and that it takes only very little time to answer. The questions were also designed to be easy, and the same population includes people that do not follow football.

The first question of the questionnaire is aimed to pose a "diagnosis" if the respondents are following football or not; and if yes, which team(s). These are easy questions that aim to encourage the respondents to keep answering (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2008). The second section of the survey aims to investigate the association that the respondents make

between a particular brand and a club: "which club do you associate with this brand". The third section is more about the influence of these associations on the consumers' behavior. Lastly, a few questions are purely demographic, asking for the age, the gender, and the region of identification. They are asked at the end of the survey as suggested by Rattray & Jones (2007). The survey questions can be found in Appendix 3, Appendix 4, Appendix 5 and Appendix 6.

The distribution was planned in order to achieve the best results possible, however there is no "right" or "wrong" answers when it comes to distributing a survey. The questionnaire was written and distributed in English since it is targeted to the global population. The distribution channel of the survey is through the Internet, and the survey software Google forms has some translation facilitators for the respondents that are more comfortable reading the questions in another language than English. It is however important to keep in mind that these types of translations can sometimes lead to distortion of information in the questions (Forsyth, Kudela, Levin, Lawrence & Willis, 2007). That is why the questions are formulated in English, in a very simple phrasing so that there are the least chances of lost in translations in case the survey is translated before being answered.

Beyond languages, the preciseness of the questions also affects the validity and reliability of the data collected. In that sense, feedback was asked from non-football and/or tourism knowledgeable people to verify the simplicity of the questions, with the aim of giving the ability to the most global population possible to answer.

The software Jamovi was used as a tool to analyze the data, which is further touched upon in the analysis section.

External validity

The validity of a survey questionnaire questions if the findings from the said survey can be generalized to a more global sample (Daniel, 2010). In other words, if the results would apply as well for the global population. Therefore, the survey was opened to everyone (football fans and non-football fans), adopting a random distribution of the population also called probability sampling process. That way, a situation of biased sampling is avoided and with enough responses the external validity is approved. However, even though the survey is aimed for the global population to answer, people not interested in football will maybe not take the time to answer when they see that the survey is about marketing in football. For this reason, the phrasing of the survey is important as well, particularly in the introductory paragraph.

The survey was distributed through groups of international people on social media platforms, and the academic background of the researcher allowed to have a rich database of potential respondents from different places and different backgrounds and interests. With football

being a global topic and with fans all over the world, it is the most logical way to get a large sample of answers that would represent a more global sample as well.

Like in any survey research, the demographics is in the center of the external validity topic. For example, age, gender, and nationality/country of identification will be considered.

Reliability

For the survey research method, reliability acknowledges the consistency of the answers to the survey. In other words, for example, if the same survey is repeated several times with the same (or not) number of respondents, the results will be the same or the variation very little (Behar-Horenstein & Dix, 2010). As seen in the theoretical framework, IMC is supposed to offer more consistency in the marketing strategies of the companies. As a result, a company using IMC is supposed to be more anchored in the customers' minds. Consequently, this research aims to understand the correlation between the use of IMC and the presence of the brand into people's mind. In this research, this correlation is evaluated in a football context, as in to investigate if football is an efficient vector for IMC for tourism organizations.

As a result, the following hypothesis are tested through the answers to the survey:

- H1: There is a positive relationship between the use of IMC and the presence of the brand in people's mind.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between the presence of the brand in the football field and people's awareness of the brand.

Marketing, advertising, and sponsoring are very dynamic disciplines. Therefore, a lot of external factors can influence the survey. One of the most obvious examples could be that a tourism company launches a campaign while the survey is happening or signs a sponsoring contract with a football club. In that case, the visibility of the said company will increase, and the response can be biased, although this also what the survey aims to examine.

Validity

The validity of the survey is represented by the measure of the degree to which it answers the elements the researcher wanted to clarify (Daniel, 2010). In order to investigate the validity of the survey, the use of secondary (already existing) research on people's receptivity to football marketing can be interesting and efficient. Moreover, for a better validity, the survey was given feedback by a few people outside the research, for the researcher to have an external opinion on the validity of the questionnaire.

To obtain responses with as little biases as possible, and for the data to be entirely comparable, no open-ended questions were used. Indeed, it is much harder to control open-

ended answers and get something out of it. Furthermore, the questionnaire has been made anonymous for data protection and for unbiased answers.

2.1.2.4 The interview

The second part of the in-depth research is to conduct semi-structured interviews, which can also be described as somewhat informal interviews. It is more to have a global idea from people in the technological field on how the future trends are likely to draw in terms of the use of new technologies in football for marketing purposes.

Interview is a very common data collection method when it comes to qualitative research (Marvasti, 2004; Cook, 2008; Persaud, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Brinkmann, 2013). The interview method makes particular sense in the present research, especially for the future trends section. Indeed, it allows the researcher to have a conversation with people from the technology field (Lodico, Voegtle & Spaudling, 2006) and have their insight on the future trends of the new technologies and how they can be applied into marketing in football.

As a result, the so-called semi-structured interview method is used. In other words, the discussion is guided towards new technology trends and their possible application in the football field. Semi-structured interviews allow a certain freedom to the researcher and therefore, the interview takes more the form of a discussion rather than the researcher asking the interviewee prepared, fixed questions, as to their content or their order (Walliman, 2006; Berg, 2009; Bryman, 2012).

Contrary to the participants' observation, the interview is more formal since it must be prepared in advance, the interviewee has to be "officially" invited by the interviewer. Then, during the interview, the questions are already prepared and usually do not deviate too much from the interview plan (or guideline). All this makes the interview not flow in a natural way (Franklin, 2013). However, the interview allows a deeper conversation with targeted people that know the topic. On the other side, larger sample methods such as the survey allow to have a broader sample, included responses from people that are not necessarily familiar with the topic but remains very untargeted and the responses will not be very specific. This research is investigating the future trends of new technologies of marketing in football. In that sense, 3 interviews were made with people that have deep knowledge of the new technologies, who are therefore able to provide concrete and precise answers.

The interview guide is based on "open-ended questions" (Walliman, 2006; Ayres, 2008). The respondents are free to voice their own opinions and views on how marketing is used in football and the use of the new technologies that are in use or will be in use.

Like in every research interview, the selection of the interviewees is very important (Cleary, Horsfall & Hayter, 2004; Rasmussen, Østergaard & Beckmann, 2006; Robinson, 2013) and

in this research respondents were chosen according to the relevance their input could have (Gorman, Clayton, Shep & Clayton, 2005) on the technological future trends. For this research, interviews were conducted with 3 interviewees with the respective focuses: Blockchain and metaverse; Artificial intelligence and machine learning; Virtual reality. The interviewees were, in addition, chosen for convenience purposes, as the researcher already had had previous contact with the interviewees (Suri, 2011). This method might lack of objectivity, but this limitation is kept under control by the fact that new technologies in marketing through football is a very specific topic in which the interviewees have actual thorough knowledge. Furthermore, the aim of the interviews is to gain deeper insight and knowledge about the possibilities brought by the new technologies rather than an answer to a specific question which would be generalizable afterwards.

This part of the research is focused on the technological future trends in football. Therefore, the research's intent is to understand how the technology in football developed in the recent past and therefore understand how it will develop in the close future, draw some trends. Then, the intent is to link these trends to the world of football and especially marketing. In other words, when the first part of the research is focused on the customer-end, the second part focuses on the supplier end, the enabler of the product. These perspectives will through interviews with experts in new technologies broaden the research horizon and allow to have different stakeholder's perspective (Freeman, 1986). The interviews of technology-knowledgeable people will allow a better understanding of their view of the world (Outhwaite & Turner, 2007). This expertise and experience are crucial when it comes to such a specific field. Consequently, such experts have very little time to allocate to such research, hence semi-structured interviews are a useful tool to use their time the most efficiently.

The questions do not have to be asked in a determined order and are therefore independent. In a way, semi-structured interviews go from the belief that one interview question and the answer associated to it can lead to a discussion rather than a list of questions for the interviewee (Ayres, 2008; Lodico, Voegtle & Spaudling, 2010; Qu & Dumay, 2011). The important result of the interview being for the researcher to have all the answer to the questions he already had, but also to get more from the interview. If the previously existing questions and concerns are answered, all additional intake is seen as a bonus.

As an introduction to the interviews, the interviewees are presented with the research background, as in the aim to draw future trends of the use football in marketing and the new technologies was further explained. Then, introductory questions were asked to understand the point of view/relationship the interviewee has with football and marketing. Then, a question was asked with the aim of recontextualizing the concept of IMC (hence the importance of the literature review here), before asking the interviewees about their knowledge of already existing football technologies. This question aims to lead to the second part of the interview, which should take more the form of a discussion about how they see these new technologies developing in the close (and further away) future.

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In total, 3 interviews were made in June 2022. On average, the interviews lasted 35 minutes which falls into the acceptable interview length according to DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) and Rasmussen, Østergaard & Beckmann (2006). The interviews were carried in person and online and are focused on the quality and the in-depth analysis of the meaning of each of them rather than the number of interviews conducted. Sections of the interviews can be found in Appendix 7, Appendix 8 and Appendix 9.

2.2   Ethical considerations

In research as a field, it is important as well to keep a certain ethical consciousness. In the use of netnography, only published content was analyzed, and therefore there is no need for consent as these were shared on the public sphere and not in a private context (Murphy & Dingwall, 2007). The validity and ethicality of this method rely indeed in the fact that the authors of the analyzed data decided to publish the content regardless of the existence of the present research.

The survey is anonymous in name (Christians, 2005; Punch, 1994; Ellis, 2007) and asks only for demographical data from the participants other than the actual questionnaire. Moreover, as well as for the interviews, the respondents can choose to respond to the survey or not. The respondents also do not need to be knowledgeable in football to answer the survey and therefore anyone can answer.

For the interviews, all three participants were aware of the purpose of the exchange and the need for the conversation to be recorded, and the participation to the interview was of course voluntary and made anonymous.

2.3   Analytical design

After having explained how the data has been gathered, this section of the methodology aims to explain the data-treatment process. In other words, what is done with the data after it is collected.

Several data collection methods were used in this research. All methods were used to complement each other and also chronologically overlap. In that sense, each method serves the others and allow a multidimensional understanding of the tourism IMC through football. There is in fact a back-and-forth movement between the different methods and using results from each helps to build a complete picture of the topic. In that sense, the entire picture explains each individual element and the individual elements give more precision to the entire picture (Rennie, 2012).

Content analysis aims to understand why and how companies are using IMC in the first place. Then, how is the football industry is used by the tourism industry to raise awareness?

This content is interpreted and linked to the theoretical framework and conclusions are made after analysis (LeCompte, 2000).

In the first place, the data is prepared for the analysis. For instance, the interviews must be transcribed for the researcher to have a written record (Kvale, 2007). However, this process is very time-consuming. Therefore, it might be more interesting to transcribe only passages of the interviews selected based on the relevance of the content with the aim of understanding the data better (Tilley, 2003; Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). Logically, the time not spent on the full transcription of the interviews can be allocated to a more thorough analysis of the said data.

Secondly, the data must be organized with the help of tools such as its division into themes or the labeling of the relevant information. This helps for a better organization and makes it much faster for the researcher to find and use the right data proper to each section of the research. In the case of interviews, the transcribed sections can be read, and the relevant parts highlighted in different colors according to the « category » of the text section (this process can be done digitally or manually). This stage is also time-consuming but makes the rest of the process easier afterwards. Indeed, by going through the data collected and listening to the interviews as a whole, the main elements will come out and reduce the amount of raw data (Walliman, 2006; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). This can be compared to the first step of editing a video: going through the hours of rush and cutting out all the unnecessary parts (mistakes, blanks). It is then easier to relate each element to the corresponding elements of theory. The sorted data can be then displayed in an easy-to-visualize setting.

In a third step, the data is analyzed and interpreted using the theory of the theoretical framework section (Lodico, Voegtle & Spaudling, 2010). The goal is to put the relevant collected data into the perspective of the theory (Willig, 2014), always at the service of the research question. After the data is interpreted, conclusions can be drawn, as well as limitations and suggestions. This is in fact a back-and-forth process between the steps and, particularly, interpreting the data can lead to go back to the sorting process and associate it with other theories and elements (Yin, 2011).

The following section of this paper therefore presents the collected data and its interpretation, putting together the data and the theory in several main themes.

3   ANALYSIS

Worldwide tourism receipts were 1323 billion Euros in 2019 (UNWTO, 2020). Because of the enormous spending power of tourists, companies wish to tap into this market from every possible angle. Football as a sport is one of the more popular forces, with viewership spanning across continents. The global phenomenon of both tourism and football provides a

unique ground to create multiple touchpoints of engagement to create a strong brand awareness and recollection. The general model in such a case is where tourism companies (particularly airlines and hospitality industries) provide money to the football clubs in order for them to have their branding placed in different contexts. The following sections will go through the different types of sponsorship that the brands and clubs have at hand before going deeper into its impact on the end customers and the future developments that will be made possible by the new technologies.

3.1   Sponsorship strategies and consumer's perception

3.1.1   The jersey main sponsor

In football and sports in general, sponsoring takes the shape of key visibility on the teams' jersey, as the main (or subsidiary) logo on the shirt. Figure 6 shows the example of Karim Benzema, player of Real Madrid, celebrating his 5th UEFA Champions League success. The brand Emirates is visible on the player's jersey. Most teams have at least one to two "main" jersey sponsors (out of the 98 observed clubs issued from the five main European championships, less than 5% did not have any chest jersey sponsor). Some clubs have two chest sponsors, and others even change sponsors on the home game jersey and the away game jersey.

Figure 6: Karim Benzema wearing the Real Madrid shirt with Emirates as a sponsor

Source: Real Madrid C.F. (2022b)

This picture denotes that the sponsor is very present, even if it is not in every player's intention, and gets the complete focus of the world. The players being the true protagonists of the game, the jersey sponsors are omnipresent before, during, and after the game.

The chest jersey sponsors were observed in the five main European championships (England, Spain, Germany, France, and Italy), and the results are given in Table 3. As we can observe, they are mainly from the Finance/Insurance sector (including gambling and betting), the Food and Beverage Industry, the telecommunications, and the airline industry. The tourism sector is mainly represented by regional DMOs (4 out of 6), which are very localized and difficult to measure through a global survey. However, Accor Live Limitless (ALL) is an interesting case with Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and will be further studied, as well as the airline industry.

Table 3: Sector of activity of the sponsors in the 5 main European football championships

Sector of activity	La Liga	Premier League	Bundesliga	Ligue 1	Calcio A	TOTAL
Airline	1	2		1	1	5
Car			2	1	3	6
Bank & insurance	6	4	4	2	4	20
Tourism sector	1			3	2	6
F&B	2		3	5	2	12
Real estate	2		2	1		5
Telecommunications	3	1	1	1	1	7
E-commerce	1	2				3
Bet/Gambling		9		4		13
Software		1				1
Job search			1	2		3
Other	3	1	6	6		16
TOTAL STUDIED CLUBS	**20**	**20**	**18**	**20**	**20**	

Source: Own work

3.1.1.1 Airlines

- *Fly Emirates*

Fly Emirates is an Emirati Airline based in Dubai and was created in 1985 (Emirates, n.d.). It is the largest airline in the Middle East (SeatGuru by TripAdvisor, n.d.). The brand has been dominant in its presence in sporting industries, namely in football, through sponsoring clubs, stadiums, and competitions.

Paris Saint-Germain

Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) is the most successful club in the French Ligue 1 after winning 8 out of the last 10 championships. The club was bought by Qatar Sport Investments in 2011 which rapidly placed the club in the wealthiest clubs worldwide (Ozanian & Teitelbaum, 2022). Since 2006, even before the club was bought, the main jersey sponsor was Fly Emirates until 2019, when Accor hotel (All – Accor live Limitless) took over as the key sponsor for the club (PSG, 2019).

We can observe that this choice of sponsors brings several elements to the front. Firstly, looking at the history of the clubs' jersey sponsors, one can observe a transition from the traditional corporate sponsorships – the likes of the cars, food & beverage, media, and technology industries, to the airlines and the hospitality industry. One can admit that the tourism industry has grown exponentially in the past twenty years for a myriad of factors and therefore has more potential to be a football sponsor candidate. Furthermore, Paris and France are some of the most attractive destinations worldwide (UNWTO, 2020), which could again explain why the club tends to build sponsorship relationships with tourism companies to enhance the destination's visibility worldwide and its position amongst the most popular destinations for tourists from everywhere in the world. This dimension is unique to destinations as such and has a multi-layered impact for both the sponsors and the clubs, as the spillover effects are super impactful.

Of course, the sponsorship matters only begin with the logo placement of brands on the jerseys during the games, but it goes out much further as it is also integrated into the social media campaigns of the brands. For example, in 2015, Emirates was encouraging supporters to "come and explore one of [their] favorite cities with one of [their] favorite football clubs" (Emirates, 2015), which reinforces the idea of the integrated promotion of the club and the city as a destination. More focused on the club, the "Welcome aboard our PSG flight" video on the airline company's channel, some of the most famous players of the team at the time (February 2018) are scenarized into the flight "4-3-3" for "90 minutes" (Emirates, 2018a). These football terms were precisely chosen to sound familiar to the football fans audience. But with the most famous players in the video, it is also appealing to a wider audience that does not necessarily watch football but is aware of the faces and stars associated. In terms of the destination, the "French touch" is there with the local player Adrien Rabiot correcting the cabin crew in the pronunciation of the name of the city.

At the end of the sponsorship of Emirates, people were quite satisfied with it, as we can see them acknowledging the "good looking" jerseys during the Emirates era, admitting that they deeply associate the brand with the club (deleted user, 2019). Some of the comments are illustrated below:

"The white Emirates PSG kits (plus that all black Jordan one) were always super fire, imo. Definitely the end of an era"

"Fly emirates jerseys are usually top tier"

"PSG no longer a Fly Emirates bro. Friendship ended"

Furthermore, it can be observed that Fly Emirates is also the main jersey sponsor for several other teams such as Lyon, Arsenal, AC Milan, and Real Madrid, which will be further illustrated in the next sub-section.

Real Madrid

Real Madrid has also been sponsored by Fly Emirates since 2013 (Navarro, 2013). Fly Emirates also published a video for the club, very similar to that they had made for PSG: scenarizing the players on a flight, followed by a team made up of the actual players and the cabin crew in the Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid, wearing the game equipment with the tagline "One team" referring to the club and the company (Emirates, 2018b). Drawing upon the same logic of destination branding, the Spanish capital being one of the more visited cities in Europe with great connectivity, it makes sense for the airline industry to invest in such a legacy club, especially when the same year the rival airline company Qatar Airways starts the sponsorship of the historical competing club Barcelona FC, another popular destination for global tourists (see the next section about Qatar airways and FC Barcelona).

Fans seem to have mixed feelings about the sponsorship of Real Madrid Football club by Fly Emirates (Senju, 2022):

"I miss the shirt with absolutely no sponsors"

"Emirates on our jersey looks class. Also some of our best moments this past decade came after we got Emirates as our sponsor especially La Decima and 3 peat so it's been kinda lucky for us."

"The Fly Emirates is the best shirt sponsor logo. No matter the team that wears it (Madrid, PSG until recently, AC Milan, etc) it looks good"

"As sponsor logos on shirts go this is the least obtrusive. It's always fit perfectly with the style of our kits and hopefully we have it as long as possible. As someone said tho having no sponsors is always the best look lol"

"... we will go with whoever can pay the most."

The comments can be divided into two trends. Some of the authors affirm missing the old sponsors such as Teka, or even the period when jerseys did not have a sponsor. Others greet the memories they have of the club's success in the last decade, and that they associate the brand with this success.

- *Qatar Airways*

Qatar Airways, based in Doha, was created in 1993 (Qatar Airways, n.d.-c) and is owned by the Qatar Government since 2014 (PSG, n.d.). In 2021, it was elected the best airline in the World for the 6th time (Thornhill, 2021).

FC Barcelona

Barcelona and Madrid have had political as well as cultural differences that are far deep-rooted, and the game is a space for the fans to express themselves. This rivalry also shows in the promotion of both airlines and both clubs. There are several videos on Qatar Airways' social media showcasing the football players in different destinations served by Qatar (The USA, France, Japan for example), which is quite like the Fly Emirates campaigns (F.C. Barcelona, 2013). But Qatar Airways decided to use an even more integrated marketing strategy by using the players in the presentation of the safety measures (Qatar Airways, 2015). In this one, the borders between a flight and a football game are blurred into a more connected experience. By analyzing the video, we can see some exciting ways the brands connect with the clubs through different elements in the videos. The seats of the stadium and people's couches at home become the airplane seats when it comes to the presentation of the seatbelt rules. The player Gerard Piqué is making the fans running out of breath when the airplane oxygen masks suddenly appear. Then, the video explains that smoking in the toilet of the aircraft is prohibited and punishable by law, displayed as a red card. This video has both promotional and educational purposes, as it is more likely for children and younger people that safety rules showed by Neymar and Piqué will have a better impact than if it is made by the cabin crew. On the other side, this video being shown in every Qatar Airways flight, it is likely that people, football fans or not, will associate the club with the airline company.

The sponsorship between FC Barcelona and Qatar Airways is marked by the slogan "A team that unites the world" (F.C. Barcelona, 2013). There are many ways to read this sentence, the most obvious one being that Qatar Airways unites the word with its worldwide operating flights from a central hub, much like how FC Barcelona unites its fans and supporters from across the globe. In that sense, the union of both brands is uniting the world geographically and through common culture and understanding of how the world is connected.

The general feeling of the people interacting about the end of the Qatar Airways sponsorship is that they are happy that the brand will not appear in the team's jersey anymore (Xenmate, 2017):

"Yet another positive effect of Neymar's departure. The club will no longer associate itself with the Kingdom of Qatar in any way."

"What about trying an Airline, which isn't linked to a dictatorship, oppression or just dirty money?"

On the other side, two comments are actually welcoming the Qatar Airways jersey (Xenmate, 2017):

"Have to say, I reaaally miss the 'Qatar Airways' text on the shirt, I loved it way more than I will ever love the 'Rakuten' text (the kit from 2015/16 is also my favorite kit)."

"Me too. I will just miss how it looks aesthetics wise, I really liked the font"

One of the comments also questions the economic purpose of jersey sponsorship (Xenmate, 2017):

"what is it about football fans and believing that kit sales has any impact on the clubs economy?"

This user keeps going with some calculations of the club's profit and proves that even though jerseys are a little part of the club's revenues, it is a significant factor of attraction for sponsors because it is the most prominent way the brand can be advertised on the field and on media and are therefore an important source of income for the overall club revenue.

To conclude on sponsorship by the airlines, one can see that despite the cross-section of different companies supporting different clubs (and also moving between the top clubs), the campaigns have one goal: drawing a parallel between the wide audience in terms of destinations for the airlines and for the fans for the clubs. The different slogans aim to state that together, they can bring more "clients" to each other (the fans and the travelers, which in the end are widely the same demography. The dimension of destination appears with the promotion of the respective cities Paris, Madrid and Barcelona. Additionally, the brand perception of premium airlines working with premiere clubs creates a very strong association in helping the airline industry have a stronger brand recollection through football, and vice-versa.

3.1.1.2 Hospitality sector: Paris Saint-Germain and ALL

PSG started its sponsorship with ALL in 2019 (PSG, 2019). The French Hotel chain had been publishing promotional content on its social media accounts. For example, the "Summer move" video, scenarizing the players in the booking of their holidays in the Accor Hotels resorts (ALL_AccorLiveLimitless, 2021). The goal of this video is like the airline ones, but instead of promoting flights and its destinations, it is promoting the group's resorts. Therefore, PSG fans from all over the world get to see this video and that their favorite players are using ALL to book their holidays, thus creating a strong association of premium value.

The audience seems to not be against ALL sponsoring the club's jersey. Only one comment regrets Fly Emirates, but it seems to be more out of habit of seeing the logo than a negative connotation that the sponsor changed to ALL (PSGAcademy, 2019).

"Will be strange not seeing Fly Emirates on our jerseys...it's been that way for about fifteen years."

Interestingly, the survey shows that people still associate both PSG and FC Barcelona to their respective former jersey sponsors Fly Emirates and Qatar Airways.

Even more interestingly, non-football fans not only keep in mind the former sponsors of the most famous clubs, but also associate Qatar Airways to PSG, because it is well known, also outside the football sphere, that the state of Qatar owns the PSG team; and by association, people who do not know about football will choose to think of Qatar Airways as the club's official sponsor. As a matter of fact, the Qatari airline just became the club's jersey sponsor from the coming season 2022/2023 (PSG, 2022).

This section detailed the sponsorship of the main jerseys in football. The brands are getting more recognition from football fans through it, which is true for brands from all industries, including tourism, as shown in the three scenarios explored above.

3.1.2   The training equipment

3.1.2.1 The national teams

As per FIFA rules, the national teams are not allowed to have jersey sponsors (Oh My Goal, 2019). Therefore, they are using the training equipment that are of course less visible than the game jersey but still given some visibility during the training, the interviews, during the game on the bench and on the social media posts by the various stakeholders.

For example, Antoine Griezmann (France) training with his national team:

Figure 7: Antoine Griezmann (France) wearing his national team's training kit

Source: Griezmann (2021)

3.1.2.2 The clubs

Clubs also have sometimes other sponsors on the training equipment, as for example PSG and Visit Rwanda (Figure 8):

Figure 8: Lionel Messi and Kilian Mbappé (PSG) wearing their club's training kit

Source: Mbappé (2021)

Again, these two pictures are shared on social media. A lot of pictures like these are available on the players' or the clubs' accounts. Just like for the teams' jerseys, players (and clubs)

tend to share pictures not only of the games but also of the training sessions. Therefore, there is an actual advantage of sponsoring a training kit as the peripheral sponsoring is not only beneficial for the main jersey sponsor. On the three pictures, which are again only a few examples out of many others available on Instagram and the other social media platforms, the sponsor can be seen very clearly: Orange (phone operator), Volkswagen (car company) and Credit Agricole (a bank) for the French national team (Figure 7); and Visit Rwanda for PSG (Figure 8).

The different examples show that, similar to the main jersey, the training equipment gives visibility to the brand, which is also true for tourism brands.

To assess the potential visibility of both the game jerseys and the training equipment, the Instagram profiles of 5 players were analyzed and the following results were observed (Figure 9). The players were chosen based on their presence on social media and the researcher's estimation of the potential impact on the followers (fans, and non-fans of the sport itself).

The following players were chosen to have the widest spectrum possible regarding these criteria: Cristiano Ronaldo, Sergio Ramos, Antoine Griezmann, Robert Lewandowski and Zlatan Ibrahimović. They all represent different clubs, countries and national teams. The full results can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Figure 9: Repartition of the 5 player's posts
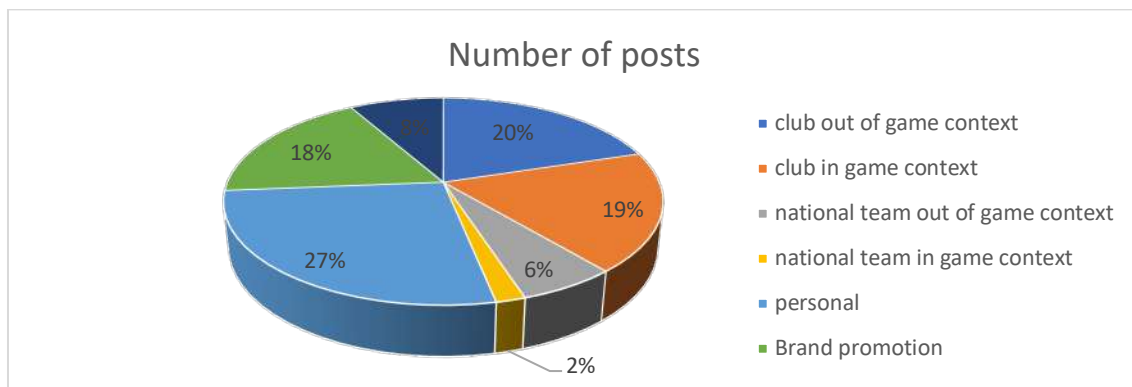
Source: Griezmann (n.d.); Ronaldo (n.d.); Lewandowski (n.d.); Ramos (n.d.); Ibrahimović (n.d.)

Figure 9 shows that around 39% of the posts are about their club and show them in training sessions or in other contexts related to the club (20%). The training equipment is often visible on these posts, including its sponsors and logos. Then, around the same percentage (19%) of the posts represent the players in a setting during or after a game with the said club. Of course, all these posts show the club's jersey as well and its bearing logos for the sponsors.

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The player's private life also represents an important part of the shared content (27% of the player's posts), which makes sense because after all, it is at the core of being on any social media.

The brand promotion does not always show the players in a game context, but certainly is using their notoriety to give visibility to the brand. For example, Sergio Ramos playing at PSG shared 3 posts about a trip to Rwanda organized by the club for a few players. This happened in the context of the partnership between PSG and the DMO Visit Rwanda, in addition to being the sponsor of the training jersey of the Parisian team. Other brand promotions are undertaken by the players for brands that are not directly football related such as Mango Man or Head & Shoulders.

The same applies for the clubs' accounts - who share content, mainly in video and picture formats of the games and training, promotions of the jerseys and others, which, more often than not, showcase the brand presence in a rather cheeky manner. In addition, other promotional videos are made for the sponsors that do not necessarily appear on the jersey or the training equipment. The same goes with the national teams' social media accounts.

The common denominator here again is that with the advent of social media, there is more to sponsorship than just the 90-minute game at the stadium itself. In that sense, when tourism companies sign an agreement with a football club, it is beneficial for them to leverage on these numerous touchpoints. The most obvious one is of course the people at the stadium seeing the players jerseys, but there are also all the people watching the game on TV all over the world. Furthermore, the social media content generated in the scope of the partnership also plays a significant role in the sense that it can also reach the non-football fans by word-of-mouth marketing and social media exposure. Travel and tourism being an integral part of people's life, the brands of this industry are also using these techniques to raise awareness amongst football fans and non-football fans on the social media.

An increased number of stadiums are sponsored by companies. It is a common practice in the USA for a long time that has also made its way into Europe in the last decades.

3.1.3   Stadium sponsor

Several stadiums in Europe, and particularly in the five biggest championships (Spain, France, Germany, Italy, England) are sponsored by a brand, which represents important revenues. In this case, sponsorship of the jersey and the stadium are treated independently.

3.1.3.1 *Groupama Stadium, Lyon (FR)*

The stadium in Lyon was built in 2015 and the naming rights were acquired by the French insurance group Groupama (OL Vallee, 2022; Groupama, n.d.), becoming the Groupama

Stadium of Lyon, while the jerseys of the club are sponsored by Fly Emirates since 2020 (OL, 2020).

On Reddit, under a post about Emirates becoming the new sponsor after Hyundai (and eventually of the stadium as well), the general comments are about either the sponsoring of the shirt and the fact that Emirates is the jersey sponsor of several clubs. Specifically, about the stadium, a comment states (Thet-best, 2020):

"I don't mind the shirt sponsorship. Not sure about how I would feel with another Emirates Stadium though".

Although the stadium sponsor is not Emirates, this comment suggests that it can be difficult for fans to accept stadium names.

Pierre Ménès, French journalist, states that in Lyon (like in many other cities), he hears mostly about the original name of the stadium "Parc OL" instead of "Groupama Stadium" (Ménès, 2021), highlighting that people struggle to change the name of the stadiums in their minds. It is exceedingly difficult to define if this blockage is made intentionally (people consciously refusing to call the stadium by its brand name) or unintentionally (the old name is genuinely anchored in people's minds).

3.1.3.2 Wanda Metropolitano, Madrid (SP)

The stadium in Madrid was built in 1994 in an to attempt to organize the 1994 World Athletics Championship. The Chinese Real Estate group Wanda acquired the naming right of the stadium during its renovation in 2017 (Club Atlético de Madrid, 2016). On the other side, the shirt sponsor is the online trading service provider Plus500 (Club Atlético de Madrid, n.d.). People do not seem incredibly happy about this change of name. On Reddit, under the article called "Atletico Madrid's new stadium will be named the Wanda Metropolitano", the comments about the stadium are exclusively negative (NouveauSarfas, 2016).

"From Vicente calderon to Wanda Metropolitano, it sounds fucking awful. I read they'd name it as Luis Aragones stadium, which'd be a fitting one.Would like to know how Atleti fans feel about this."

"I fucking hate it."

"Its bad, but it will eventually either grow on you or people starts calling it the "Atleti Stadium" (Ala Highbury or the new Juve stadium)."

"Fans don't seem to pleased by it, looking at the replies on that tweet. They basically sold the name (Wanda is the name of the company that owns 20% of Atleti) and a lot of people wanted the stadium to be named after Luis Aragones"

"Poco a poco se van cargando la huella histórica de este equipo. Que sigue después? remplazar el himno por una canción de David Bisbal? Una lastima." (Little by Little, they are taking away the historical footprint of this team. What next? Change the anthem for a song of David Bisbal? What a shame.)

"Hate this. Don't put the name of a corporation in your stadium."

Other comments point out the fact that people will still call the stadium by its usual name, by UEFA rules and by common practices (NouveauSarfas, 2016):

"The Metroplitano doesn't sound too bad."

"it seems like the allocated name will stick however it's ugliness."

"People will just call it El Metropolitano just aa our old stadium."

There are more than 50 comments under the twitter announcement of the club, and they are almost exclusively negative (Atletico de Madrid [@Atleti], 2016). Either the authors are expressing their disagreement with the naming of the stadium or are mocking the new name/saying that they would have preferred the stadium to be named after Luis Aragonés, as part of a tribute to the former renowned player of the club. The words coming the most often when putting the comments into a word cloud generator are "name" (nombre), "stadium" (estadio), "no", "shame" (vergüenza), "history" (historia), "horror", showing the general disagreement with the name (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Word cloud from Atletico Madrid's tweet's comment

.

Source: Atletico de Madrid [@Atleti], 2016

There is not always continuity in the sponsorship between stadiums and teams/jersey. The two examples above show that a company can decide to sponsor exclusively, or partially. Sponsoring a stadium may also have added value, through other events hosted at the venue can also help gain the branding momentum. All in all, a short-term association with a stadium (such as Atletico de Madrid) would not stick in the consumer minds, but Arsenal's association with the Emirates Stadium existing for the long-haul eventually makes a place in people's minds. This, however, is a special case as this is a holistic sponsorship that Emirates has undertaken.

3.1.3.3 Sponsoring of several stadiums

In some cases, certain companies choose to sponsor several stadiums. For example, the company Allianz sponsors several arenas - the Allianz Arena in Munich, the Allianz Riviera in Nice and the Allianz Stadium in Turin (Allianz, n.d.). This might have a counterproductive effect as people might think that the company is all over the place and not showcasing loyalty to a specific club and only seeking monetary benefits from the sponsorship of any football club. But on the other side of the story, it enables the brand to host multiple events of football. This, from a categorical standpoint, helps brands have visibility over supporting arenas, rather than taking an immersive approach with a single team.

As a conclusion about the sponsoring of stadiums, the closest to IMC is the first example when clubs (jerseys) and stadiums are sponsored by the same company, to give continuity in the fans' eyes. This builds a holistic image of the club and the company working together. On the opposite side, we can question the dollar and brand return of companies like Allianz, who choose to sponsor arenas over individual clubs.

3.1.4 Stadium and jersey - combined sponsorship

Some of the stadiums are directly sponsored by the same sponsor as the jersey. This resembles IMC as it gives a structured image of the company and its relationship to the club.

3.1.4.1 Emirates Stadium, London (EN)

Arsenal has been playing in the Emirates Stadium since 2006 and the construction of the stadium acquired the name of the sponsor Emirates at the same time as the jersey sponsoring (BBC, 2004). It seems that "Emirates Stadium" is set in the fans' heads as the airline's name was associated with the stadium from its construction. However, people claim that they would prefer to have it named after Arsène Wenger, the club's iconic manager and one of the club's "big name" (Shashwat, 2019).

"I knew I will see a comment saying wenger the moment I started reading "stadium naming rights". Oh boy, we all love arsene so much :)"

"Some name that has either "Wenger" or "Arsene" in it. The legend absolutely deserves it!"

Other comments are just acknowledging that naming rights is a must in football business while others doubt the ability for another company to settle if the agreement with Emirates were to end (and contemplating old or hypothetical names) (Shashwat, 2019):

"Yep, and honestly in this day and age not having someone pay you millions to name it would just be bad business. It's just lighting money on fire, no matter how cool other stadium names may be."

"There are people saying that sponsors will be reluctant to take over the name of something that has been called the Emirates for so long, and to a degree, they are right. It might be a less valuable commodity than if it was a new park, but Arsenal is still a massive, world famous club. Someone will pay."

"If Emirates don't renew it they will just name it Ashburton Grove or something else that's neutral. Nobody else will want to pay for naming rights to a stadium that has been called "The Emirates Stadium" for the past 22 years. The name is ingrained now. People will still likely call it The Emirates even if we had no sponsor. The value for naming rights is only really there in the beginning when a stadium opens."

3.1.4.2 Etihad Stadium, Manchester (EN)

Manchester City plays in the Etihad Stadium, renamed that way in 2011 through the acquisition of the naming rights, as part of the renewal of the jersey sponsorship that started in 2009 (BBC Sport, 2011). Consequently, both the stadium and the club's jerseys are sponsored by Etihad since 2011.

This author is emphasizing the fact that Manchester City has a big place in the UAE and the role that companies like Etihad are playing.

"I lived in abu dhabi for decades and it's why I support city. The team is big there. Of course you have the madrid/barca/liverpool/united fans but there is pride in man city and companies like Etihad do push that relationship, even to employees. I was walking through their HQ and there were cardboard cutouts of players in internal areas."

3.1.4.3 Spotify Arena, Barcelona (SP)

Spotify will own the arena and be the sponsor from the coming season 2022-2023 as announced by the club on its website (FC Barcelona, 2022). Spotify will be the main jersey sponsor of both the women and men teams. Furthermore, the brand will also be the subject of the renaming of the Camp Nou stadium, the first in the club's history since 1957.

This image given through linear sponsoring of the club and the stadium can lead to a stronger relationship between both parties who will be more committed to each other, and this can be sensed also from the consumer's point of view. In the case of FC Barcelona and Spotify, it is clearly stated on the club's announcement that emphasizes the benefit of the long-term strong relationship that unites both stakeholders.

However, it seems that fans are not necessarily approving of this decision of the club. On Reddit, numerous comments can be found regretting the name of a young brand being put next to the "historical" stadium (QuyT1, 2022)

"Old enough to remember when Barca were the only sizeable club to never have a sponsor on their shirt."

"I hate this part of Capitalism. Everything sounds so stupid"

"This makes me sad. Not even a barca fan."

People are also arguing whether the stadium will actually be called that way in the everyday life (QuyT1, 2022)

"Nobody is ever gonna be calling it this lmao"

"We don't need to call it that as long as we are exposed to it. Also, medias have binding agreements related to it."

"Barca's CEO stepped down because of this purchase. The naming rights is the biggest issue. Camp Nou never had its name changed, and now it's entire rights is not Barcelona's anymore."

"Tbh it's super easy money, fans will get over it once they realise it barely effects anything"

Lastly, people are also making fun of the name and imagining names for other stadiums if they were to have a sponsor. Also, they question the efficiency of such strategies and whether they buy the products more because they are sponsors of a club (QuyT1, 2022).

"TikTok Parc des Princes"

"I've always been curious how much companies actually benefit from their shirt sponsoring deals. I've never purchased electronics from Sharp, nor owned a Chevrolet, nor bought insurance from AIG, nor used whatever it is that teamviewer is, nor used vodafone's services, nor Aon...what the fuck does AON do? I've probably never used it either."

"Now QPR used to have Guinness as a sponsor. I can get behind that...but I would be drinking beer regardless of whether or not it is on my football team's shirt."

3.1.5   Naming of clubs

3.1.5.1 Bayer Leverkusen, Germany

Historically, the club is owned by the pharmaceutical company Bayer (Bayer04, n.d.-b). Therefore, not only is the brand the creator of the club, but also the current naming sponsor of both the club and the stadium. Indeed, the club was originally created in 1904 by workers at Bayer who wanted to create a team to play football together. Today, the club is playing in the Bayarena, highlighting the brand's name at the arena. Throughout the years, the name of the club was always related to the company: the name of the owner Ulrich Haberland, BayArena (from **Bay**er) (Bundesliga, n.d.: Bayer04, n.d.-a). Naturally, the brand logo also appears on the club's logo since 1928.

3.1.5.2 Red Bull Leipzig

The energizing beverage company bought the club in 2009, a fifth division German club to make it grow (BBC Sport, 2020). This is a remarkably interesting strategy which, despite the company not creating the club, makes it part of recent history. In fact, the club managed to raise the club into the first division (Bundesliga) by the season of 2016-2017, only seven years into buying the club. By this action, the company anchored its name with the club's success as most people following football would associate the brand and the club together, besides the usual sponsorship values.

Both strategies employed by the brands managed to have an efficient and/or long-lasting impact on the respective clubs. Awareness is raised for the brands through their visual presence on the stadium, and in the media, which are supposed to mention the brand when they mention the stadium. This is true for all brands in general, including the tourism sector.

3.1.6 Sponsoring and naming of competitions

3.1.6.1 Naming of competitions

Ligue 1, France

The French League was sponsored and therefore titled "Ligue 1 Orange" after the phone and company between 2008 and 2010. Then, between 2017 and 2020, the furniture company Conforama was the one adding its name on the competition (LFP, 2017), before the League signed a contract with Uber Eats until 2024 (Ligue 1, 2019). The three vastly different sectors of coming into sponsoring these events show the multiplicity of the sectors of activity sponsoring football.

"Imagine english league being called: Uber Eats Premier League
I'd fucking vomit every time I watch a match and see this logo. And they're doing it. Jesus"

"Everybody is sad but if I can get a 5€ reduction on my McDonald's delivery on match days...."

"you win the Uber Eats ligue 1 cup. can't stop laughing"

"The partnership will last two years and will bring in €15 million per year which is pretty much what Conforama is giving."

"Not all money is good money"

"Just when you think Ligue 1 can't produce more memes"

"There's already ads everywhere on the pitch, why not get some extra revenue selling the naming rights of the entire league?"

"This isn't a new concept. What did you think the Barclays in Barclays Premier League meant several seasons ago? Or Carling Premiership back in the 90s?"

"No fucking way bruh. That is the most terrible sounding sports ad since Guaranteed Rate Field."

Beyond people joking as in the examples above on both the level of the competition and the brand itself, (and a few comments admitting that the sponsorship does not bother them) (Boolouloubi, 2019), one of the comments point out that there is more to sponsorship than just a name (Boolouloubi, 2019):

"This actually makes a lot of sense. For one they're paying 7 million more. Secondly, with Uber being a tech company, I'm sure they'll involve more technology in promoting the league, teams and players. Like there will likely be an app, where you can look up players, order meals made from their freshly grown produce, rate them 1-5 stars and tip them - all while watching them play."

Some comments also point out the role of ethics and politics in these sponsorships (Boolouloubi, 2019):

"Although there is no problem with Uber Eats in France, there is a lot of controversy with the part about cars."

"Another explanation could be that they think that promoting one service is more efficient than the whole company and that Uber Eats is the one most closely linked to football."

"at least Conforama gives legit contracts to their workforce"

Emirates FA Cup

The FA Cup in the UK, after several other companies, has been sponsored by Emirates since 2015 (Emirates, 2017). The Airline company is present here again, showing their affection for football. Football fans oscillate between indifference (they will keep calling the competition "FA Cup") and madness to see the omnipresence of emirates in football sponsorship (Broopyd, 2015):

"Oh come on, people, no one will call it that. It doesn't matter."

"The people on TV will, and that's who they care about."

"But it will be on all the logos and advertisement boards and so on"

"Meh, doesn't really matter does it, people will always call it the FA Cup, who cares about the sponsor."

"What a shit name ! but as you say, better than Emirates cup. Personally, I am just getting sick of all this Emirates and Qatar bullshit. We need some new names on the front of the shirts. Like Milan's Opel shirt or Man Utd's Sharp. Those were iconic kits."

"Sounds great. Soon we will be watching the Emirates League, where Emirates City play Emirates United, while Emirates Town are playing Emirates City #2. These games will be taking place in Emirates Stadium #23 and Emirates Stadium #14."

A sub-discussion in the thread leads to people talking about the sponsorship strategy behind it and its efficiency. Some of them even suggest that we would not know about the airline if it were not for football sponsorship (Broopyd, 2015):

"Advertising has proven to be effective, otherwise companies wouldn't pay extortionate amounts for it. Surveys have shown that people always think they're never influenced, but in reality they are. You probably will be slightly influenced, or maybe you won't, but a lot of people are influenced by this kind of advertisement."

"Sponsorship isn't only about influencing purchase, it is mainly on brand awareness and corporate image. Budweiser, being an American brew will/is difficult to compete with existing English beer that local FA Cup audience are already accustomed to. However, the next time that a tourist goes to the USA, Budweiser may be the only domestic beer brand that you are aware of, and therefore, orders it."

"Same with airlines. People might never heard of Emirates unless they have some kind of interest in the middle east. But with it's heavy involvement in football, it is now known globally. Some fans will want to take the same airline that their favourite player's been on."

"Companies want to associate their brand with something people have strong feelings for. That's why sponsoring teams and stadiums is a powerful tool in branding. If you were an Arsenal fan for example, when you see the Emirates airline outside of football you might prefer them because it reminds you of Arsenal and all the strong feelings associated with football and the club. This is often something that happens pretty much unconsciously."

Comments also point out some potential conflict of interest with Emirates being the sponsor of one of the competitors (Broopyd, 2015). This concern makes sense although football still is a game, what happens on the pitch cannot be influenced.

"What are we gonna call the Emirates Cup then?"

"What are Arsenal gonna win every preseason now?"

*"When I first read the headline I literally said out loud
"Fuck me, Arsenal have bought the cup"!"*

When others point out the fact that sponsors are changing frequently and that they do not necessarily feel attached to the "temporary name" of the competition (Broopyd, 2015):

"It changes sponsor too often for me to keep track, so has to be League Cup for me."

"I tend to alternate between league, carling and capital one depending on who I'm speaking to."

Other authors are trying to point out the actual value for the clubs and the competition (Broopyd, 2015):

"At least it's still the FA cup. Feel like they should be prioritising specialising the F.A cup again before these sponsorships."

"This could help it become more special, more money means more teams trying, more teams trying means more money etc"

By adding their name to the competitions, the companies gain a lot of visibility because the brand is named at every mention of the competition and the logo is visible at many places. Potentially, people that are not usual customers can also become more loyal to the brand because they see it at every game they are watching on TV, at the stadium, or in any kind of media that talks about football at some point.

The same way as the naming of stadiums, naming of a competition gives more visibility in form of the presence of the brand logo and name in the media in the broad sense. At the beginning of the game, the brands are also displayed on the stadium for example. Once again, the examples given are examples from both the tourism industry and other industries.

3.1.6.2 Sponsoring of competitions

Looking at the sponsoring of the two major football competitions, the UEFA Euro and the FIFA World Cup, the tourism industry appeared quite recently, in the 2000s. Indeed, Emirates became a sponsor of FIFA with the FIFA World Cup Germany 2006 as a first major tournament, with a contract until the FIFA Brazil 2014 World Cup. From the next World Cup, Qatar Airways became the sponsor for the 2018 (Russia) and 2022 (Qatar) (FIFA, 2017). For the UEFA Euro Cup, Turkish airlines in 2016 (UEFA, 2015) along with Abritel/HomeAway (UEFA, 2016), and Qatar Airways in 2020 (UEFA, 2021a) along with Booking.com. (UEFA, 2017).

The following section aims to look deeper into the case of the Qatar World Cup 2022.

FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022

At the end of this year, Qatar will host the 2022 World Cup (FIFA, n.d.-a). All the controversy around this event apart, the next World Cup is interesting to study in terms of marketing. Firstly, Qatar Airways, by signing a global agreement with FIFA in 2022 stating the sponsorship for the next competitions (2018 to 2022). This represents the biggest agreement in the airline's history and was of course preparing for the FIFA Qatar World Cup 2022. Furthermore, this event is also the first one of this scope in the Middle East and is therefore a strong promotion of the region as a tourism destination. This can also be seen in

the numerous advertisements from the country's DMO. Other local companies with the namesake of the "Qatar" brand are sponsoring the event, such as Qatar Energy.

This can be considered as IMC from the destination's point of view. Everything around the World Cup is meant to serve Qatar as a destination, and even though the World Cup is not explicitly mentioned in the Visit Qatar advertisements.

The national airline company Qatar Airways also advertises the World cup, for example in this video called "Get ready for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™" (Qatar Airways, 2022a), Doha Airport is scenarized and the displays of the airport show the groups of the competition. The last screen of the video shows the sentence "Next stop the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™".

Every Qatari stakeholder linked to tourism is advertising Qatar towards the World Cup that will take place this December besides the DMO advertising the competition (both direct and indirect advertisements for the FIFA World Cup). For example, one of the multiple thematic videos using the purposedly created song "Shining" shows a quite good example of IMC itself (Visit Qatar, 2021). The references are very subtle, but the video shows a significant number of references to the country, including a Qatar Airways airplane and a shot of one of the World Cup stadiums. Not present in all the videos of the series, these two elements show the inclusion of several stakeholders in the tourism industry, and the union between the DMO and the companies/events to promote the country as a destination.

The idea between these joint communications is to use the World Cup as a factor of attraction to the country and to bring people to the event and to the destination, and Qatar Airways is the perfect tool. In fact, people use this airline a lot to travel from Asia to Europe or to North America using Doha as a hub. For example, from Montreal to Dhaka through Doha or Frankfurt to Singapore through Doha. But this time, travelers, and football fans will not only transit in Doha but stay for a longer period and watch the competition.

Figure 11: Qatar Airways' destinations worldwide

Source: Qatar Airways (n.d.-b)

This map (Figure 11) shows all the destinations served by Qatar Airways from Doha (Qatar Airways, n.d.-b), 65 according to the company's financial statement 2022 (Qatar Airways, n.d.-a). People coming from North America to South and South-East Asia and vice versa take Qatar Airways to travel and follow European football for example. These two elements will connect and form a unity with on top Qatar hosting the FIFA World Cup as a Middle Eastern tourism destination.

The company is very much linked with both FIFA and the fact that the upcoming World Cup will happen in Qatar. In fact, the event is even the object of the company's 2021 financial report (Qatar Airways, n.d.-a). As observed in Figure 12, the aircraft with the colors of the FIFA World Cup 2022 is displayed on the front page of the report, meaning that it is the first image that customers and professionals see when opening the report.

Later in the report (Qatar Airways, n.d.-a), one page is made about the importance of the one-year-to the World Cup event that happened in November 2021 with a Qatar Airways flight, specially painted for the occasion, was transporting the trophy (Figure 13). The company also affirms that being the official airline partner of the competition is a big opportunity of further growth for the company.

Figure 12: Front page of the annual report 2021-2022 of Qatar Airways

Source: Qatar Airways (n.d.-a)

Figure 13: Annual report 2021-2022 of Qatar Airways

Source: Qatar Airways (n.d.-a)

On Reddit (michealajay, 2017), one comment can be found about the influence Qatar Airways would have in FIFA's decision.

"Nice of them to make it official after the millions they stuffed into the pockets of FIFA officials."

This example shows how much the sponsorship of the competition is part of Qatar Airways' strategy and could be considered as being integrated into the strategy at least for a certain

period. There is a sense of natural link between the event, the destination, and the tourism company.

The opening ceremony of the UEFA/FIFA competitions

On the US model with American Football, the UEFA now opens the opening ceremony for sponsoring, with Pepsi since 2016 (UEFA, 2020). For example, Pepsi sponsored the 2022 final opening Ceremony with Camila Cabello (Billboard, 2022).

Figure 14: Camila Cabello and Pepsi at the UEFA Champions League final 2022

Source: YouTube, 2022

In the naming of competitions or part of the competitions, the brand is constantly present (example in Figure 14) and the heavy mediatization of the said competition automatically leads to a higher visibility, whichever sector the brand is part of. This shows an example of a multinational from the F&B industry, but it seems like it could apply as well to companies for other industries.

However, when exploring the topic on Reddit (SkinnyhairaM, 2022), people do not mention the brand Pepsi at all and admit that the show itself does not stick in the memories.

"The UEFA president (or someone involved with the organization of the event) has said that they do want to make the performance a bigger deal. More people watch this game than watch the Superbowl so it could benefit everyone if the performance does become a bigger deal."

"On the other hand, Dua Lipa performed before the 2018 final (which Liverpool lost) and, to this day, the supporters still sing 'One Kiss' after big wins."

"Yeah. I follow soccer and I can't name past performances. I can barely remember who performed at world cups, let alone CL finals. Good for her for getting a stadium performance under her belt but soccer fans don't really care about inaugurations and such."

3.1.7   The pre-and post-game interviews

Players and coaches regularly have interviews and press conferences where sponsors can be seen in different manners. For example, as in Figure 15, we can see Antoine Griezmann after a game with the French team in an interview (MyTF1, 2021).

Figure 15: Antoine Griezmann (France) in a post-game interview

Source: MYTF1 (2021)

Behind him, you can see several logos: Volkswagen, Nike, Carambar, Credit Agricole, or KFC. This is one of the other ways brands can be displayed in football.

These images are then shared on social media, blogs, forums, on TV and other media in the form of videos and pictures by the several stakeholders. It can be the player, the club, the league, the broadcaster of the game and so on. Brands from different sectors can therefore benefit from these interviews by being displayed in front of a large audience before and after the game.

However, the use of those brands can be controversial. For example, Cristiano Ronaldo during an interview in the frame of the UEFA Euro 2020, took off a bottle of Coca-Cola and drank water instead affirming that he wanted to show people, especially children, that water is the healthiest beverage (CNN, 2021).

During the same tournament, Paul Pogba, Muslim, took away a bottle of a non-alcoholic Heineken (BBC Sport, 2021a). The UEFA reacted to these two "events" by asking the

players to leave the sponsors visible and that if this type of incident reproduces itself, there would be sanctions (BBC Sport, 2021b).

3.1.8   The fence around the field

All around the field, one can see dynamic advertisements of different brands. Such a thing was allowed by technological advancements and the fact that it is dynamic allows more sponsors to be displayed.

Figure 16: Marcel Desailly and Thierry Henry at the UEFA Euro 2000

Source: Desailly (2020)

This first picture (Figure 16) represents the two French players Marcel Desailly and Thierry Henry during a game of the UEFA Euro 2000 (Desailly, 2020). In the background, we can see advertisements such as Coca-Cola or Carlsberg. It is also important to specify that at that time, the tourism industry was not present, it was mostly the F&B and the technology industry.

Figure 17, a capture from a game in 2022, shows the brand Expedia on dynamic screens around the stadium (Real Madrid, 2022a). This shows that the brands represented also evolved. People travelled increasingly, which gave a space for the companies to raise brand awareness through football.
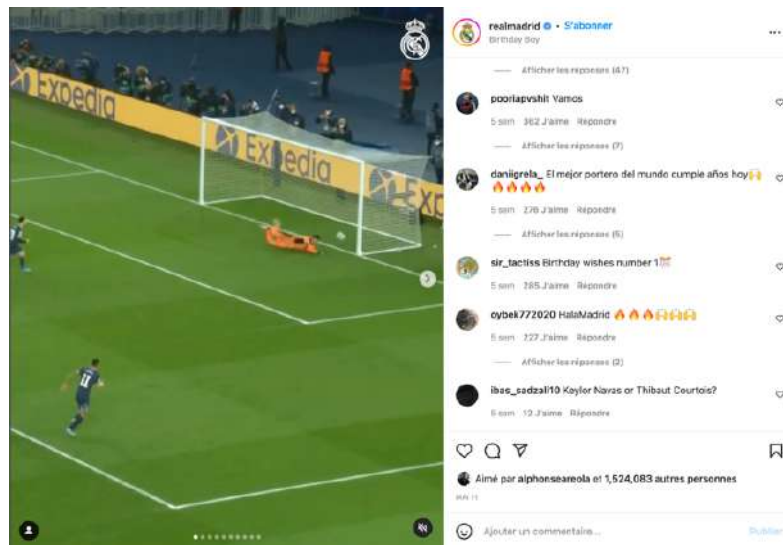
Source: Real Madrid (2022a)

Between the two images (Figure 16 and Figure 17), we can see the difference in the display of the advertisement and therefore the technological advancements that occurred in football. In 2000, the advertisements were static and not digital at all. In 2022, the advertisements on the fence are not only digital but dynamic. The screens move from sponsor to sponsor showing their logo.

On the internet, people also seem to accept that ads on the fences are part of the game (Targ_, 2020):

"Been like that for years lol"

"Yeah they've always been there. It's the first thing I always notice"

"In a bull market you will see more advertisements"

To conclude on sponsorship touchpoints in football, the investment made by the (tourism) companies is getting a high return on an overall from the brand awareness standpoint, amongst both football fans primarily through the game itself, and the non-football fans through a spillover from the social media. The sponsorship gives visibility, meaning more potential customers all around the world and therefore more revenues. From the club's point of view, the money received from the sponsorship is necessary and crucial very useful since it participates in the investments made by the club in buying new players, managing the club's operations, and supporting growth. The economic logic dictates that the more money the club makes, the better players they can afford, giving the club better results and therefore higher legitimacy for further agreements. As mentioned throughout the section, examples of sponsorship exist in football within and outside the tourism sector, which makes it

acceptable. But over the last two decades, the participants from the tourism industry have been on the rise. Therefore, what is valid for other sectors such as the car industry or the bank and insurance industry is also true for the tourism industry, as it also plays an important role in people's life. Companies are gaining visibility by sponsoring football clubs in many ways: on the social media (through players, clubs, and coaches accounts), on the news, on the Internet in the broader sense, and so on. To get a more grounded reality of how these sponsors are perceived on the ground, a survey was conducted and analyzed, and used with the aim to observe the actual impact of the companies' strategies, particularly IMC strategies, on the consumers, both football fans and non-football fans.

3.2 Brand recognition and customer behavior

3.2.1 Demographics

This section will focus on analyzing the data collected through the survey. In total, 63 responses were collected. The analysis of the survey responses aims to understand the influence football marketing has on people's consumption behavior.

In the first section, the identification as a football fan was crossed with the demographic data (gender, age, region of identification):

Figure 18: Survey result "do you consider yourself a football fan"
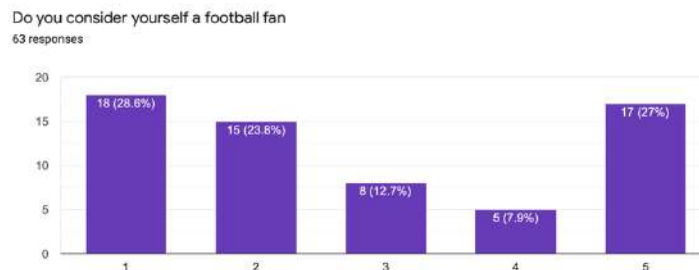
Source: Own work

As we can see in the answer of the first question (Figure 18), the majority does not consider themselves football fans at all (18 respondents; 1 out of 5 on the Likert scale), but it represents the same amount as the people considering themselves football fans (17 respondents; 5 out of 5 on the Likert scale).

Amongst the football fans (Figure 19), the majority is fan of FC Barcelona (15,9%), followed by Real Madrid, then equally Dortmund, PSG and Manchester United. However, a considerable amount of people affirm not following football (55,6%). This is more than the

number of people not identifying as football fans and englobes the "2 out of 5 on the Lickert scale" responses.

Figure 19: Survey result "What team do you follow?"
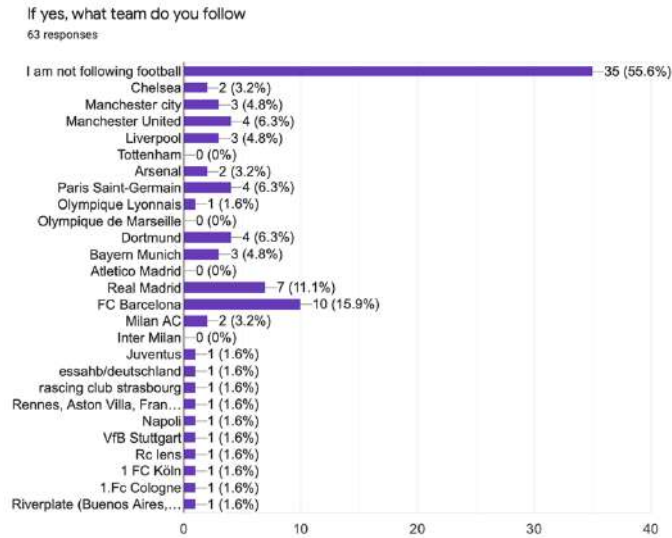
Source: Own work

Figure 20: Survey result "Gender"

Source: Own work

Age
63 responses

Less than 18
18-25
25-34
35-44
45 +

41.3%
9.5%
34.9%
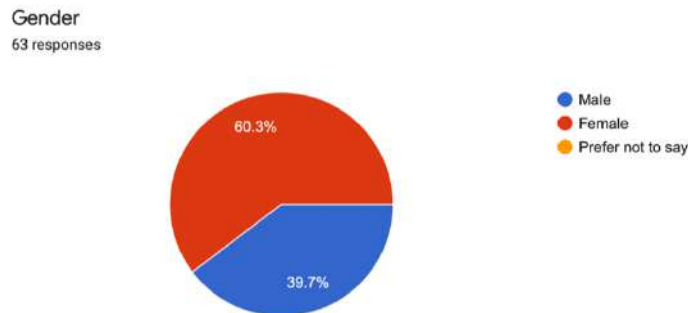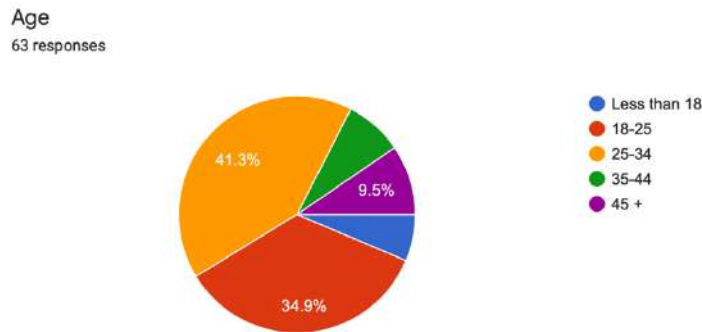
Source: Own work

Figure 22: Survey result "What continent do you consider yourself from"

What continent do you consider yourself from ?
63 responses

Africa
Asia
Europe
North America
South America
Other

61.9%
9.5%
14.3%
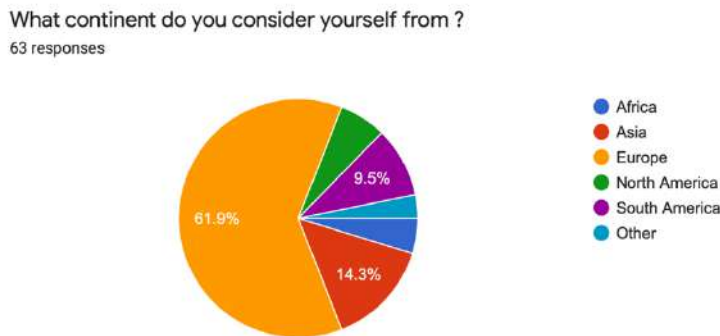
Source: Own work

In terms of representation, 60,3% of the respondents were women (38 respondents) (Figure 20). Most of the respondents were aged between 18 and 34 years old (48 out of 63 respondents), 41,3% being between 25 and 34 years old and 34,9% between 18 and 24 years old (Figure 21). 61,9% of the respondents consider themselves from Europe, 14,3% from Asia and 9,5% from South America (Figure 22).

Firstly, 13 out of 25 men responding to the survey affirmed being football fans (5 out of 5 on the Likert scale) when only 4 women out of 38 affirm the same. On the other side, 2 of the males affirm not being a football fan at all when this feeling is shared by 16 of the women. Also quite big is the number of women responding with a 2 out of 5 (11 women respondents). (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Survey result "Do you consider yourself a football fan?" by gender
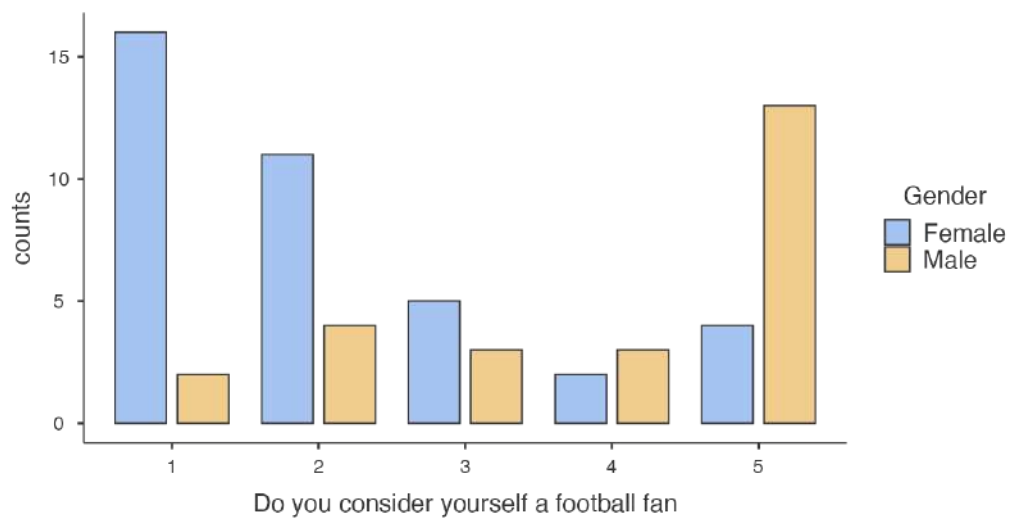
Source: Own work

In terms of age, as shown in figure 24, most of the people who like football are between 18 and 44 years old, which can be explained by the fact that these two age categories also represent most of the respondents (76,2%). Therefore, they without surprise represent most people not liking football as well.

Figure 24: Survey result "Do you consider yourself a football fan?" by age
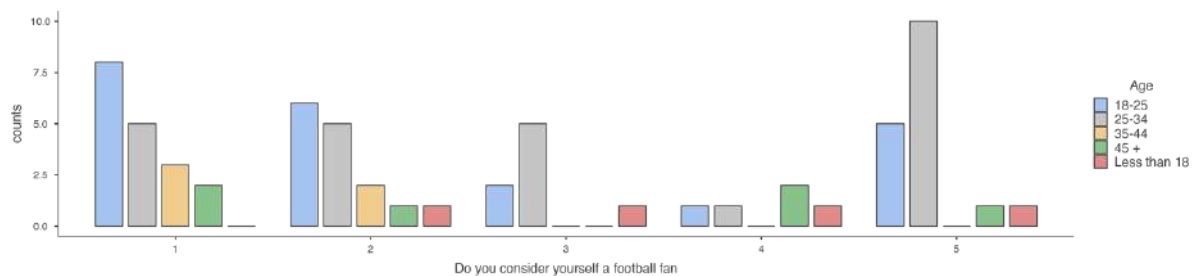
Source: Own work

Most of the respondents also reside in or are from Europe, which explains that the bars in orange (representing Europe) are overshadowing the other regions in Figure 25. It is however interesting to see how Asian respondents seem to answer a 1 or 2 out of 5 for most of them when asked if they consider themselves football fans. Historically, this can be explained by the fact that football is not the most viewed or played sport in Asia. The same goes for North American respondents sharing exclusively 1 or 2 out of 5.

Figure 25: Survey result "Do you consider yourself a football fan?" by region
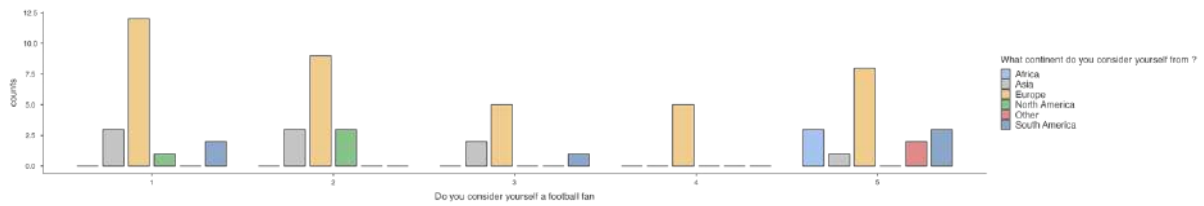
Source: Own work

3.2.2 Brand recognition

In the second part of the data analysis, the associations between brands and clubs will be further investigated. Six brand logos were shown and the idea behind this exercise was to try to understand the psychological influence of sponsorship on both football fans and non-football fans.

The first question of this type showed the logo of the Airline Emirates and a selection of 10 clubs that the respondents could choose (it was possible to select several clubs to associate with one brand. This response was crossed with the fact of being a football fan or not. For the responses to be more accurate, the responses of non-football fans will be considered as it is assumed that football fans already know the sponsor of the clubs mentioned as they are very much anchored in the football world.

For this question, only one person (Figure 26) had all the correct answers that were:

- AC Milan
- Real Madrid
- Olympique Lyonnais
- Arsenal

Notably, this person also considered himself a football fan (5 on the Likert scale)

Figure 26: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for Emirates, according to the degree of interest into football
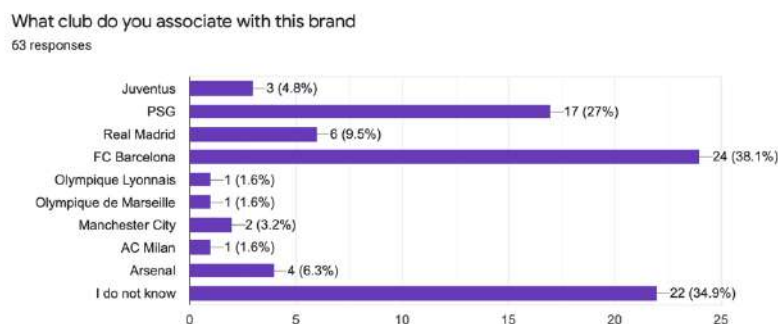

Source: Own work

Figure 27: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for Emirates

What club do you associate with this brand
63 responses
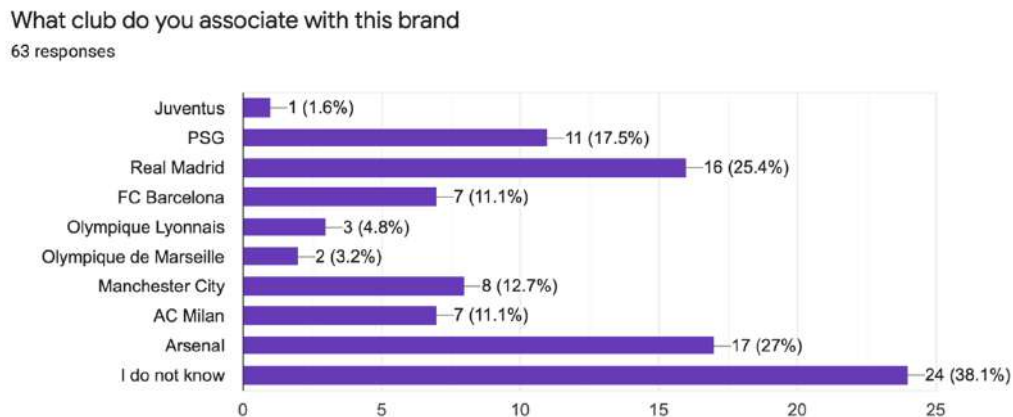
Source: Own work

Looking from a wider perspective (Figure 27), the "I do not know" response set aside, most of the people mentioned Arsenal (27%), which is true, especially when we know that the stadium the team is playing the games at home is the Emirates Stadium, which could have anchored the brand even more together with the team.

Then, Real Madrid was the second team being cited the most often (25,4%), followed by PSG (17,5%). Very little mention was made of AC Milan (7) and Olympique Lyonnais (3). It is very interesting to see that PSG comes in the third position when the airline is not the jersey sponsor since 2017 anymore. The brand, however, seems to be well linked to the Parisian club in the respondent's mind. When looking deeper at the people who mentioned PSG, there are respondents that are from all "levels" of football fandom. This shows that the brand's strategy seems to be working quite well for being in the customer's mind after several years of not being contractually linked to the club as the main jersey sponsor.

The second logo proposed is the logo of ALL Accor Live Limitless (Figure 28), the sponsor of the PSG, only "correct" answer to this question. "I do not know" Responses aside, most of the responses were PSG only, for both football fans and non-football fans; and the French club was mentioned by 19 people, 30,2% of the respondents.

Figure 28: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for ALL, according to the degree of interest into football
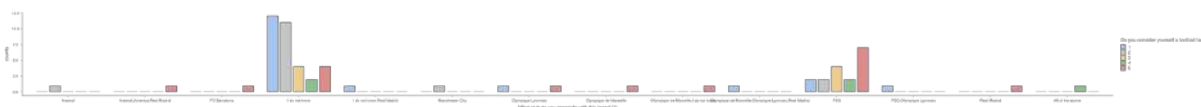
Source: Own work

This fact makes it even more interesting that people associate PSG with the right current sponsor but still affirms associating the same club to the airline Emirates.

Figure 29: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for ALL

What club do you associate with this brand
63 responses
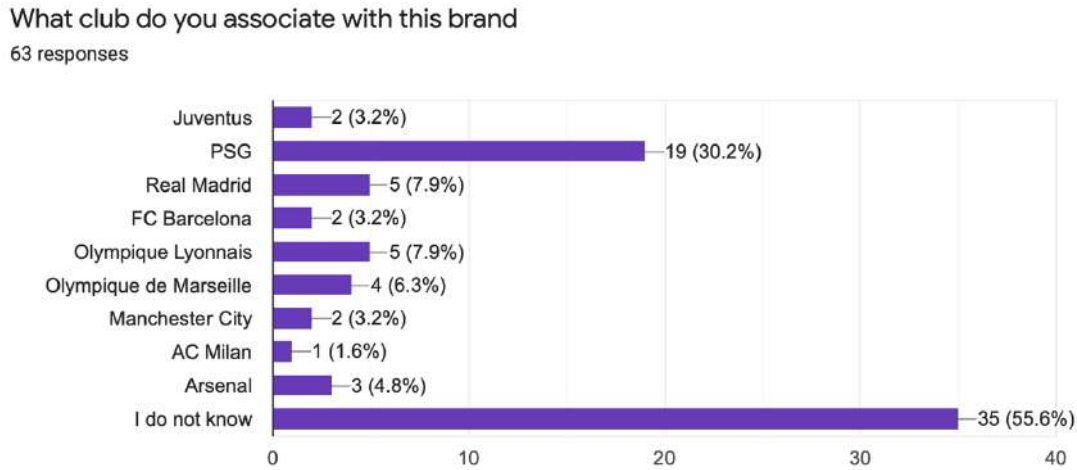
Regardless of the respondents' identification as a football fan or not (Figure 29), PSG was mentioned by 30,2% of the respondents (19), far before Olympique Lyonnais or Real Madrid with respectively 6 mentions.

The next proposed brand logo was Uber Eats, sponsor of Olympique de Marseille (Figure 30).

Figure 30: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for Uber Eats, according to the degree of interest into football

Most of the football fans had the correct answer when the rest of the answers were more dispersed. Interestingly, some people also associated the brand with other clubs such as PSG or Olympique Lyonnais (in respectively second and third position) (Figure 31). This is a relevant information since Uber Eats is in fact not only the sponsor of the Mediterranean club, but also of the French Ligue 1.

The difference between Marseille and the second most cited club Olympique Lyonnais is not particularly important (respectively 17,5 and 9,5%). Therefore, it can be considered that people do not generally immediately associate OM and Uber Eats together.

The next logo was Qatar Airways, the airline that used to sponsor FC Barcelona (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for Qatar Airways, according to the degree of interest into football
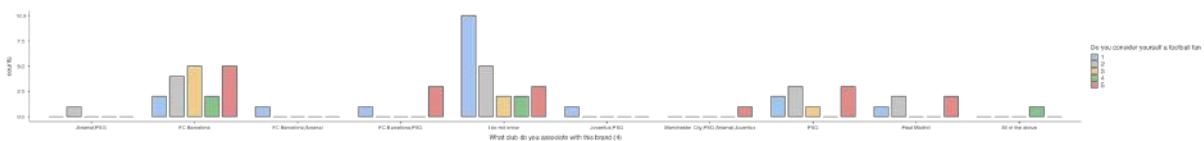
Source: Own work

People from all "fan" categories (Figure 32) associated the Spanish club with the airline (38,1%) but interestingly enough, people also mainly associated the airline with PSG (27%) (Figure 33). In fact, the airline is not a direct jersey sponsor or even a main sponsor of the team at all but since the club is owned by a Qatari investment fund, it makes sense that people associate the club with the middle eastern country and by association, with the airline.

Figure 33: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for Qatar Airways

Source: Own work

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There is not that much of a difference between the time FC Barcelona was cited and the times PSG was.

It can be observed that most of the football fans correctly associated the Jeep logo with Juventus FC as shown in Figure 34. In fact, there are only two significant responses to this question: "Juventus" with the large majority of the football fans and "I do not know" with most of the people from the other categories.

Figure 34: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for Jeep, according to the degree of interest into football
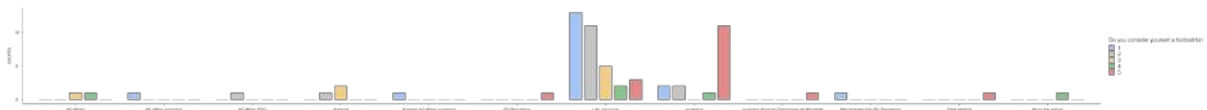
Source: Own work

Despite that, Juventus was still mentioned by 31.7% of the respondents, way before the second most mentioned clubs Arsenal and AC Milan (Figure 35).

Figure 35: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for Jeep
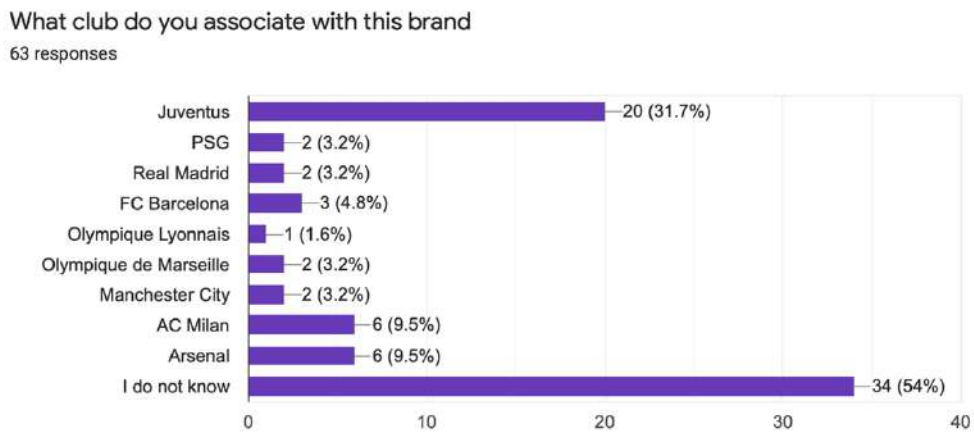
Source: Own work

Lastly, Etihad was given (Figure 37). It is currently both the sponsor of the club and the stadium of Manchester city. Like the precedent logo, the majority of football fans were correctly associating the club and the brand. Again, it seems that when it comes to such specific brands and clubs such as Jeep and Etihad, with respectively Juventus and Manchester City, non-football fans are not associating any club with the brand when they still have a vague idea when it comes to more famous brands such as Emirates, Qatar

Airways, PSG, Real Madrid, or FC Barcelona. Still, Manchester City was cited by 31,7% of the respondents, far ahead of the other proposed clubs (Figure 36).

Figure 36: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for Etihad Airways

What club do you associate with this brand
63 responses
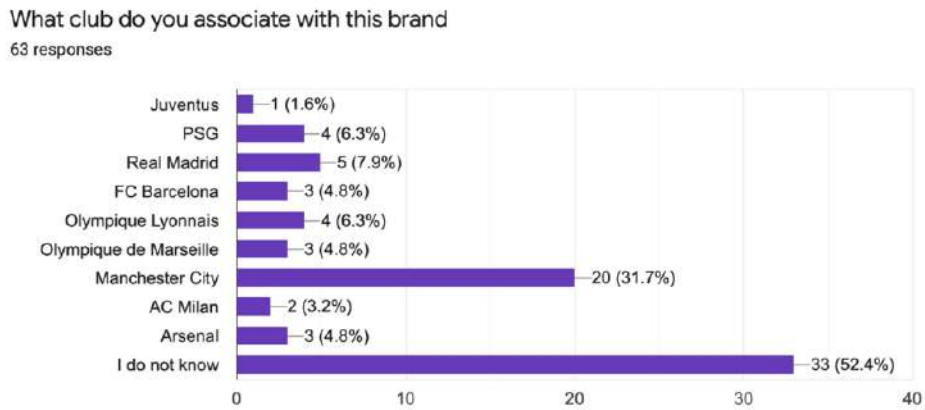
Source: Own work

Figure 37: Survey result "Which club do you associate with this brand?" for Etihad airways, according to the degree of interest into football
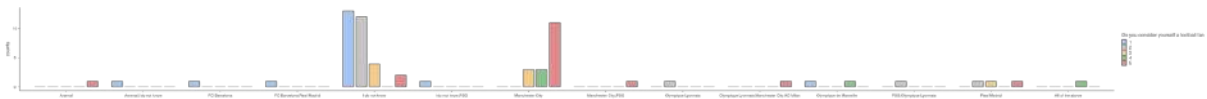
Source: Own work

3.2.3 Consumption behavior and brand image

The last section of the survey focused on the respondents perceived influence of football marketing in their way of consuming. Almost half of the respondents (47,9%) consider that football and the presence of brands in it are influencing their consumption behavior. Only 8% consider this influence to be major (5 out of 5 on the Likert scale) (Figure 38).

Figure 38: Survey result "Do you consider that your consumption behavior is influenced by the fact that you see the brand in football?
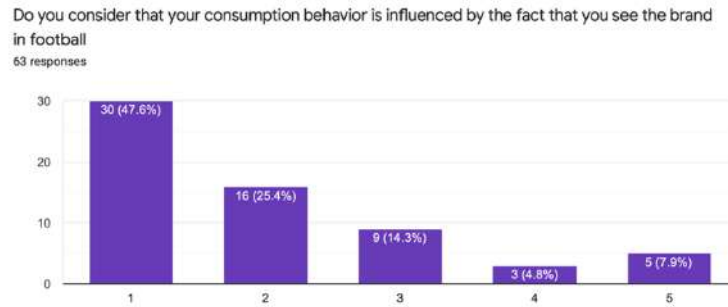
Source: Own work

Looking at the respective responses of each category (Figure 39), most people do not think that their consumption behavior is influenced by the fact that they see the brand in football (1 or 2 on the Likert scale).

Figure 39: Survey result "Do you consider that your consumption behavior is influenced by the fact that you see the brand in football?" according to the degree of interest in football
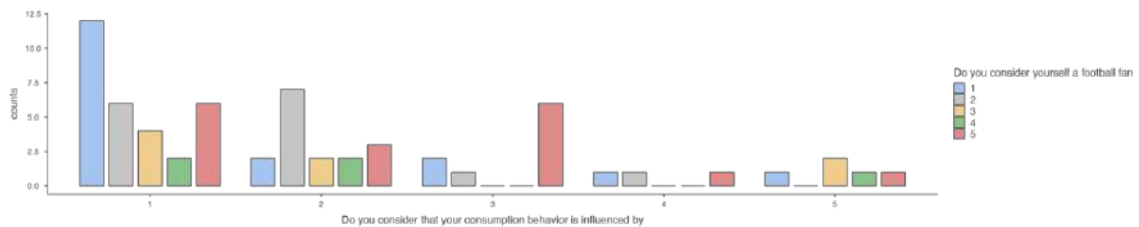
Source: Own work

More than half of the respondents consider not tending to purchase more of the product of their team's sponsor (Figure 40).

Do you tend to purchase more a product that is a sponsor of your own team ?
63 responses

- Yes
- No
- I do not have an opinion

31.7%

14.3%

54%

Source: Own work

Interestingly, 60% of the respondents also affirm not really caring about the associations between the brand and his/her club. Still, 16 respondents affirm appreciating the association between the brand and his/her team.

Figure 41: Survey result "Do you tend to purchase more a product that is a sponsor of your own team?" according to the degree of interest into football
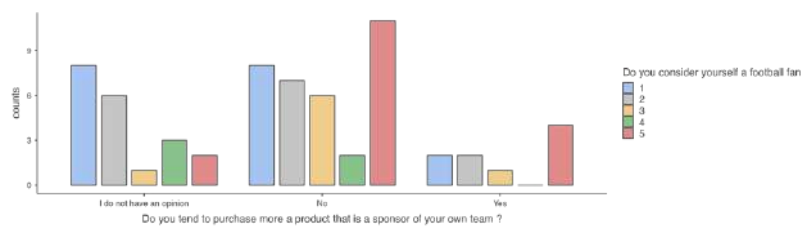
Source: Own work

Most of the football fans affirm not tending to purchase products from their team's sponsor when they also represent most of the people that tend to purchase more a product of the sponsor (Figure 41).

Source: Own work

Most fans consider liking the said association when most non-football fans actually do not have an opinion on the subject (Figure 43).

Figure 43: Survey result "Do you like the association of the brands with your team?"
according to the degree of interest in football
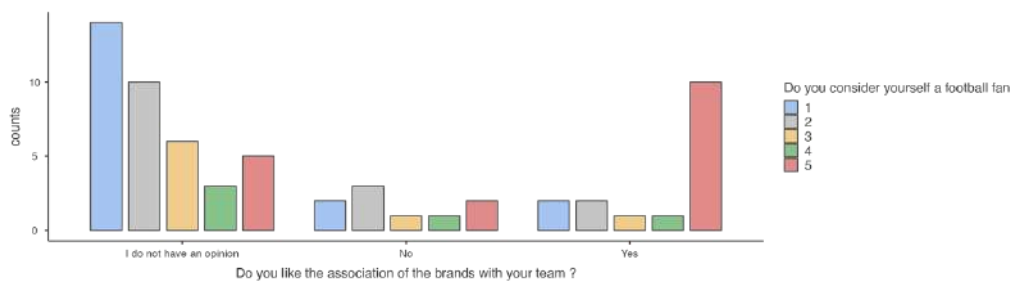
Source: Own work

This survey brought two major points to this research. First, it shows that the associations that people make between a club and a brand do not necessarily reflect the present reality but can also have two other explanations. These associations can indeed come from past realities or be influenced by external factors playing in favor of this association in people's minds. Secondly, the survey showed that some clubs or brands are associated "correctly" by non-football fans as well, such as PSG, FC Barcelona, or Real Madrid. In general, airlines seem to be easier associated with the clubs by them, especially for the ones that have more visibility.

The survey relates in certain aspects to the netnography used in the previous section. Some of the analyzed comments were explaining that the audience "absorbs" the advertising content and assimilate it unconsciously, meaning that they do not directly notice the impact the brands have on their consumption behavior. This explains the fact that most of the survey respondents affirm that their consumption behavior is not impacted by the brands they see around football.

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Furthermore, a lot of the content from the netnography was a critic towards football sponsorship in general. This is part of the audience's opinion, but the result is that even though they are against sponsorship in general or of a particular brand, they are still talking about it on the different media channels, bringing additional visibility to the said brand.

The next section shows some examples of other contexts as well where sponsorship happens between the sport or the entertainment industry and companies from the tourism and other sectors.

3.3   Other contexts

Sponsorship between a company and a club/stadium/competition is not exclusive to football. Indeed, it is becoming an increasingly widespread practice in different sports and different industries. This section will briefly introduce a few examples.

3.3.1   Accor Hotel Arena, Paris (FR)

In Paris, the concert arena Bercy became AccorHotels Arena in 2015 for 10 years (Accor Hotel Arena, n.d.). The amount of money involved in the process is not mentioned on the official announcement made on the arena's website.

3.3.2   Turkish Airlines Euroleague

The Basketball Euroleague is named after the airline Turkish Airlines. The agreement was signed in 2010 for 5 seasons (Turkish airlines, 2010), so up to mid-2015 as stated by press releases from both the airline and the Euroleague.

3.3.3   Pro A, Basketball (FR)

The French Basketball championship is called Jeep Elite after the car company between 2018 (L'Equipe, 2018) and 2021 before being named after Betclic ("BetClic Elite") (LNB, 2021)

3.3.4   2024 Paris Olympic games

Airbnb, the hospitality technology company will be the sponsor of the coming Olympic Games in Paris in 2024 (Airbnb, 2019). This is another example showing that tourism companies get involved in major events.

The coming section details and analyses the findings gathered through three interviews of people from the technological field.

3.4   Future trends

With the evolution of football and media technologies, new formats and possibilities are in the offing. The literature review shows different technologies that were implemented in football on and off the pitch; the latest being the semi-automatic offside technology (FIFA, 2022).

To understand this further, during the interviews, the researcher conducted three interviews with experts on the topic and proposed a vision of the future of marketing into football. We can predict that in the medium-term future where people go in the stadiums or watch it at home like today, both these experiences will be much different than today.

It is easily acknowledgeable that the Virtual Reality (VR) and Extended Reality (XR) technologies will take a front row seat in our lives, which also includes recreational aspects such as the consumption pattern of a football game. The technology already exists and is making exponential progress as well in the video game industry, which shows that it is possible to translate it into football.

In the coming years, it will also play a role in marketing the same way it already does with the green screen technology allowing advertisements to be different in the field advertisement boards based on where the game is being broadcasted.

The VR technology will allow people at the stadium to have an even more immersive and omniscient experience, allowing them for example to switch from the "real game" to the broadcasted version allowing them through a VR headset to experience the game from different points of view (the ball, a player, the coach for example). From an architectural point of view of the stadium, there are a lot of places that are usually sold at a cheaper price, but where the actual field is quite far away, and the visibility is not the best. This ticket category could then be priced in new ways, thanks to the technology (we could imagine a "classic ticket" for the people that do not feel comfortable using a VR headset or that want to experience the football game in a traditional way, and a supplement for adding a VR headset), which is beneficial for the different stakeholders.

This is where marketing enters the conversation. Through the VR technology and the headset, advertisements can be targeted to the public (if the person is a child, a man, a woman). With better targets, the communication of sponsors will be more efficient, and therefore the results will be better for the companies. This can be applicable for any industry, including the tourism industry.

Further into the future football marketing trends, the at-home experience can also be changed. Fans watching a football game from home can have the same immersive experience through a VR headset. One can imagine an agreement with the football broadcaster (Amazon Prime, BeIn Sports, Sky Sports) and technology companies to offer the option to the client, when subscribing, to add a VR option and receive a headset at home. According to where the game is broadcasted, the advertisements can be different, the headset can be set up with demographic statistics (age, gender, interests).

It is not to forget that a significant part of the fans of the big European teams are not watching the game from Europe, but from everywhere around the world. This has two major opportunities for brands and marketing: a VR experience for people that are located in distant countries and still willing to have a deeper immersion into the game, and the advertisements can be targeted to them. To sum up, football fans can be next to experiencing the game up and close with their favorite stars, the likes of Mbappé, Messi, Neymar, Ronaldo. This also addresses dimensions of accessibility and affordability, for example. Sponsorships will include the audience worldwide and not only the local audience, and this is particularly interesting especially for the tourism industry, which can range from global to local destinations. For example, DMOs from Armenia can target local audiences viewing from Armenia to encourage domestic tourism within the country. This may also disrupt classic overarching sponsorships and may include distributed sponsors across the board.

In terms of sponsorship, we can imagine for example Qatar Airways or Fly Emirates on football star Neymar's shirt for the Asian audience - the core userbase of these companies mostly traveling to Europe, USA or the Pacific nations and in the cities where the clubs are based; and EasyJet or Ryanair for example would play a similar role for the European audience who travel conveniently using these airlines throughout Europe (this could also possibly give more "prestige" to the two last brands that can be seen as very cheap and low-cost airline companies). Then, we could imagine a system tracking the audience watching the game with each sponsor and distributes the revenues proportionally.

The revenues gained from the sponsorship can benefit to a lot of different stakeholders, for example: the stadium, the destination (the club, the region/municipality owning the stadium, and the whole tourism industry in general through the tourists attracted) and the sponsors in financial benefit and the audience in terms of experience. Financially, the technology, by democratizing, will also become cheaper.

The three interviews helped get more perspective on the accuracy and the feasibility of these thoughts.

3.4.1 Blockchain and Metaverse

During the first interview, several aspects were mentioned throughout the discussion that was focused on blockchain and metaverse technologies. Blockchain already exists in the world of football and is used by football clubs already (Trequattrini, Nappo, Cuozzo & Manzari, 2021; Mazur & Vega, 2022). According to the interviewee, using blockchain and metaverse in football now resembles more of a marketing strategy in the sense that the clubs and companies using these technologies are doing so more to position themselves as pioneers in the industry ("being the first company in the tourism industry" is the example given) than for the actual use of the said technology and the solving of needs or problems.

The way metaverse is explained by the interviewee (a virtual world where the real person is like an avatar). An easy example came out of this conversation: through metaverse, we would be able to virtually go into stores and try the clothes before buying them online. This could suggest that, applied to the tourism industry, metaverse would enable people to visit a hotel before the making their choice if they are hesitating between several establishments, or virtually visit an aircraft/the business lounge to see how it is from the inside. This could be extended into advertisements, for example, where the classic storytelling will evolve from a two-dimensional world into the three-dimensional space. As stated by the interviewee, who completed their Masters in tourism, the discipline is very experience-focused and therefore, it will be difficult to shift people towards traveling virtually as opposed to going to the actual places. However, technologies like metaverse would allow them to make more conscious purchasing decisions. Later in the integration process of this technology, this would be also very efficient for the companies themselves and would allow them to have a higher satisfaction rate since people would have the opportunity to "test" the product before buying it. That way, it is logical to think that the feedback provided by people would be more constructive because all the people for whom the product is not suitable would have changed their mind before and not purchased it.

Another interesting element that came out of this interview is the evolution in the use of VR technology itself. First, it was used for gaming (so entertainment purposes) and with time and the progress in the technology itself, it enables the solving of more primary needs. In the conversation, Facebook mentioned their product Oculus that is trying to bring people closer through VR, so fighting isolation of the population.

Relating these thoughts specifically to the football industry, we could imagine that once the fact of watching games in an immersive manner through a VR headset, it would be easy to add the metaverse technology to the VR experience and when there is a time off in the game, metaverse can take over and show a hotel or an aircraft in an immersive manner. For example, if Emirates is sponsoring the English FA Cup, we could imagine that when the ball goes out of the field or there is an injury, the spectator can be in an Emirates aircraft for a few seconds or minutes. This would also be beneficial for the players themselves in the case

of an injury. We can take here the example of the player Christian Eriksen that suffered a heart attack during the Euro 2020 in a game against Finland. The cameras of BBC were still filming (Frandsen, Jerslev & Mortensen, 2022), which was ethically controversial in regard to the respect of the player's health and private life.

The interviewee, however, raises an especially important point with the example of a Swedish hotel chain that is using blockchain: an impact in the ROI is not to be expected at first, it is more to position the company as a pioneer in these technologies.

According to the interviewee, advertising in football is not much aiming for an immediate purchase but more so that the spectator, when having to make a purchasing decision, will remember the brand he saw during the football game before its competitor.

To conclude on this first interview, the interviewee seems quite hopeful about the feasibility of adding metaverse in football. It is therefore acknowledgeable that once the VR technology will allow people to have an immersive experience of a football game, metaverse will be one big opportunity for companies, including the ones from the tourism sector, to exercise their marketing activities.

3.4.2   Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence

The second interview used the same questions, but the responses were naturally targeted through artificial intelligence, the domain of "expertise" of the second interviewee. This interview aims to have a realistic approach to the technological feasibility of the VR part.

While agreeing on the logic of having targeted advertisements according to the location where the game is broadcasted, the interviewee points out that it is of highest importance to consider that digitally adding a brand logo on a continuously moving surface is difficult because the fabric (jersey) is folding in an endless possibility of manners. Therefore, although it is mathematically possible to compute the different shapes and angles that the logo should take to fit the players' jersey in any situation, the live retransmission can be more difficult.

This would for example require the player to wear sensors like the way video games FIFA and other action games) are pre-recorded. However, this is unlikely to be feasible for real-time games as the sensors would affect the player's performance. And it is also not feasible to pre-record the movements of the player as there is such a high number of combinations possible.

Then, another layer of the problem appeared in the discussion: even if the sensors and cameras are light and small enough to not influence the player's performance, the data still needs to be transmitted in a short amount of time to make sense for the spectator. Servers

able to support such data and transmit it instantly to VR headsets are highly likely to be expensive as well, although money is not necessarily a problem for the top teams and competitions in Europe (this aspect will be further developed in the limitations section).

Repeatedly, the importance of the fact that football is "a fast-paced game" is mentioned and the that the technology for now and in the close future will enable it for static objects like it is already the case for the advertisements surrounding the pitch. They explain that having a static frame would enable the advertisement to be digitally changed without having so many troubles in the accuracy of the image retransmission of the logo on the jersey.

The interviewee also points out, when the idea of having, for airlines, an aircraft of the said company that just virtually flies in the sky of the said stadium, that there are two additional factors to consider from a technological and a marketing point of view. Firstly, would not such advertisement be "too much" for the public? And secondly, there are external factors to consider for such a recording, for example meteorological conditions.

However, brand logos added digitally to the pitch should, according to them, not be overly complicated to execute. The interviewee also acknowledges later the total feasibility of advertisement tailoring in the end of game interview (the panel in the background of the player or coach).

The mention of the meteorological conditions gave the researcher an idea to investigate this particular aspect more during the third and last interview.

3.4.3   Virtual Reality and Extended Reality Technologies

After gathering insights on the digitalization of the logo on the jersey and the live image capture and retransmission, the final interview aims to understand better the feasibility of the image capture from an external point of view to not alter the player's performance.

First, the interviewee explains how the advertisements on the field's fence are changed and adapted to the different markets. It is, according to him, just an overlay of images, and since the cameras are static, it is possible to digitally add an image (logo) on top of the logo that is displayed in the actual stadium using the technology called augmented or extended reality. Technologies using overlay such as Pokémon Go "are much more complicated than that".

Regarding the future development of it, being able to watch a football game through VR would give advertising and marketing much more space in the literal sense. VR could allow, for example, to put advertisements in the surroundings of the pitch without bothering the game experience too much. This was a perfect transition to the example of the aircraft going through the sky, and according to the interviewee, it is possible using the same technologies

mentioned before and overlaying the aircraft image with the actual sky without altering the "realistic" perception of it through weather conditions for example.

He also affirms that the VR representation of a live situation is on its way to be possible. To explore more about this technology and its development, the researcher experienced the "free viewpoint video technology" being developed by the interviewee in November 2021 at the Smart City expo in Barcelona. The situation used by the experienced project is a VR visit of an apartment with actual conversations possible between two "real people" not being in the same space through VR. We could imagine this possible through football although transcribing a live situation as active as football is going to need more advancements from a technological point of view.

As suggested, the first implementation in sport, that could be easier than football, would be tennis since the players are always facing the same side of the pitch. This technology uses several cameras that can reconstruct a central point-of-view. The additional cameras are capturing the surroundings of the circle the more accurate the final image will be.

When it comes to the feasibility of a free viewpoint video retransmission of a football game, the interviewee affirms that, when his research on the topic started in 2008, he was hoping to see it implemented less than 10 years from then. It is now 14 years later, and the technology is still far from being implementable in professional football such as the Champions League or national championships in Europe.

As an example of marketing implementation in football, the interviewee remembers seeing logos digitally retransmitted on the pitch at the beginning of the game and disappearing later. This is again the same technology of overlay of images and, as affirmed, it already is implemented in professional football.

In terms of adoption of the global audience, the VR retransmission of the games should not affect the price of the broadcasting too much because the cost of the material is easily absorbed through several years of use and is divided between several millions of people. However, a cost impact on the final customer could be the necessity of a strong internet connection for the image to be retransmitted without noticeable lag. As mentioned by the interviewee, a lag of even 100 milliseconds would make the spectator dizzy. About the adoption rate in general, it is affirmed that VR was "hype around 2015-2016" and is now growing again accordingly with the progress the technology is making.

Off recording in a more informal discussion, the possibility of using the VR technology for marketing purposes was also explored. Indeed, the time the referee is checking the screen can be used as marketing time.

3.4.4 Common elements from the interviews

The three interviews have a few elements in common that will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

Regarding the adaptation of the sponsor according to the market (the example given was in the three interviews Easy jet in Europe and Qatar Airways in Asia), the idea and concept acknowledged by the three interviewees, as a basic technology and easily implementable.

On that, the second interviewee says the same "The tailoring of advertisement for viewers, it should be no different from tailoring ads on Facebook and other platforms" and therefore acknowledges the feasibility of tailoring advertisements in VR.

For further targeting of the advertisements, however, two out of the three interviewees were more skeptical in the sense that the data protection of the customers must be taken into account. The first interviewee particularly emphasizes the willingness of the metaverse industry "except Facebook" to be decentralized and to not use the users' data for commercial purposes.

3.4.5 Conclusion on the interviews

Technologically, the idea of an immersive retransmission of a football game is considered as unlikely in the close future by two of the three interviewees (the first interview only suggested that metaverse could be implementable in the next 10 years or so).

It is unlikely that the global audience will be able to experience a football game from home with VR goggles adopting different perspectives. Even (as stated by the third interviewee) a static VR retransmission which would be the first implementation step of such a technology will be possible, but the network, connectivity and communication needs to be much faster first to reduce the lag as much as possible for the spectator to not fall sick.

Another technology that is already pretty much existing in football and that could be further explored is the overlay of images, dabbling around the domain of Augmented Reality, whereby real-time action in two-dimensional spaces can be augmented using real-time data analytics or graphical integration

In the meantime, we can expect the image quality of the retransmission to get even better over time and that other technologies will be implemented into the game itself, as the Goal line technology and the VAR did in the last decade.

CONCLUSION

This research provided a deeper look into football marketing and how companies, especially from the tourism industry, can leverage Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) avenues and techniques to forge brand awareness through football.

The methodology used in this case, therefore, was to combine official information available from the clubs and organizations available on the internet in order to understand better what strategies are used by both the companies as well as the football industry. To gain a wider perspective on the perception of its impact on the ground, namely the fans and viewers, netnography was used to analyze the customer's perspective. From this first part of the analysis, it can be stated that the (tourism) brands have a wide range of opportunities when it comes to sponsoring within the football ecosystem, from having a company logo or name on the team's jersey sponsor to stadium or competition sponsor. However, as diverse as these techniques can be, they help obtain a cohesive goal: use the wide-spread interest in football to raise brand awareness amongst both regular football fans as well as non-fans who associate with the brands passively. This is even more true in the digitalized world we are experiencing, where football events are hosted primarily in the stadiums, but the hype around it is built around its mainstream media as well as on social channels prior to, during and after the game. Thanks to the visibility of football inside and outside the stadium, brands can easily use the football industry to leverage awareness of the billions of people, whether they actively follow football or are just a lambda user of social media and the general landscape of the internet without any affiliation to football. In most cases, seeing sponsors on the jersey does not bother the customers as much (Emirates is even recognized by the fans for suiting the teams and the jerseys the best), although there are several mentions of the times when sponsorships played almost nil role in football. On the other hand, when it comes to stadium sponsorship, people are more dubitative and often claim that it takes away the history of the club (Arsenal being a classic example in this case). Lastly, specific competition sponsorships are rarely seen as a positive outcome, but mostly just a revenue source since people will keep referring to the competitions by their title.

After a thorough analysis of the implemented strategies and their perception by the customers, the survey helped understand how these strategies are impacting the consumers in their purchasing habits and behaviors. Major findings are that the association between a club and a company in the consumer's head, be it football fans or non-football fans often last longer than the sponsoring relationship itself between both companies. In fact, people tend to associate clubs even with their former association, especially with the brand placement on shirts, far after the company has moved on from the sponsorship deal.

The next interesting finding through the use of survey is that people tend to associate clubs with the "wrong company". Perhaps this is in connection to external factors psychologically influencing the consumers, with bigger associations around the club, for example. It is likely

that people will associate PSG with Qatar Airways because of the tight relationship that already exists between the club and the State of Qatar. However, in reality, the ownership by the State of Qatar of the leading French club Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) does not necessarily entail that the national airline with a strong branding presence in the domain of football is also the club's sponsor. In fact, the competitor airline Fly Emirates used to be the jersey sponsor of PSG for several years, which may create a stir of confusion amidst the audience. However, owing to PSG's strong association to the state, which also has direct ownership over the airlines, they recently moved to create a holistic Qatar brand with one of the leading clubs with some of the biggest football superstars – ahead of the World Cup 2022, which will be hosted in Qatar.

The survey further revealed that even non-football fans are starting to associate clubs to brands, which shows that the companies manage to leverage awareness through football amongst the general population. This can be explained to a great extent by the eventual democratization of football and the massive IMC reach that football has gained through new media tools and new partnership avenues. In other words, football is not just a game anymore, but also features celebrities and personalities on and off the pitch, who also have their domain of fanbase beyond followers of the core sport in itself.

Lastly, the interviews gave insights from different points of view on the evolution of the new technologies in the football industry, and the role they will have in the coming era of marketing and broadcasting. It came out to be quite clear that people will not be able to watch a game in Virtual Reality (VR) with a 360-degree immersive experience and customized points of view in the very near future. Although, two ways to do so were mentioned by the interviewees (having sensors and cameras on the jerseys and capturing the live video from different static cameras), both are technologically too advanced for an implementation at scale. In the first hypothesis, the sensors would be too heavy and could therefore interrupt the player's true performance. For the second hypothesis, the cameras already exist to capture live images and reconstruct a 360 view of the live action, but such a dynamic situation as football would require pristine reactivity and precision from the cameras that such a product may devalue the experience. In both cases, the connectivity between the cameras/sensors and the broadcast image must be extremely fast to prevent any delay in the retransmission. However, it will be interesting to note the growth of the technology as it is still at its infancy but backed by some of the biggest global players such as Meta.

Once implemented though, retransmitting a game live in VR would allow more space for marketing thanks to the 360 perspectives both from a visual standpoint, and also from the spatial audio features. This would create an immersive experience that would create a new vertical in the broadcast offering for viewers at home. Some technologies are already existing in today's marketing which use the digital boards around the field for branding,

whereby they digitally replace advertisements targeting different markets through relevant products.

The authenticity is sometimes taken away by the financial stake in the sponsorship domain, and in certain cases, the marketing decisions do not align with the financial matters. For example, given the fact that Qatar is the owner of the PSG, it would make sense for it to be fully integrated into this destination. For example, the club is owned by Qatar Investment Funds, the jersey sponsor could be Qatar Airways on the chest instead of Emirates (NB: since 2019, Emirates is not the PSG jersey sponsor anymore), Qatar National Bank (as it is now) on one sleeve and Visit Qatar on the training kit instead of Visit Rwanda. That way, the relationship between the club and Qatar, who also sponsors the PSG training stadium through the company Ooredoo, would be fully integrated, although this would have created a debate around ethics and fair play.

On the other hand, we saw that Emirates sponsors several clubs, which can seem more of a marketing strategy than a deep relationship with the club based on common values or a logically targeted audience. A strong example of with a deeper connection is that of Arsenal since the airline has also extended the sponsorship of the stadium (known as the Emirates Stadium). The relationship is also based upon mid to large European cities served by the airline (Lyon, Milan).

The branding itself led to some controversies that were only briefly mentioned in this research, that are important to consider both from the players' and the viewers' perspectives. Actually, a whole discussion could be pursued on the evolution of football under the influence of marketing and sponsorship paradigms, and the relationship they hold between each other – meaning this would need to ensure a deeper study.

It is important to point out that this research was intended to focus only on the male European football only. Therefore, the results can be translated to, but are not entirely applicable to other sports such as handball or basketball the exact same way although sponsoring and naming seems to be quite common practice across the different disciplines. Following through with the reasoning, women or youth football was not investigated for this research, as well as the geographic bounds of football beyond the European landscape, which proposes room for further research for comparison.

One of the core limitations to this research was based on online-driven research to help find out actual figures on how much revenue is involved, what avenues are used, and what are the perceptions of such sponsorship agreements. Some informal sources affirm having the correct amount of revenue, but those are not considered as trustworthy sources of information for this research and were therefore not mentioned in the analysis section. Furthermore, much of the official content is archived when sponsorships change, thus adding to further difficulty to finding the core sources of information as well as interactions. Due to

the limited amount of time and the high number of posts from the players on their social media accounts, only five players were chosen when a broader analysis could have given more generalizable numbers.

The use of the survey method also contains limitations as the responses could have been more reflective of reality with a higher number of responses, leading to a lesser bias. For the interview, the insights brought by the three interviewees upon the future trends of travel-related sponsorships were objective, and since they were not particularly football fans (as they stated in the pre-interview discussions), their inputs were unbiased. On the other hand, an interviewee from the technology field that identifies as a football fan may have had the complementary advantage of knowing specifically the already existing technology in the football field.

To conclude, tourism brands can clearly leverage the space and visibility provided by football and its different stakeholders to raise awareness for football fans, although they are not necessarily aware that their consumption behavior is influenced by the advertisements that they see during and around the football ecosystem. This is also part of a brand's strategy to make it subtle so that the consumer does not feel "forced" but to create a strong association over a given period.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Division of the Instagram posts of five selected players: in numbers

	Cristiano Ronaldo		Sergio Ramos		Antoine Griezmann		Robert Lewandowski		Zlatan Ibrahimović		TOTAL POSTS
club out of game context	31	18	35	18	20	10	25	10	16	10	**66**
club in game context		13		17		10		15		6	**61**
national team out of game context	14	9			9	9	3	2			**20**
national team in game context		5						1			**6**
personal	21		15		6		38		8		**88**
Brand promotion	19		8		18		12		2		**59**
Personal football related	8		3		1		11		4		**27**
TOTAL posts	**93**		**61**		**54**		**89**		**30**		**327**

Appendix 2: Division of the Instagram posts of five selected players: in percentage

	Cristiano Ronaldo	Sergio Ramos	Antoine Griezmann	Robert Lewandowsky	Zlatan Ibrahimovic	TOTAL POSTS
club out of game context	19.4%	29,5%	18,5%	11,2%	33,3%	20.2%
club in game context	14 %	27,9%	18,5%	16,9%	20%	18,7%
national team out of game context	9.7%		16,7%	2,2%	0%	6,1%
national team in game context	5,4%			1,1%		1,8%
personal	22,6%	24,6%	11,1%	42,7%	26,7%	26,9%
Brand promotion	20,4%	13,1%	33,3%	13,5%	6,7%	18%
Personal football related	8,6%	4,9%	1,8%	12,4%	13,3%	8,3%
TOTAL POSTS	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Appendix 3: First section of the survey questionnaire: affiliation to football

Do you consider yourself a football fan *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally agree

If yes, what team do you follow *

- ☐ I am not following football
- ☐ Chelsea
- ☐ Manchester city
- ☐ Manchester United
- ☐ Liverpool
- ☐ Tottenham
- ☐ Arsenal
- ☐ Paris Saint-Germain
- ☐ Olympique Lyonnais
- ☐ Olympique de Marseille
- ☐ Dortmund
- ☐ Bayern Munich
- ☐ Atletico Madrid
- ☐ Real Madrid
- ☐ FC Barcelona
- ☐ Milan AC
- ☐ Inter Milan
- ☐ Juventus
- ☐ Other:

Appendix 4: Second section of the survey questionnaire: brand recognition

Appendix 5: Third section of the survey questionnaire: consumption behavior and brand image

Appendix 6: Fourth section of the survey: demographic data

Appendix 7: Interview transcript: Blockchain and metaverse

Interviewer: So I was working in my thesis, about how marketing works in football. So how companies are using football to get visibility to have like more travelers, if it's a destination or more customers in general. And I also thought how this could develop in the future. Because what we all know, like the names on the Jersey and around the stadium, but I think in the future, there's gonna be much more with all the technologies developing.

So I was particularly thinking of the VR technology. For example, people could be at home and having like, a VR headset. And instead of watching the game, like directly on their TV, which is like one camera, like pretty much fixed, that they, they have like a VR headset and they can have like, kind of an omniscious experience of the game.

Well, I think the technology is already there that we can put cameras, in the ball or like have different point of view. And the people can basically be from their couch, be Mbappe or be the ball in the game. So kind of have this like 360 perspective, and now I know you work with blockchain, so I wanted to see, to explore a little bit how blockchain can be added into this like VR kind of a situation.

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah. I think that that's a big question, but I think blockchain can be added in the form of metaverse. Metaverse isn't a technology, a specific technology, but rather like a new virtual reality where we predict theoretically assume that's a new virtual life we will be living in. And a lot of football teams or gaming companies are entering into that field. That could be a possibility to use VR and virtual reality with football, right? So people would have this virtual VR goggles and experiencing football through a metaverse instead of being just the football game itself. I think that we won both thoughts behind it.

Interviewer: Okay. And. So what will be exactly the marketing role in, in this?

Interviewee: Like, for example, there is this big metaverse project called sandbox and this sandbox has a lot of companies in it for now. It's just crypto and some clothing stores, etcetera, and people use, uh, company uses VR, new technology, not necessarily to get revenge instantly, but to gain brand awareness and to be a pioneer in the field. Let's say this tourism company wanna be in metaverse just to be like, oh, we are the first tourism company in this.

So let's say if a tourism company related to this. A VR football event and they wanna display in this metaverse in the form of NFT, whatever. And they will be the one like, oh yeah, we are the pioneer. And that will be all over the news. Right? All they have to do is to be in the that VR itself, but the free promotion written by news and media will be like a lot of marketing.

Interviewer: and so I'm, I'm just trying to understand like the, the metaverse like, I don't know this technology at all, but so basically from what I understood is like kind of a new way to buy, like things that are not real, right. Like not, you cannot touch them or

Interviewee: yeah. You cannot touch them. Like Facebook recently rebranded themselves as meta, right? So metaverse is basically imaginary space or the virtual reality world itself. That that's the another way multiple universe or metaverse and within that people try to create lives that we cannot attain in the real life kind of ways. So buildings will be looking super cyber techy looking kind of things, etcetera, and that people tend, or again, theoretically, they think it will be changing the, our way of experiencing things in for now, for example if it is, if a tourism company is within VR, how this can change? If it is in a metaverse, let's say you book a flight.

Currently our online shopping experience would be very too dimensional. You just click in this button and that, and in that website, not website, sorry. In metaverse you, you have a avatar of yourself in, within this virtual reality world and that avatar will be selecting things what you take and purchase. So that's like a three dimensional experience.

Interviewer: So basically you are on your couch? Yes. In H and M yes. Trying clothes. Yes. That's amazing. But how would this apply to tourism? Like, let's say Qatar Airways?

Interviewee: That that's really, tourism is really focus on experience, right? Yeah. So it would be the hot, the last industry that can fully implement in my opinion, because people will still like human experience. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. They want to go to the places.

Interviewee: The, the only thing possible in VR is just seeing places through that lense for now.

Interviewer: Now you're on your couch, but you're in Bali at the same time. Yes.

Which brings me to how soon do you think this idea of like VR and even further the metaverse and blockchain, like

Interviewee: around 2030, that would be a lot of advancement are going on and probably around 2030, we will be seeing more advanced.

Interviwewer: Okay. So quite soon in a way.

Interviewee: Yeah. Like 10 years-ish.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. Yeah. It has done like a lot of progress already. I mean, VR is still like a very recent technology and it's used, and I think it's used a lot in gaming. Mm-hmm I don't know if it's very present in other industries, but

Interviewee: yeah, mainly in gaming think so that that's like the first one.

Interviewer: so like first entertainment. Yeah. And then it becomes like actual like yeah. Need solving…

Interviewee: …Or Facebook is trying to do this Oculus in where you have meeting instead of zoom meeting, but you will have your goggle, this, the syncing, everything there. That

Interviewer: that's also good in terms of like, if you think of old people, like they can just go and yeah. I'm here in Denmark, but my grandparents want to see me. Then you just put like your goggles and you're with them in their living room, but that's, I think like a next stage and, okay. So how, like how, in your opinion would brands. I mean, that's also related to what we were telling before, but how would like tourism brands get leverage in like, through this like VR platform and blockchain. So let's say you have Qatar Airways that does advertisement. How is like, how are they going to win more people? Like, how is them sponsoring, like having this VR and sponsoring like this club, how is this gonna help to have more travellers?

Interviewee: Yeah, the, that is something we never know for sure. First of all, what's the target market of the specific company, right? The users of VR as of now would be people who are super into tech and let's even, we can even say less 10% of a hundred percent of the population might be even less than that.

But what they can become is position their, their tourism company as an innovative company in a way. So what, they can only get brand awareness and see themselves as a leader. Because I remember during my thesis as well, like I interviewed one company in Sweden, they are using blockchain for their hotel chain.

And I when we talk to them and they, they, I also asked a similar question, like, how do you benefit from this technology, et cetera. And their response was we only benefit receive benefit, see as a privilege or being innovative, but they don't see any ROI as in sales return. Okay. For that. Yeah.

Interviewer: Maybe because it's too soon.

Interviewee: Probably. Yes.

Interviewer: because we could also imagine a technology where let's say the football player. Mm-hmm if you have someone watching the game with VR goggles in China and someone watching with VR goggles in Europe. Yeah. Then maybe the player in Europe would have like easy jet on his shirt instead of in Asia, maybe like Qatar Airways, which is like a company that goes a lot to Asia like linking Asia and Europe. Yes. So this can also be like I let's, I don't know if it would like relate more, like if you could see it in the ROI, but mm-

hmm, like having more targeted advertisement. I don't know if, if this is something that would have a coherence.

Interviewee: Yeah. That, that would make sense.

That would be like impacting their decision making trip decision making at a later time, people wouldn't be. Booking through Qatar Airways airways while they're watching this VR game or even after right. Immediately. But when they have to do a trip from, let's say Asia to Europe they ha they in their unconscious mind, they be like, oh, I've seen this brand somewhere.

Maybe this seems reliable. Could be yeah.

Interviewer: Point it's also, it's also psychological in a way. Yeah. Okay.

Interviewee: Because people want like to use the brands that they're most familiar with. Right. Exactly. Yeah.

And I was also thinking that it can, I dunno if the technology is there yet, but that it can target.

Let's say if you have, like, let's say a typical family, like for people in Spain watching game like at their home and not in the stadium. Yeah. Each of them has, let's say VR goggles. I know that's like a very futuristic situation. But each of them has like VR goggles and then it's also personalized, like the child would see, I don't know, Capri Sun or like some child advertisement when the, the dad would see like a car brand, for example, because well, like technically a car advertisement won't help the child, like, yeah, exactly. It's not before 20 years that he would need to buy one.

Interviewee: Yeah. But that would be back to centralization and decentralization of technology because the targeted advertisements uses your data in a way, right. Uses your data, even things we speak on the phone the next day, it pops up on your phone.

Right. But will it still be in our future? Because most of the current metaverse and VR with yeah. Metaverse platforms try to, except the one from Facebook, try to be decentralized and don't use such user data to be to use the commercial activities. So by 2030, will we still be using personal data to show ads? That'd be another interesting way.

Interviewer: So that's yeah, also a question of GDPR and all those like personal rights, but it can be also like very general data. Like your, not even a name, but like your age and your gender maybe, or maybe not even the gender, maybe just your age. Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewee: Yes. And because the matters or some, most of the metaverse are trying to be completely anonymous. They don't know your age, gender, anything. Okay. So yeah, but you can choose to view some commercial ads and stuff, but in the metaverse created by facebook, for example, that will be very centralized. Right. They have all your data and that'll be quite crazy to get so much ads, especially, you can't even take out your glasses

Interviewer: yes. It becomes like a TikTok, addictive. Okay. That's also very interesting because yeah, there is, and I think it's even more lately, like the trend is to like the data protection then. Yeah. And how this is gonna. Because, well, I mean, all this technology is beautiful, but the there's a lot of people that care about their data and, and that's also why the GDPR rule was implemented like a few years ago and stuff.

Yeah. But it's very very interesting insights about the technology and the perspectives in the football field.

Appendix 8: Interview transcript: Artificial intelligence and machine learning

Interviewer: Basically my thesis, what I'm working on is sponsorship in football. So how, like, you know, they have like the names of their companies that sponsor on the Jersey mm-hmm and so this kind of like stuff, so, and I'm trying to work on the effect it has on people. Sorry. Let's say if someone sees, I don't know, like a player Ronaldo - Qatar Airways on the shirt.

It's gonna be like, oh, Ronaldo has Qatar airway. It means Qatar airways is good. Like I'm gonna fly Qatar airways. Now, you know, I'm trying to like work on the, let's say psychological effect and like how this marketing strategies work. So I did this survey to try to find out

And then I'm trying to work on the future trends, like how it's gonna develop in the future. And as you know, because you're from the tech field, technology is making a lot of improvements and quite fast. So I'm working, especially on the VR technology. Like I was thinking that maybe in a few years or maybe even shorter or longer than that, people will be able to watch the game from home, but not only on a TV, but just having like a VR headset and having a more like immersive experience.

You can put, I'm sure this technology exists already or is, can exist at some point, like you put cameras in the ball or like on the jerseys, like, you know, like, and you watch the game from home and you can be the ball. You can be the player, you can mm-hmm , you know, have multiple perspectives. And but I was also focusing on the marketing side, which is Let's say the Jersey can have different sponsors according to where people are watching the game

let's say if someone watches the game from Europe, if you're like in Denmark and you watch the game with your VR headset, you're gonna have easy jet, for example, because it's, you

know, Europe or RyanAir because it's in Europe, European people fly a lot like within Europe.

And if someone watches the game from, I don't know Myanmar, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or even China, Then it's gonna be maybe Qatar Airways

Interviewee: sorry so players, they're not like when you're saying, if you are from Europe, then there is one flight company. And if a person is from Bangladesh, then there is another brand.

Interviewer: Yeah. But not, not for the player for the, the viewer, like for the viewer.

Interviewee: So the player is wearing whatever, but the viewer. different t-shirts depending on where they are from mm-hmm so like, is it modification of graphics? Inside VR? Like I put the VR stuff on.

Interviewer: Yeah. Either like it's I don't know exactly how the technology works, but some sort of a green screen, but then the players still have to have like a sponsor, like on the field for the people in the, in the stadium.

Right. But like some sort of a, like, green screen on the t-shirt. So that then it adapts the brand. It already exists for I don't know if you see in the stadium, there's like a lot of advertisement all around the the field and this already exists. If you watch the same game of the work, for example, in the us, or in Qatar is not gonna be the same advertisements.

Okay. Probably if you have Heineken in Europe, in Egypt, there's not gonna be Heineken because well alcohol is prohibited or this kind of stuff.

How artificial intelligence or like what role could artificial intelligence play into the marketing?

Interviewee: into the marketing?

Like let's say like to artificial intelligence in the sense that the player, the, not the player, the, the person that sees that watches the game with the VR headset is gonna get more personalized advertisement.

Like, you know, this kind of role the artificial intelligence could take.

Interviewee: The tailoring of advertisement for viewers, it should be not different from tailoring ads on Facebook and other platforms. It's. it depends on which like data you feed to the system, like the location, maybe interests of the particular user that is uh, using the VR set. So it's like the fact that it's football and the, the fact that the advertisements are on t-shirt shouldn't change anything in this relation.

What is different though is that you need to fit. the advertisement onto the t-shirt which is much harder than feeding an advertisement onto

Interviewer: you mean in terms of like space, right?

Interviewee: Not only space, but also like dynamics because it is just a, a border of a stadium. It's a static thing. It's it's not moving, it's not folding.

Like it's not turning while a player is, you know, football, everyone is running perspective. So there, artificial intelligence could also help. But is it related to the question or it's?

Interviewer: I think it's very interesting. First of all, you brought the data protection in a way aspect. like you were saying that it depends like the targeted advertisement depends on …yeah. What data you want to share or you accept to share. So that's also interesting because, well, this is something that's very like trendy at the moment. Like people want to know what data they're sharing, they want to protect their data.

So then would also come down to which data. like determined as private or not. Let's say if you just give the age let's say, okay, I'm 45. Like let's say, in a family, like each person has a VR headset. And is, I don't know, typical family, two adults and two children. Then the dad is like, you know, 45. He puts when he configured the VR headset, he puts that he's 45. Then he's gonna get, for example, a car advertisement. And then if it's the child that's like 10 years old, maybe he'll get, I don't know, Capri Sun advertisement or legal advertisement, you know, because it wouldn't make sense for the kid to get a car advertisement when he's like not gonna need a car for the next 20 years or something.

So. Yeah, that would come down to what is defined as private data, for example, is age private. If you don't put the name against it, you know what I mean? Mm-hmm so that's a very interesting aspect that you brought and the fact also that the technology it's complicated because it's dynamic, right?

Like they're moving as you were saying. So, which brings me to the, to a follow up question with this technology that would need to adapt itself to the movements of the player. Mm-hmm how long do you think, like, do you see this possible, like either in a close future or in a, like far away future? And if yes, how far?

Interviewee: That's a complicated question. First of all, first of all it's not necessarily. Like you don't necessarily need artificial intelligence for this, because like let's say there is a fabric, right? Not only, not, not necessarily a t-shirt, but just a fabric. And the fabric can be folded in many ways.

These, these like endless possibilities. You can, I'm very sure that you can simulate this using technology. And if you put a picture on it, a picture of like flying company logo or something else, some no text you can calculate how the picture will look like using mathematics.

Interviewer: Let's say like an endless of movements, possibilities. Do you know how FIFA works? Right. Like you're into video games. I think. Okay. But like basically I think they have people wearing the shirts and then they get like filmed, they have a bunch of like captors or something. Yeah. And probably they do like a bunch of movements yeah. To like have it in the game memory.

And then when people are playing well, they're doing the movements that are recorded. I say from yes.

Interviewee: Yes, yes. Like also FIFA video game you were speaking about, right? Yeah. True. Also in like action video games. There is this sensors on a person's body. Oh yeah. Sensors. And then a person doesn't move.

Like if it's a fighting game, a person performs a hit and then a model can repeat the hit because the model the nodes on the model are linked to the sensors on the person's on the actors arm, then that's how it works. Well question is, are these sensors and the technology, the hardware part, is it practical?

Like, can a person be playing an actual football game inside your t-shirt without you know, without being disturbed, because if it's, if it's heavy, right, then it affects the performance of the player. So like, let's assume it's, let's assume it doesn't disturb the player. So it's like, there is a t-shirt and then there's sensors on the t-shirt and what else do we need,

Interviewer: but couldn't it be prerecorded? Like? So the way FIFA, the video game works is that there's people in front of, or I dunno if it's like the actual players, but they're in front of like a green screen and they have sensors and then the game reproduces the movements that are registered. So let's say you have a data bank. I don't know if technologically it would work, but let's say you have a data bank of movements that the players usually do on the field.

Interviewee: Yes. I see. I see where you are coming from, but it would be, if it's prerecorded, it'll look horrible. I have, my intuition is telling me so because you cannot, you can prerecord movement. Sure. But you cannot prerecord all the ways in which a fabric can fold. Yeah. So it'll be like a subset and then you'll see something like, you know, t-shirt is, let's say facing this way, but the advertisement is feed.

You'll see that it's not, yeah, it be fucked up yes. That's like corner sticking out or something like this. So I think it has to be light.

Interviewer: So the technology has to be like very light sensors that are not like too heavy for the players,

Interviewee: yes, it has to be. First of all, I'm not sure if such technology exists because the videos which I saw about how they record fighting games actions like people are wearing full on equipment.

So I'm not sure such technology exists. But if it does, yes, it has to be lightweight. And it has to send information somewhere as in, like, it has to be connected to, to some server, which will then transmit this information to users, VR sets.

Interviewer: Follow up question, because my idea was that the people like the, the players would have cameras in their Jersey, right? Like very light and tiny cameras to do what I was saying. Like the 360 experience. Yeah. Yeah. Can those cameras have sensors. Like how does it work?

Interviewee: Cameras, like, how do you, how do you see you know, a camera on the shoulder?

Interviewer: I was more seeing like super tiny cameras, like integrated in the t-shirt, but do they exist? I have no idea.

Interviewee: Could be, but it sounds like very advanced technology. It's, it's the cameras and the sensors and the fact that they need to talk to a server

Interviewer: it needs like cables and stuff.

Interviewee: No cables not necessarily. It could be wireless. Okay. But there still needs to be like the simplest micro controller with internet connection imaginable. Because it's, it needs to send data. I'm not sure if it's going, like, if, if you, if it's going to be comfortable for players to have such technology on. T-shirts what you, what you can check is like whether to, to answer the question, whether it's a viable project idea or no is how large and how expensive the smallest sensors of this kind are.

Like you can look there is a name for this. When movements of a model are created on the computer, but when it's when the model is repeating a person, there is a name for this. I don't remember it, but you, you, you should look into this direction and see like how how small you can get so to speak.

Yeah. Speaking about speaking about the communication. yeah. They communicate to the server and then the server transmits the data. It also needs to have very fast connection because it's a fast paced game.

Interviewer: Yes. Transmitted live.

Interviewee: So, yes. So that, you know, if, if a person quickly, the player quickly turns to the left so that there is no two seconds waiting before that ment turns left.

Yeah. You. mm. And brainstorming it on the spot. I don't want to sound pessimistic, but it's a complex project for sure. And you need like dedicated team, you know, people, hardware, people software people. Yeah. Of course. Networking people. That's as much as I can say, on this part

Interviewer: I was thinking like, there is so much technology that was brought into football. Like I don't know if you ever heard of this. It also exists in tennis. It's called the gold line technology and it's like a, probably a line that works like a, a sensor on the goal line. And then it can digitally say if the ball went into the goal or not if it passed the line because before the, the referees and the people like making the, the rules, like saying, okay, you, the goal is accepted or not.

They could only base on, on video. Right. Mm-hmm but sometimes it's not necessarily accurate. Like, I mean, I know it did like a huge progress, but some, sometimes it could be like, kind of How do you call it? Like borderline, you know, like nobody knew if it was like actually in or out.

Interviewee: Yeah. If it's, if it's just in the middle, you know?

Interviewer: Exactly. But now I think from when was it? Probably six years ago. No, 10 . Well, no 10 years were actually they implemented this also in, in tennis. mm-hmm and more recently they implemented the video assistance referee, which I don't exactly know how it works, but it's like some sort of a special recording of the action that the referee can go.

Like there is in every stadium, there's like a referee screen and he can like, just stop the game and go and watch the screen what happened on like different angles. That's actually what brought me to this idea, like mm-hmm, the freaking bring can see different angles to see, let's say if there is a fault on another player, if this player touched the ball with the hand or, you know, whatever mm-hmm has to be checked.

Interviewee: I see, I see. And sorry you had something more to say.

Interviewer: Mm it's more like a reflection, like, because all of these are like more fixed. Yes. It's not dynamic.

Interviewee: Yes. And this like I see how it originated, but static versus dynamic is an important factor. Yeah. And because you need to, do you need to do calculations, you, you to read the data. you need to send the data quickly. If, if we're speaking about the the Jersey t-shirt ment like advertisements on jerseys. Yeah. You need to read the data quickly. And

then you need to send it quickly to the server, calculated it quickly enough and send it to the user quickly enough so that there is no delay between the actual movements of the player and what the user sees.

And. I think it's, it's very advanced and I expect it to be very expensive. That's also true. And one also comment from my side is that there might be like, let's put it this way. I do it news. I do check like new technologies that are out there, but not on a regular basis. So there might be something that I don't know there might be pieces of technology, which make this process easier. But based on my studies and the work experience, I would say that it's highly advanced, highly, highly advanced,

Interviewer: also thinking it's gonna be expensive. You have a point because taking into account that the players change Jersey every game, right. And sometimes even at the half time. Mm. so then it has to be also a technology that is removable, right. Else it's gonna be too expensive to have like cameras or like sensors on each Jersey. Mm-hmm

Interviewee: yeah, that's true. Either, either it's a part of a t-shirt, you know, like it's it's inside the t-shirt. They put new T-Shirt on and there is a new piece of technology in there, or it has to be detachable, as you said.

Interviewer: Yeah, no. Cause I was thinking like in, especially in the new phones, like the cameras are like super tiny. That's what also brought me the idea

Interviewee: you need the dedicated team for this. Experts in various fields, you need modeling people. Also. I said like hardware opportunities for modeling people. And

Okay. Uh, I think the idea with, was it like the, the other one, not the participants, but other cameras inside the ball and the yeah, the cameras on players. I think this one is way more realistic to implement.

Interviewer: Okay there's like already like a lot of cameras all around the field. And I think there's like, and in French we call it a spider camera. It's like, you know, it's on eight threads over the stadium and the camera moves and it gives you like a view from up, you know what I mean?

Mm-hmm. And then there's probably like a, I don't know how many, but like tons of cameras, like on the field and around, because I'm still thinking it's crazy how, like they can get a shot from every perspective. Like, I don't know how many cameras are like out there, but it's a lot.

Interviewee: Well, football is very, it's most popular.

Interviewer: I mean, football has a lot of money as well. Like it's, it's an industry and they have a lot of money when it comes to professional football. Like when you see that they pay a player 230 million euros, mm-hmm, like, it's a lot of money, right.

Interviewee: With a lot of money. It would be possible to like, have, you know, the best connection and very powerful cluster, which can do the calculations for all the players and then send it to people.

Interviewer: But so technically the more feasible, or let's say the, the one that's gonna be feasible in the closest future is the camera on the ball or like inside the ball, like I know how it would be. Yeah. I would say like in. In fixed places, but for advertisement.

I'm just thinking also from a, so like purely the football experience, I get it. Like, you can have the balls perspective, like it's flying or I don't know, whatever. I'm also trying to get the marketing perspective

How would technology help? Like, how is it gonna, how is technology like the new technologies that are like here that are like developing, coming in a soon or like in a further future? How is it going change? Can change the marketing into football, according to you.

Interviewee: depends on the technology. Depends on the technology. Like, I mean, technology is very broad, so you have a lot of like brainstorming area, answer the question on the spot, because it's very broad. Like I would need to think about it, you know, I see, I see, I see amazing things that can be done there, but it's not the same as, you know, hype machine learning, which can, I dunno.

Interviewer: but what are your, what are the amazing things you, you mentioned?

Interviewee: Okay. Amazing things that I mentioned. I don't want to speak about them yet because it's it might work. It might not work. And in any way, it's, it's related more to the universe to like simulating processes in the universe than to applied stuff. Okay. It's more scientific than applied, I would say.

Mm. So I think it would be an act of forcing if I try to you know, see how this changes football if you can name me piece of technology. Mm. Then I can try to, yeah.

Interviewer: I can try to, to brainstorm in a way, like out loud on yeah. How is the technology now? And maybe because you know it better, maybe you can see like how it could work.

so, yeah. Now there's like the, this technology that changes the advertisement that's like on the screens around the game. Yes. Which is already doable because it's it's how do I say it's not dynamic, right. It's static. So it's easier to, to change the advertisement on a static frame. Yes. Right. What we were saying before and. What happened? I mean, of course the quality of the cameras are better now than it was

The qualities of the cameras and Probably their mobility, because they're like smaller.

Interviewee: Exactly. The mobility no, like they shouldn't be moving, but the smaller part is definitely true because we are creating smaller and smaller and smaller components like transistors.

So that it's like, you know, in older days you, you had to store 32 megabytes in a box that big. Yeah. Now you have a phone

yes. One, one megabyte in USB drive. Yeah. So components are getting smaller. So in this way, I think. it's how to say it's, it's useful for this project because if they're so small that they don't affect the player then you can attach them to a t-shirt with the ball though, that I'm not sure about because there might be like a weight requirements to the ball, because imagine if it suddenly becomes 50 grams heavier.

Interviewer: There is definitely like there has to be FIFAs rules or something on the weight.

Interviewee: So I think the, the, the hardware, the hardware aspect that technology is getting smaller as in components are getting smaller. That's definitely useful and beneficial for this quality of the camera. Yes. Like we, we are because we are improving in all directions.

Quality of this quality of that speed, how much you can store . yeah. Size weight

AI, AI. I'm not sure about, because like, of course there is tailoring the advertisement, but this is not a novel thing, because as I said, it's, it doesn't matter where you advertisement on, the tailoring part should be the same.

Interviewer: Yeah, it would just add on, let's say like, if this thing, I think from a purely, like, let's say marketing aside, like if the purely like, from the football experience side, like I think the camera technologies are there already to, to provide, even if it's not on the players yet, but to provide it with cameras, like a little bit everywhere on the field or like around the field.

it's able to like gather together the information from all the cameras and provide like some sort of like a immersive slash 360 or 3d. I don't know how you wanna call it, like experience on the VR headset right? Mm-hmm

yeah. VR, VR like the, the idea with having a, the idea of being able to see a game through VR, like being present on the football field. I think it's totally doable. Like technology, is there already to do this

Interviewee: you can even have cameras that make you feel like you're, I don't know, at the place of the coach or you are sitting in the stadium or yeah. You know, like yes. Different points of view. Yes.

Interviewee: Because if there are cameras that can capture the football field already from all the angles, like you said then creating it in VR, I think is the, is a matter of calculation on the data that is provided by these cameras. You could, you could look into how Google maps works. I'm not sure the dynamic, the dynamics is there

What can be changed though? Is. But that's not during the game. That's more after the game and it doesn't really need VR for that. Or maybe it could like at the end of the game, there's always like, I don't know either the players or the coach that are talking in front of like a lot of journalists and cameras.

Interviewer: And when they're talking, they have like a huge like a. I don't know, what's the name? It has a name, but like a wall with like a bunch of like advertisement. Let's say here, you would have like Carlsberg ikea, like a bunch of brands that have logos. So this could be changed, like, because it's static.

Interviewee: That's absolutely doable.

Yeah. I'm still thinking of like during the game. Oh, wow. I have an idea because the cameras are static. They're filming, but they're static. Right? So how about the company? Logos are not on the player, but like on the field, like literally on the green space or almost like a hologram of the logo. You see what I mean?

Interviewer: like showing a hologram or like showing advertisements on the field to people in VR is way easier than the former idea.

Interviewee: It's because it's purely digital. Yeah. You don't need to attach anything to anything physical. It's it's like, it's literally putting an image on image, you know, like the image of the logo.

Like if somebody's watching a game yeah. They can move either because they're attached to a player or a ball, or because maybe it's free camera and you can like press arrows and then move yourself around. So of course the image, like what do you see will have to change? You are looking at it from different angles, but it's, it's linear transformations, mathematics, and it is, it has been known for a long time. So it's absolutely implementable.

Interviewer: Yeah. Or also on the goal, like in the goal. I don't know. That could be an idea actually,

Interviewee: but would it not be too too much, you know, advertisements on the board, on the fence, advertisements on patients, advertisements on the ball and then there is one part there no advertisements. Dream cross and then bam. Coca-Cola

Interviewer: no, I was thinking like, let's say if it's a easy jet the airline company, or like Qatar Airways. Let's say, if you're watching the game in VR, like da, da, you have your

players playing, blah, blah, blah. And then all of a sudden you have a like easy jet flight going. like in the background. Like an actual aircraft flying in the sky but like made digitally

Interviewee: It sounds like an overcut to be honest. it, it won't look, like people will notice that it's. Yeah, it'll be visible if it's a model for sure. Some might be fine with it. Some might be not like I would, to me would be too much to me. It would be too much. Yeah.

Appendix 9: Interview transcript: Virtual Reality

Interviewer: So basically I started, I looked at how the marketing is used in football like right now. So we have, I know the most famous, like the, the Jersey, they have advertisement or like around the stadium. There's also like some screens, which from what I heard also use like lately, a new technology, which enables to change it, like depending where you are watching the game it's not the same advertisement. So I don't really know what this technology is, but it allows in terms of marketing very well. Very interesting. So, I don't know. Do you know how this works? First of all

Interviewee: yeah, basically. I mean, I don't know. I don't know the details. I've seen these in examples, so I can guess so that it's a kind of augmented reality. So, you know, you know, augmented reality is like overlay over the real world that you see. Normally you do like through your phone. It will be like the AR glasses, but anything could be considered like that augmented or mixed, extended reality, let's say so basically what they do is just setting some targets instead of the traditional advertisement that traditional advertisement could be also target, just need, build vision to detect that there is a spot, an area where you want to project your advertisement. And then based on the joint system, just knows the geometry of the area. Thanks to the viewpoint of the camera and project a content there. So then the content, it works, the selection of the content I guess it works similarly. Like what, why advertisement does they collect all the information they can about you, about who is in front of the screen and and just select what is best for you. I guess I, this is just, again, I mean, I never worked on anything like this, I guess to that side of.

Interviewer: Okay. No, because I was thinking that it could be also like green screens and then they just put digitally whatever advertisement they want to for whichever market they have to. But then, I mean, in the stadium, they still need because there is still people going to the actual game, so they still need to have like one advertisement in real life.

Interviewee: Yeah. But as I said, I mean, any image can be used as a target, so you, you can have an actual advertisement and then use that advertisement as a target that you recognize and the camera recognizes that image, that be another advertisement, like just the frame replaces it. So you just need, you don't actually frame, I think you just put an overlayer on top of it. Technically it's not, it's not complicated, like , doing stuff that your phone does, like putting any, any object as an overlay of the real world, like Pokemon go or, and and evolutions of that technology is much more complicated actually than that.

Yeah. So that's the first marketing situation I could think about. And. Also, I mean, they still have like the social network that they use in, on every picture, either of the players or of the clubs. I mean, there is like the players with the Jersey, with the logo, et cetera. And then I was thinking, how is it gonna develop in the future?

Interviewer: Because now we have, it's a lot present in gaming for now, but it's gonna be present in even more aspects of our lives. Uh, For example, the. The VR. So as I was explaining to you in smart city, I was thinking that in the future, people will probably like be able to watch the game at home in like with a VR headset in like some sort of a 360 kind of a setting.

I was trying to think from that point of view how is it gonna be affecting marketing or like how marketing is gonna be able to use the, this technological advancement?

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't know. That's an interesting question. So basically when you say 360, uh, actually I think it could be even moved over the free point video.

Are you familiar with the concept of free point video? So basically it's it's like moving freely in in a world, like if it was a video game, but a video game is computer graphics. That's not actual video. It's uh, is that like content? Yeah. Free viewpoint video. Be able to do the same thing, but with natural content. So if there is a video of tennis match of a football match, you it's actual video that you see with the photographic quality when you watch TV. But you can move in any theoretically, potentially in any place of these stadium or, or any other area.

So at that point, yes, you could watch, you could. Even with your laptop, but moving around with the mouse, the, the, the end user device doesn't make much, much of a difference. Difference is made by the possibility of moving around how this can change the marketing world. I, I don't know. I guess you have more space where to place advertisement.

Probably you can in an easier way, maybe place advertisement during the match without bothering the viewing of the match. Mm. So that it's not only in that, those banners that are surrounding the, the pitch, but it really like the QR maybe together with the goalkeeper, you want to see the match from the goalkeeper and you could have like Endless empty space in the sky above working where to project all sorts of advertisement. And maybe, maybe these are the possibilities that that are open by technology,

Interviewer: Yeah, I think that that's, that's a good advantage it could bring, but there is also like I was thinking technologically, like, let's say, if you want to give the possibility to the, the viewer to let's say, take like live the game or experience the game from the, let's say the player's perspective.

Let's. During the first half, I want to be Ronaldo. Like, is that possible with external cameras or the cameras have to be like on the player?

Interviewee: Well, it, it is theoretically possible with external cameras, because what you can do, it's something called viewpoint, viewpoint inter collection.

So synthetic view interation. So what, what happens that if you have two cameras, each camera records video. You can create synthetically, but like not real cameras placed in between these two, these two places. Okay. Because you inter you, you know, where the cameras are placed, especially if the cameras are static, it's much easier to do.

just know where the camera, the relevant positions between them. And then you can create a video of a camera that doesn't exist, but as if it was So clearly the farther you go from this configuration. So if you want, for example, to do actually 360, also random around actually 360, meaning that you can look at inside from many viewpoint of a circle, right?

The more cameras you have, the more accurate this is going to be. If you have four cameras, you can do it. But when you go in the middle, like the furthest point between two cameras, That's where the algorithm has the highest chances for getting errors for getting like artifacts. Let's say if you are in a situation like that one that you want to create a synthetic view from what a football player can see theoretically, you can do it.

If you have like a lot of cameras around the stadium in different distances, theoretically, you can do, but you don't have Real image taken close to that point and additional challenge. This point is moving constantly because the view point of a person can't be static. Exactly. Even if it wasn't any, any, any other situation.

Of course, if you run it's even more, if you would not, even if you don't just walk around, it's something difficult. Otherwise I'd say would've been done already because the technology exists, but it works well on, in static situation study at the environment. okay. So yeah, that is looking at the future future something that could be done that right now it's difficult.

And free viewpoint video actually, it's one of the first things I've been working on back in 2008. I started like a couple of years. I worked, my PhD was around this technology and I remember that this was exactly what people were saying. How amazing it would be to watch a football match from the viewpoint of a football player or tennis match tennis that's actually, that would be easier tennis match from the viewpoint of tennis player, because we always look at the same direction.

So what we need to do is to make, to make like a rack of cameras behind me, for instance, at the bottom of a beach, that is something that's my it's more feasible. We still have artifacts, but I mean, it's been already 15 years, not 15. Yeah. 14 years from then. And that this hasn't been done. Cause it hasn't been done in 15 years maybe it's never going to be done, but you

never know many things now with the AI and learning these same technologies are getting better and better. So maybe, maybe it could be.

Interviewer: okay. Because I was, yeah, I was like curious also. That was my next question. Like, if it's some sort of like possible, how far from now are we talking?

Interviewee: So I would've told 15 years ago. I would've told you that in five, six years, we would've had it, but we don't, we didn't right now I've. like something called the never audience fields that it's basically the same concept, but AI driven comes to ING. There are thanks to narrow networks. So that is amazing.

Like the quality that stuff gets it's incredible. And also how fast is been moving forward. So I see that this, the nerve, the nerve fields could get us closer. That how fast? I don't know. I would like to say again five, six years, but who knows. yeah, exactly.

Interviewer: And I was thinking. If you imagine the, the spectator has like a VR headset then technically, because a lot of football sponsors are airlines. Like. I think of Qatar airways of Emirates, they're doing a lot of like football sponsoring. So I was thinking, would it be one day possible that you're at home, on your couch watching a football game? And then in the sky of the stadium, you see like a, like a virtual, Qatar airways flight, like just passing by.

Interviewee: Absolutely. That's, that's exactly the same technology of what were saying at the beginning. The, the mixed. that's the extended reality concept that you apply on a video on the video stream it's happening already, like in uh, in the champion league they have like the, the, I don't know if they do, they still do it, like actually like the, the champion league logo in the center of the pitch. And now they do all these things, like also the the score, the many, many other graphics that they do them as if they were part of the pitch and then they disappear. Many, many things on TV. Like there are computer graphics on top of the pitch.

Like they do, they look like Painted on the grass, but, but they're actually not, it's just CG, you know, the camera speaks the perspective. It speaks. It's very easy to project something that actually object just need to move it as if it was on top of the pitch. So it's the same concept you can do more like something going up to the sky to be anything we and our friends be anything really.

Interviewer: Okay. That's interesting. And from a. Let's say customer point of view. How big do you think the adoption rate would be? Because I guess, like, I don't know how it is in other countries, but I know in France, for example, if we want to watch the champions league, the French league, I think we have to pay like three different. How do you call it? Yeah, subscriptions

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't know if Spain it works. I know that Italy because my father always ended this stuff. And yeah, so basically we had sky, you know, sky. Yeah. We had sky for, in Italy holding the, all the rights for many years, but then a couple of years ago, a zone entered in the market.

They started getting. A little of the rights. So the way I dunno, 80% of matches in, started 30% in zone, but then now it's the other way around, like from this year it's been the other way around. Okay. So people, people were complaining for this because like what you have to do every year, you have to change.

Interviewer: Yeah. Every channel wants also their own like share of the football games, because I mean, they, they get a lot of money from that. Yeah. But then for the, for the. Let let's say someone that really wants to watch like a lot of football. Then if you want to watch all the games, you have to pay three subscriptions. Which is absolutely. Yeah. I think like almost in France, almost a hundred euros per month, which is a lot to watch football, I guess then you rather go to the stadium almost. .

Yeah. It depends. But yeah, in in Italy, I don't think it's so, so expensive in Spain. I have no idea really. I'm sorry about that. But yeah, I think with the, the thing is that sky has many different packages that can, that can provide to you. So if you want only football, I don't think it's so. So maybe with the 30, 40 euros per month, you can get that at the moment. Okay.

Interviewer: So from, from that perspective, if we add the VR headset option, let's say you, you subscribe to sky, let's say sky football, and then you, you add the option VR, let's say sky sends you over like a box with the VR headset. Yeah. How, like how much more expensive is like, can we imagine that the subscription is gonna be?

Interviewee: I I'm sorry, I don't feel like comfort, confidence to say something about prices or something like that. I guess that technically it doesn't involve really much more uh, if you have the headset. It depends on what is that you're going to receive.

If you are going to receive a 3d reconstruction of the, the, the pitch that changes constantly that's heavy, heavy to, to transmit. Maybe you need a high bandwidth, like strong, strong bandwidth. Really if you don't. if you just receive the video, just a stereo video, let's say that maybe they said they know the movement of your head and they send only what you're seeing.

There is no difference from a normal video to that. Okay. Just have to double 40. I, but there is a another issue there. So that your head moves very quickly. So if this, the lag is not like minimum, same minimum. I like about 10, like less than 10 milli second or something like that. If it's already like 100 milli second you notice it and it makes you dizzy.

So there's because it's called like adaptive streaming, basically. It's like the, when imagine that you are watching the image on your PC, you can move around the pitch with the, with the mouse. And you control yourself like us, your point of view was you were a video game character, let's say, yeah. There is a delay in this, but it's on the screen.

So it doesn't depend on your head, but if you move your head, you expect to have in front of you immediately, what you're seeing. Right now we are speaking and zoom is delay of 100, 200 milli. We don't know notice it at all. We, it doesn't matter for this kind of conversation, but if it's in your eye in your eyes, then you start noticing it a lot.

You start make you sick actually mm-hmm. So there are, there are many issues there, like not so much the bandwidth, because it's only linear that to just meet, but becomes a lot. And so in one and another way you need the a more powerful connect. bandwidth on one side latency and reliability on other side. Okay. So these things may cost. I just don't know how much now

Interviewer: I was thinking also itself the process of like the, all the cameras and all the material that is gonna be needed to, to fill the pit. This also has a cost. Right, right.

Interviewee: Yeah. But this is maybe not related to the service. You do it. And, it's a, it's an industry let's say baseline cost that then you say spread over years and customers is not, it's not that, that, that one I think is much more relevant because it's the cost for you, just for you just to bring it to you. Yeah. There is a cost to bring that to you. So that will, that will affect it more. I think your finance

Interviewer: and I know you work in, in VR, like not necessarily in the football field, but how, how big is the adoption rate of VR, would you say?

Interviewee: So I I'm, I'm a researcher. Okay. I do not follow the, I mean, I marginally follow the market. I know that VR it's spreading and spreading, there was like a hype around 2015, 2016.

That was delayed. It's looking like this hype it's taking over again it all depends on the quality of the, of the content. So my work. It's mostly done to try to, to move these things faster. Why, what, what I do that it could be related to, to, to sports in general, it's to bring people, actual people in VR.

So that concept of natural video that truly intrigued, it's very difficult to to transmit and compress in real time. All, all this content. Especially for people, especially if you want to have this conversation. As I say before, we have 10, 100, 200 millisecond. We want to have like apparently real conversation teleported.

We have seen my technology. Right? You, you remember technology? Yes. I'm developing together with my team. And so we, we want to be able to have this conversation that we are having, but if, as if we were sitting in front of each other in VR or in augmented reality, even just with my phone, I could see you through my phone sitting on, on the chair beside me here.