

## Contemporary Marketing Communications Framework for Football Clubs

Alkis Thrassou , Demetris Vrontis , Nicos L. Kartakoullis & Thanos Kriemadis

To cite this article: Alkis Thrassou , Demetris Vrontis , Nicos L. Kartakoullis & Thanos Kriemadis (2012) Contemporary Marketing Communications Framework for Football Clubs, Journal of Promotion Management, 18:3, 278-305, DOI: [10.1080/10496491.2012.696454](https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2012.696454)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2012.696454>



Published online: 09 Aug 2012.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1990



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 7 View citing articles [↗](#)

## **Contemporary Marketing Communications Framework for Football Clubs**

ALKIS THRASSOU, DEMETRIS VRONTIS,  
and NICOS L. KARTAKOULLIS

*School of Business, University of Nicosia, Nicosia, Cyprus*

THANOS KRIEMADIS

*Department of Sports Management, University of Peloponnese, Tripolis, Greece*

*Sports marketing communications (MCs) theories have stemmed from orthodox marketing concepts; and though they have naturally adapted to the differentiators of their very nature, they increasingly portray elements of stagnation. The sport core product is still being regarded as essentially on-location or media entertainment, limiting researchers and practitioners to a correspondingly pre-defined MCs approach that fails to incorporate the true spectrum of sport value offerings. This paper provides an innovative perspective on sport MCs, through an extensive review of classical theories and their infusion with contemporary consumer-focused MC research. The findings indicate a need for a more holistic and value-based approach to MCs, with an expanded range of both elements and processes.*

**KEYWORDS** *sports marketing, football marketing, sports marketing communications, football marketing communications, sports promotion, football promotion, sports product, football product*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sports marketing communications (MCs) have stemmed from orthodox marketing theories and have naturally evolved to adapt to the differentiators of its very nature. This evolutionary path of sports MCs theory, however, increasingly portrays elements of stagnation, with most authors' methodological approaches being confined within the same context. Specifically, classical

---

Address correspondence to Demetris Vrontis, School of Business, University of Nicosia, P.O. Box 24005, 1700 Nicosia, Cyprus. E-mail: vrontis.d@unic.ac.cy

sports MCs theories and their contemporary counterparts still retain a perspective on the sport core product as being essentially on-location or media entertainment. This predefined perspective limits researchers and practitioners to a correspondingly predefined MCs approach that fails to incorporate the true spectrum of sport value offerings.

## DEFINING SPORT MARKETING

Marketing is an organizational management process that emphasizes customers' needs, wants, and exchange processes. The marketing concept is about the way marketing activities are included in organizational goals achievement, by shaping and meeting the target markets' needs and wants (Stanton, Etzel, & Walker, 1994; Churchill & Peter, 1995; Kotler, 1997; Zikmund & D'Amico, 2001; Theakou, Kriemadis, & Leivadi, 2008). These authors refer to the marketing concept in terms of four key elements: organizational goals, profitability, need satisfaction, and integrative marketing activities.

Schlossberg (1996) describes sport marketing (SM) as the way organizations make use of the emotional bond of the fans to their sport heroes and teams in order to place themselves favorably to sell more of their products and services; to increase their awareness and goodwill, as the means to channel sports for the average fan; and to achieve their products' and services' relationship marketing and positioning as part of their marketing strategy.

Evans, James, and Tones (1996) summarize sport marketing as the use of sport as a promotional vehicle for consumer and industrial goods and services and as the marketing of sports products, services, and events to consumers of sport. They further state that sport associations adapt a market orientation to remain commercially viable in a competitive environment.

According to Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2000), SM comprises all those activities designed to meet the needs of sport consumers, through exchange processes. They further propose that SM concerns two key themes. The first is the marketing of sport products and services straight to consumers of sport; and, the second is the marketing of other consumer and industrial products and services through the use of sport promotions. According to this definition, SM involves the marketing of services (such as sport club memberships); products (such as sport equipment and apparel); and entities (such as sport teams, leagues, or individuals).

According to Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (1993) sport marketing consists of five elements:

- *Market for sport products and services*
  - *Sport organizations compete and simultaneously work together*
  - *Consumers often regard themselves as "experts," due, for example, to strong personal recognition*

- *Sport product*
  - *Marketing must emphasize more on product extensions rather than on the core product*
  - *Sport is both a consumer and an industrial product*
- *Price of sport*
  - *Price that the consumer pays for sport is somewhat small compared with the total cost*
  - *Non-direct revenues (e.g., from television) are frequently higher than direct operating revenues (e.g., gate receipts)*
- *Promotion of sport*
- *Extensive publicity of sport has led to a low emphasis on sport marketing*
- *Sport distribution system*
- *Most sport products are produced, distributed, and consumed all together at one location*

## RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

This largely conceptual paper aims to provide an innovative prescription of sports MCs, through a consumer-focused perspective on the sports product definition and its consequent marketing communications effects. The aim is achieved through five separate objectives:

1. *The execution of an extensive literature review of classical theories on sports marketing, to understand the evolution of orthodox perspectives, and corresponding and currently prevailing sports marketing communications processes.*
2. *The study of contemporary consumer-based perspectives on generic marketing and marketing communications, to provide a fresh outlook on the subject.*
3. *The comparison of the two to identify deficiencies and application potentialities in sports marketing communications' academic theories and managerial practices.*
4. *The infusion of the former with the latter to develop a more holistic, broader-spectrum, value-based sports marketing communications framework, with a football focus befitting prevailing environmental conditions and managerial practices.*
5. *The explicit prescription of managerial implications and further research direction(s).*

The framework developed and its consequent theoretical and managerial implications, ultimately aspire to *jump start* a much needed process of change on the subject offering, at the same time, a solid platform for its implementation.

## THE SPORTS MARKETING MIX (OBJECTIVE 1)

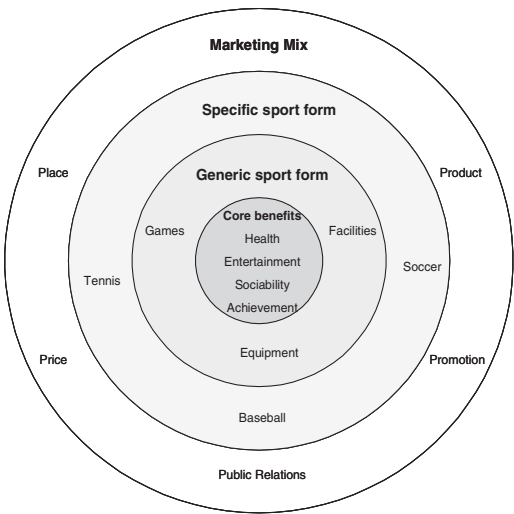
This section elaborates on the subject of SM mix as it establishes the foundation for the research's eventual focus on SM communications. The SM mix consists of marketing tools that the organization utilizes to accomplish its objectives in the target market (Kotler & Armstrong, 1991). The traditional marketing mix comprises of four key elements, the "Ps" of marketing: price, product, promotion (or marketing communications), and place (distribution) (Kotler, 1989; McCarthy & Perreault, 1990; Kotler & Armstrong, 1993; Stanton et al., 1994).

The key elements of the marketing mix of a sport organization are: *Product*, which includes positioning, service quality, product development, packaging, modifications, additional elements, and support services; *Price*, which includes list price, additional services' prices, discounts, allowances, payment period and credit terms; *Place*, which includes locations, distribution channels, assortments, transport, sport facilities, facility planning, facilities and equipment quality, process (systems to reach high levels of quality), and people (skilled employees); and *Promotion*, which includes advertising, sales promotion, selling, publicity, public relations, promotional licensing, direct marketing, television rights, and sport sponsorship (Kotler & Armstrong, 1991; Brooksbank, 1999; Shilbury, Quick, & Westerbeek, 1998).

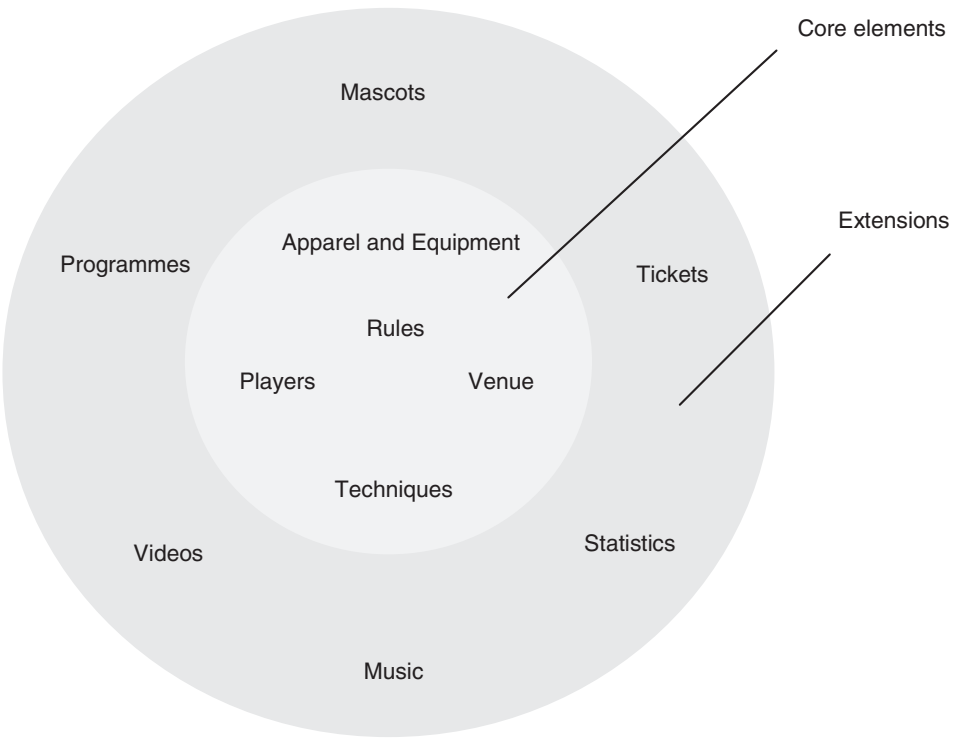
### Sport Product

According to Shank (1999), the sport product is a good, a service, or any mixture of them that is employed to offer benefits to a sport participant, spectator, or sponsor. Organizations employ the product in order, not only to meet customers' needs, but to also fulfill business objectives. The sport product can present the basis for a relationship between organization and its customers. For example, the takeover of Manchester United Football Club by Malcolm Glazer was opposed by a proportion of the fans. The product is the game of football. Nevertheless, fans of Manchester United consider their relationship with the club important enough to allow them to express their point of view regarding the clubs' future (Beech & Chadwick, 2007).

The sport product can be explained as any bundle of goods, services, and ideas that a consumer expects to be satisfied with on delivery (Figure 1). The sport product is unique and at its heart it covers the buyers' basic needs, such as entertainment, sociability, health, and achievement. As Figure 1 illustrates, the sport product includes the core elements as well as the extensions of the sport product. The central/core elements are (Figure 2): Game form (rules/techniques), Venue, Players, Equipment, and Apparel. A sample of extensions to the sport product includes music, tickets, programs, mascot, statistics, and videos.



**FIGURE 1** The bundle of characteristics of the sport product (Kriemadis & Kartakoullis, 2011).



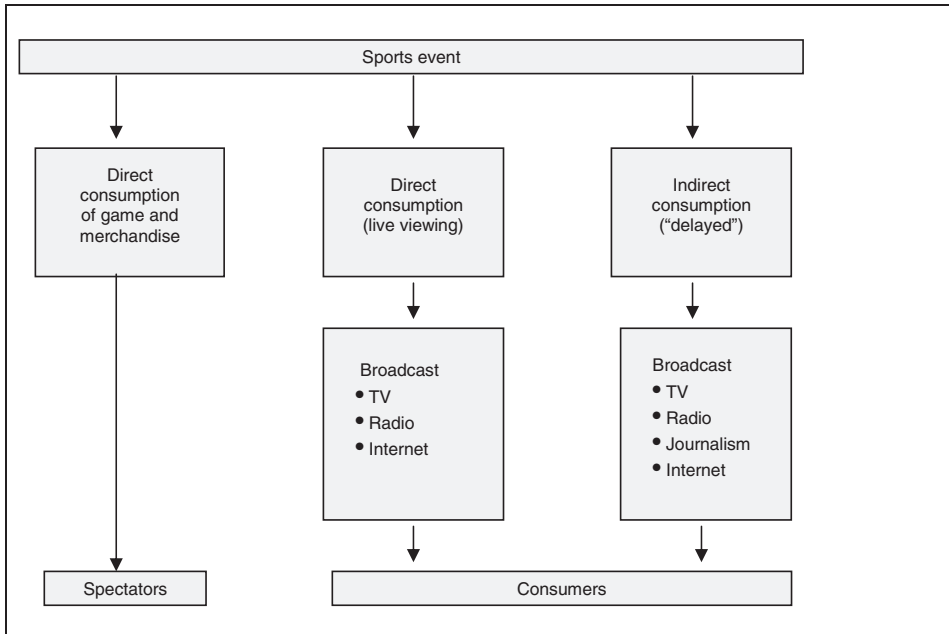
**FIGURE 2** Core elements of the sport product and a sample of extensions (Kriemadis & Kartakoullis, 2011).

## Sport Price

Pricing sport products is frequently based on the marketer's sense of consumer demand. Sport marketers should consider important issues such as the competition nature, the general market demand, and economic climate (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). Like other products, most sport merchandise has a price tag that often reflects the value (or perceived value of it) provided by the sport product. Customers might perceive that a higher price indicates a higher quality. Nevertheless, the sport marketer should be cautious and balance the perceived value against perceived quality (Masteralexis, Barr, & Hums, 2008). Sport marketers are frequently required to study their marketing environment in order to verify consumer tastes and the consumer pricing evaluation process.

## Sport Place

A typical product is manufactured and then relocated to a place where it is offered to consumers for purchase at any time. But this does not apply to sport products. The place where the product is produced (is the stadium or arena) is also the place where the product is consumed (Masteralexis et al., 2008). A distribution channel is the system that goods use en route from manufacture to consumption (see Figure 3). Distribution involves the availability/



**FIGURE 3** Simplified distribution channels for sports events (Kriemadis & Kartakoullis, 2011).

accessibility of products and services, which generally occur at two points: where products are available for purchase and where products are available for use or consumption.

The availability of products to consumers might come about with the immediate transfer of sale and ownership and, hence, use. For example, when a fan buys a replica shirt at a club store, he/she, at the same time, buys, owns, and takes physical ownership of the shirt. The trade and consumption of a product might, however, take place at different times. A further example is when buying tickets well in advance of an event (e.g., for an international match). Tickets are purchased at one time and place and consumed at another time and place. The aforementioned indicates the necessity for flows of product and information in order to permit such transactions to occur. These flows are maintained within the distribution channels.

According to Beech and Chadwick (2007) the following issues should be considered with regard to distribution procedures: (a) channels are not static, and many sport channels have been transformed; (b) information is as vital to channel performance as is the movement of physical products; (c) there is a need for information in order to ascertain the cost-effective pairing of supply and demand; (d) the selection of channels and the scale of the intermediaries are significant and demand careful thought to enhance revenue and cut waste by being more successful and efficient.

### Sports Promotion (Marketing Communications)

Promotion is the means through which the marketer communicates data about the product, place, and price. More significantly perhaps, promotion is also the method for positioning a product in the customer's mind; it involves the following forms of marketing activity (Mullin et al., 2000):

Advertising: any paid, not individuals-directed, clearly sponsored message conveyed through the media;

Publicity: any form of publicity in the media not paid for by the beneficiary or within the beneficiary's control or influence;

Personal selling: any face-to-face presentation in which the seller has a chance to convince the customer;

Sales promotion: a range of activities like trade-shows, displays, exhibitions, and performances.

The following section expands on the subject of sports marketing communications in order to identify researchers' past and current approaches and perspectives and, also, to provide a counterpoint of comparison to the more innovative philosophies of contemporary marketing.



## THE SPORTS MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS (OBJECTIVE 1)

### Sports Promotion and Public Relations

Effective promotion is based on environmental awareness and consumer knowledge. Sport marketers, therefore, should develop messages that might be better understood, as well as select the most effective promotional methods and the most appropriate media. Regarding the former, merchandise display relates to presentation of products to customers; sales promotion to inducements to purchase; personal selling to interaction with personnel (team/player or stadium); advertising to messages to customers; direct marketing to direct contact with customers; sponsorship to linkage with related events, individuals or companies; and public relations to information management via media and “news” sources (Beech & Chadwick, 2004).

Lagae (2005) states that “marketing communications can be described as establishing contact with consumers and organizations, that is, to influence their knowledge and attitudes in a positive direction for marketing policy.” In parallel, the aim of corporate public relations (PR) is to create goodwill among diverse public groups. Target groups engaged in a sporting project, include politicians, sports fans, employees, and the press, combined with sports fans and all stakeholders associated with the sporting project (Theakou & Kriemadis, 2005). Sport, as an activity, can strongly support several forms of PR targeted at different audiences.

Examples of these are *Media PR* as utilized by the Special Olympics to inform the press about their activities to create positive publicity; *Fusion communication* by Vodafone Group Plc. communicating through sports when taking over local brands; *Retention communication* employed in the run-up advertising campaign to Euro 2000, with all employees of Nationale–Nederlanden (the main sponsor of the Royal Dutch football league) receiving an orange T-shirt on which was printed “Welcome to the lion’s den”; *Recruitment communication* used by Adecco, the sponsor of the Turin 2006 Olympic Winter Games, who handled the recruitment, selection, and training of the volunteers, and the professional progress of the Torino Olympic Committee personnel; *Public affairs* utilized by cigarette brand Marlboro, inviting politicians to its skyboxes at the Silverstone Circuit during the British F1 Grandprix; and *Marketing PR* used by Adidas to introduce the Roteiro ball in the official Euro 2004 matches through a well-targeted press campaign (Lagae, 2005).

Techniques of PR vary widely in sport and include press relations, such press releases, press conferences, press briefings, and so forth; internal PR, such as house journals, staff briefings, and so forth; publications, such as annual reports, magazines, brochures, website, and so forth; events, such as social events, annual meetings, and so forth; and, specific advertising, such as for corporate image building, and so forth (Brassington & Pettit, 2003).

## Sports Branding

Brand image is undoubtedly one of the most important concepts in the modern world; hence, companies spend a great deal of time and money on the introduction of new brands, on the enforcement of existing ones, and on the acquisition of rivals (Kumar, 2003). According to the American Marketing Association, "brand is a name, term, symbol, or design, or combination which is used to distinguish the sellers' goods and services and to differentiate them from competitors" (Kotler, et al., 2005, p. 906). The brand's qualities may be actual or illusionary, rational or emotional, physical or invisible (Ambler, 1992; Styles & Ambler, 1995; Ambler & Styles, 1997).

According to Sevier (2002), branding is explained as a promise kept. People do not buy things; they buy names. Sevier recognizes what great brands have a long term presence in the market, distinctively differentiate themselves, have individuality, and bear effective characteristics.

A brand can help an organization to reach particular goals or objectives. For a typical business, the mission of acquiring new customers is generally far more expensive than retaining existing ones (Aaker, 1991). Loyalty might be fashioned to lend a hand in forging the consumer's attachment to the brand by promoting and building a strong brand. In combination with maintaining customer awareness in the organization's brand, the customer's relationships and satisfaction with the brand, protect it from competitive offerings. Several studies have been conducted with regard to brand and consumer loyalty within the sport market (Gladden & Funk, 2001; Levin, Beasley, & Gamble, 2004; Richardson & O'Dwyer, 2003), arguing that the brands' ability to create consumer loyalty is common to the sport service.

Sport branding may be unique in that its consumers become loyal at an early age and rarely change their loyalty in order to support a competitor team (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). Moreover, a brand can help a producer to expand into other types of product categories. Many organizations have utilized the brand extension strategy to influence their existing brand equity (Glynn & Brodie, 1998). A strong brand is also able to provide a company with the power to block rival companies' movement and market access. As Jary and Wileman (1998) argue, a strong retail brand is more likely to generate greater consumer interest and market share.

Research in recently-established New Zealand football teams (Grant, 2006) indicates that the club managers' major focus should be in the creation of associations with their brand that are independent of the win-loss team performance. Although team performance influences emotions forever to some degree, the time invested in encouraging consumer identification with the brand and providing an environment where fans are able to build a community around the team will bond different consumer associations to the brand. According to Underwood, Bond, and Baer (2001) a sports franchise

might achieve attendance levels and financial goals by structuring awareness, image, and loyalty. Underwood et al. indicated that to create customer-based brand equity, sport organizations should develop strategies to encourage a deeper relationship with the team and between fans. These strategies include the promotion of the following:

- *group experience;*
- *team history and heritage;*
- *rituals or traditions; and*
- *physical facility.*

Manchester United of the English Premier League is perhaps the world's most famous sporting team. The team's reputation has contributed extensively to revenues. For example, Manchester United's merchandising revenue was just over £1 million in 1993, but this had grown to nearly £28 million by 1997 (Stavros, 2005). The success is largely related to a solid international marketing approach, revolving around the team's excellent football team that plays and wins in an exciting way. The product nonetheless extends further than the team itself to include merchandising, such as selling shirts and a variety of memorabilia; television rights; and Manchester United's own television channel. Manchester United markets itself as a global brand and is also involved in joint promotional activities, for example, with Vodafone, the mobile phone company. The club has effectively positioned itself at the premier end of the market and as a result it tends to charge premium prices, evidenced also by the high cost of its season tickets (<http://www.thetimes100.co.uk/>).

### Promotional Licensing and Merchandising

Promotional licensing is the acquisition of rights to affiliate or associate with an event or product in order to gain benefits linked to that relationship. Rights might embrace entitlement, retail opportunities, or purchase of media time. The agreements in promotional licensing may include the right to use a logo, a trademark, or a graphic representation demonstrating the purchaser's link to the event/product; the right to an exclusive arrangement with a service or product group; the right of entitlement to an event or facility; the right to carry out firm promotional activities associated with the licensing agreement, such as sales-driven activities; and/or the right of service (use of product) or the right to use the purchaser's product in concert with the product/event (Mullin et al., 2000). Consequently, promotional licensing is made up of a variety of activities linked to a communication process that aims to use lifestyle marketing (which includes sport) to forward messages to a targeted group.

Selling licensed merchandise is a technique characteristically used in order to develop sport in the international marketplace. Merchandise, which includes team logos, provides a way to connect people with their favorite teams. Sport leagues are forever utilizing merchandise sales displayed with logos in order to increase their league's popularity overseas (Masteralexis et al., 2008). As merchandising and licensing prove to be key marketing objectives, sport organizations license their logos and trademarks in order to build consciousness for the sport, or club; and to support product lines outside of sport as a way to increase revenue (Shillbury, Quick, & Westerbeek, 2003).

A fundamental part of the sports marketing mix is merchandising (Verow, Lawrence, & McCormick, 2005). Sport merchandising generally covers the following situations: (a) the merchandise sale with reference to a particular event or team property—this covers the reproduction by a manufacturer of a particular logo on different product types; and (b) the product sale by reference to an individual's name and image.

Licensing has turned out to be one of the most contemporary forms of marketing and brand extension offered to brand owners today and it is being increasingly used. Through the marketing of shirts, scarves and other merchandise, football clubs can secure high sales while improving professional brand building and emotional fan loyalty. In fact, an annual total of €615 million from merchandising is produced by the clubs in Europe's six top footballing nations ([www.sportbusiness.com](http://www.sportbusiness.com)). SPORT+MARKT and PR Marketing's European Football Merchandising Report states that the twenty English FA Premier League clubs head the ranking with €171 million, which adds up to merchandising revenue of €8.6 million per club. The Spanish Primera División is in second position (with €145 million in total/€7.3 million per club) ahead of the German Bundesliga (with €127 million in total/€7.1 million per club). Behind French League 1 (with revenue of €17 million), Italian Serie A earns a relatively low €3.2 million on average per club from merchandising. The Dutch Eredivisie holds the last position with a total of €22 million.

#### AN ALTERNATIVE, CONSUMER-FOCUSED, VALUE-BASED MCs PERSPECTIVE (OBJECTIVE 2)

The aforementioned sections have presented the prevailing theories and practices of sports/football marketing communications, satisfying in parallel the first objective of the research. This section fulfills Objective 2 by researching the more contemporary marketing communications theories, with a focus on consumer and the concept of value. The combination, comparison and interrelation of the two will subsequently allow for valuable conclusions to

be drawn and help toward the development of a new marketing communications framework for football clubs.

### Contemporary Consumer Behavior Context

Tracing the patterns of consumer activity, preferences, beliefs, attitudes, and affections has allowed marketers to adapt their strategies and communications accordingly and, thus, successfully compete in the business arena of contemporary markets. Embarking on any business, demands for the ability to cope with a multitude of factors and forces simultaneously, plus the wisdom to comprehend the vital interrelationship of the environmental forces involved and the ability to analyze them as interwoven threads, are what make up the fabric of modern marketing theory.

*Consumer behavior* is defined as the activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). The significance of consumer behavior knowledge rests on the foundation of modern marketing philosophy, which recognizes the consumer as being the focus of marketing activity and with an incessantly growing influence on business activity and decisions (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong, 2005; Schiffman & Kunuck, 2004; Blackwell et al.).

Understanding consumers and their behavior, therefore, is frequently the key to business success and a prerequisite for an effective marketing communications system. This understanding nonetheless stems from the identification of the macro-environmental factors shaping behavior, as well as the very personal, internal, psychological underlying motivators that drive it. Thrassou and Vrontis have researched the subject substantially (Vrontis & Thrassou, 2007; Thrassou, 2007; Thrassou & Vrontis, 2011a) and concluded that macro-environmental characteristics not only differentiate consumer behavior between markets, but also push the average individual motivation level disproportionately higher or lower on the Maslow need hierarchy scale, primarily through the application of collective expectations on individual performance. This results not only in different motivators (Rayner & Easthope, 2001), but also in considerably more complex motivational processes, which results in both quantitative and qualitative upgrades in the decision-making process, especially in the more developed markets' consumers (Esch, Langner, Schmitt, & Geus, 2006; Yi & Baumgartner, 2004).

The ultimate question for businesses of course is how the aforementioned factors affect them and how should they adapt their marketing processes? The answer begins by the realization that the contemporary severely competitive business environment does not really allow much room for maneuver between producer supply and consumer demand (Thrassou & Vrontis, 2009). This necessitates both a sound understanding of consumer wants and the wherewithal to satisfy them. It also renders it increasingly rare for businesses to offer truly good value through visibly higher quality, lower price, or the best combination of the two. Consequently, value is frequently

offered in other ways, such as innovation (Mukherjee & Hoyer, 2001), extended products, or services, better customer care, personal attention, and increased convenience (Thøgersen & Olander, 2002; Naumann, Jackson, & Rosenbaum, 2001).

Simply meeting customer expectations is generally not enough. Businesses have to surpass expectations to meet the prerequisites of quality (Gupta & Lehmann, 2002; Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001; Naumann et al., 2001). Another option for the creation of value is the building of a strong brand image that communicates it to the consumer. This process is often artificial, in the sense that it relies more on perceptions than on reality. In a world dominated by information multimedia, the perceptions in question become a more critical parameter than objective reality itself (McCullough, Tsang, & Emmons, 2004; Palmer & Ponsonby, 2002; Naumann et al.). Realizing this, businesses spend a large percentage of their income to shape perceptions (and therefore preferences) through all the varieties of marketing communications at their disposal. The result is that audiences are constantly exposed to commercial messages and become cognitively saturated with information. This in turn reduces the ability of producers to influence consumers, unless considerable extra effort is put into increasing the qualitative or quantitative intensity of their communication (Blackwell et al., 2006).

For a developed world with few concerns for immediate needs toward survival, consumerism appears to have become an end in itself, and through it, consumers find a voice of expression, the way to promote their understanding of a better society, an abstract escape from the predetermined, and the means to build an identity for themselves. The choice belongs to the consumer and the consumer alone, but the context and content belongs to the businesses (Thrassou & Vrontis, 2009).

## Marketing Communications Effects and Applications

Sports marketing, as a product, is by nature a service. This, in combination with the aforementioned increasing value of intangible *higher order* product attributes in contemporary markets, demands the adoption of proportionately more elements that relate to services providing marketing communications theory.

From authors such as Lovelock and Wright (2002), Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2006), and Thrassou and Vrontis (2006), three valuable elements arise: differences in the perception of the environment as physical and non-physical with the latter naturally presenting complications both in its definition and analysis; an upgraded value of internal marketing stemming from the relative weight of *People* in the marketing mix; and the importance placed on quality and the clients' perception of quality with the latter differentiated from the former.

Lovelock and Wright (2002) in fact emphasize the importance of physical evidence, but further to the actual product they include also other *real*

evidence such as offices and equipment; but also *mental* evidence such as symbols. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) identify the key reasons for service communication problems as being: inadequate management of service promises, inadequate management of customer expectations, inadequate customer education, and inadequate internal marketing communications. They subsequently present a strategy for each toward matching service promises with delivery. Earlier, McArthur and Griffin (1997) identified the need to respect the differences of various types of marketers in planning marketing communication activities.

Thrassou and Vrontis (2006, 2009) link the intangibility and complexity of contemporary consumer behavior with the increased need for customer education and consultation toward (also) customer *perception management*. Furthermore, they observe through these consumer behavior attributes an opportunity for businesses to affect not only client knowledge, but also elements such as client attitudes, beliefs, and feelings toward the service offered. Marketing communications are, in fact, viewed as the means of both receiving the necessary information and transmitting it successfully towards controlling these elements.

The aforementioned indicate the imperative of marketing communications mix design in parallel to the implementation of the methods and analyses that will allow the measurement and understanding of the above elements. Of interest to this research are the various means of stimulating word-of-mouth and targeting of opinion leaders. Word-of-mouth has been shown by previous reviews to be relatively more important to small organizations, whereas the reliance on opinion leaders appears to be more generic. Similar conclusions are drawn through the review of work by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), Hawkins, Best, and Coney (2004), and Solomon (2007).

The aforementioned researchers also, practically unanimously, identify electronic marketing as a critical element of change within the new marketing communications framework. The subject is consequently and subsequently paid increasingly greater relative attention. Reedy and Schullo (2004), through their work on electronic marketing, demonstrate the continuously growing spectrum of communication means available to businesses and their multiple implications. With the effort for gaining competitive advantage shifted toward non-price factors, new electronic forms of communication and distribution channels are invaluable for services, since they provide the opportunity for raising quality or cutting costs without diminishing the existing service standards. The future of customer service is multi-channel and its benefits plentiful: it cuts costs, it develops deeper relationships with customers, it increases sales and it reduces risk by spreading it over multiple channels (Hobmeier, 2001).

In terms of customers' channel preferences, Skiera and Gensler (2003) outline the primary influencers as the nature of the product purchased, the stage of the transaction process, and the customer with all its characteristics.

Relating to the nature of the product purchased, Peterson, Balasubramanian, and Bronnenberg (1997) concluded that customer preference over channel choice would depend on the level of outlay, frequency, the nature of its tangible aspects and the physical/informational elements. Laforet and Li (2005) state that the delivery of technology-based services appears to be correlated with high satisfaction. This has been shown to be especially true where the product is highly important to customers (Joseph & Stone, 2003). Similarly, the literature suggests that consumers prefer a mix of rather than any one single delivery channel (Howcroft, Hamilton, & Hewer, 2002) and that it is important for providers to understand and improve each channel within the overall offering rather than concentrating efforts on improving one delivery channel in isolation (Patricio, Fisk, & Cunha, 2003).

According to Clarke (2001), value propositions define the relationship between supplier offerings and consumer purchases. Clarke further outlines that value propositions specify the interdependence between the performances attributes of a product and the fulfillment of needs, and solidifies the relationship between the customer and various dimensions of product value. Thus, customer satisfaction is merely a response to the value proposition offered by a specific product bundle. Value in itself is subjectively found in new electronic channels, and individual customer characteristics (education, age, income, etc.) will affect evaluations of perceived risks, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use of electronic means (Laforet & Li, 2005; Howcroft et al., 2002; Sarel & Marmorstein, 2003a, 2003b; Bhattacharjee, 2002).

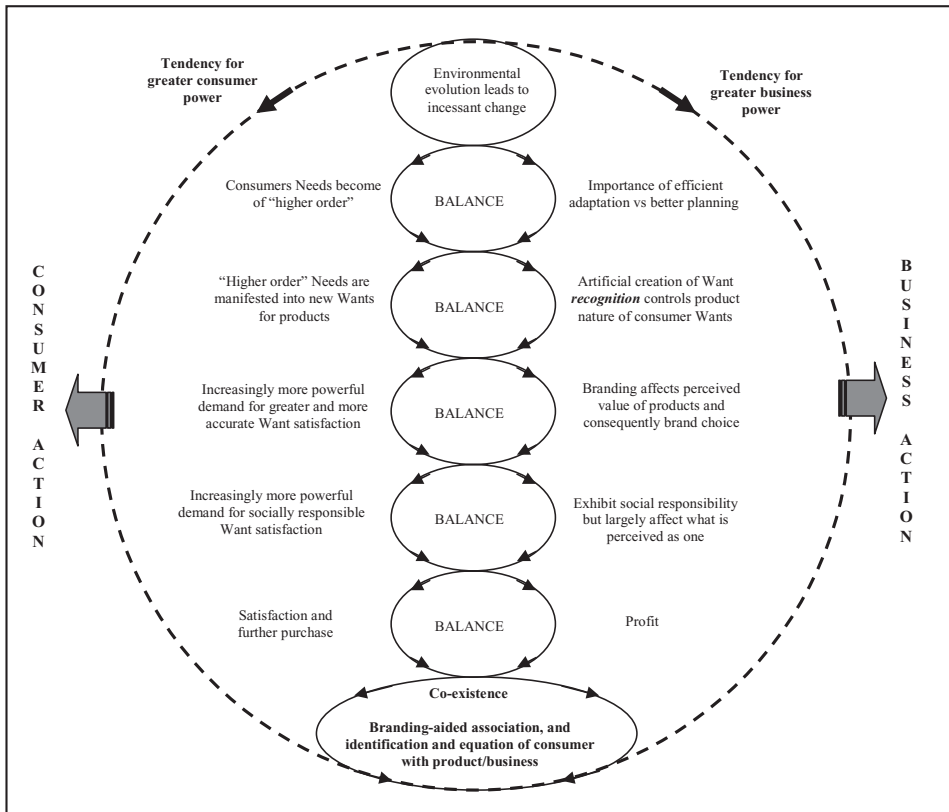
These contemporary consumer-focused approaches employ *value* as their central concept, allowing it to diffuse throughout their marketing processes; especially marketing communications. This approach is widely and increasingly applied by theorists and practitioners across the industries' spectrum, to gradually cover all types of products, from tangible goods, to commodities and intangible services; but also more liberal product interpretations such as (even) politics (Vrontis, Thrassou, & Vignali, 2006; Vrontis, Thrassou, & Czinkot, 2011; Vrontis, Thrassou, & Rossi, 2011; Thrassou, Vrontis, & McDonald, 2009; Thrassou, Vrontis, & Kotabe, 2011; Singh, Vrontis, and & Thrassou, 2011). The following section investigates the application of this approach specifically to sports/football marketing communications.

## AN INNOVATIVE SPORTS MCs FRAMEWORK FOR FOOTBALL CLUBS (OBJECTIVES 3 & 4)

### Marketing Communications Key Theoretical Findings

As previously presented, the marketing environment is changing, at an increasing pace, which organizations can do little to control and which we are given no option to accept or reject. Organizations have to accept that consumers and producers will continue to live through times of change,





**FIGURE 4** A framework toward a new business-consumer relationship in developed countries (Vrontis & Thrassou, 2007a).

with occasional interruptions of stability. Vrontis and Thrassou (2007a) and Thrassou and Vrontis (2009, 2011) concentrate on the subject of marketing communications in the context of contemporary consumer behavior, with their analysis outgrowing the abstract philosophical context to touch upon a number of practical business issues. Their findings ultimately provide the conceptual foundation for a new relationship between business and consumers, with the question of balance of power in its epicenter (Figure 4).

The literature review findings gradually form the contours of a new contemporary marketing communications model. This model is clearly shaped by two primary forces. The first relates to the incessant macro and micro-environmental changes, which induce strategic marketing to focus on reflex-style consumer relationships. The second is the consumers' needs increasing manifestation into intangible wants, of obscure value and affective nature, and which are naturally more vulnerable to marketing communication strategies. The combined action of the two forces establishes *branding* as the single most effective value-adding strategy, primarily, through the construction

of brand personalities and general anthropomorphic brand associations. The latter includes lifestyles, values, ideas, attitudes, and so forth.

The business-consumer relationship, therefore, as it stems from the literature review, is fundamentally a co-existing one. On the one hand, the consumers are becoming more and more empowered regarding their wants and consequent demands. On the other hand, businesses appear able to substantially affect the crucial interface between consumers' needs and wants, consequently, sculpting consumer demands. The one action is not simply parallel to the other. The two actions depend on each other. The dawning business-consumer relationship therefore is more than a co-existing one. It is a symbiotic one.

The implication for business marketing communications is grave. The new symbiotic relationship shifts marketing communications' target area from the consumer's environment to the consumer's mind; from the external to the internal; from the tangible to the intangible. *Reality* is increasingly shadowed by *perception* with the latter being predominant for a growing number of product categories. The aforementioned factors have a profound effect on marketing communications' practice: a transference of focus from *function* (awareness, knowledge, information, etc.) to *perception*. Consequently, perception management arises as a primary marketing communication process and branding as its primary vehicle.

### Sports and Football Marketing Communications Theoretical Impacts

Following the objectives set in the introduction of this paper, the research brings together the findings relating to sports and football marketing theory, with the findings relating to contemporary consumer-based marketing communications theory to identify deficiencies and application potentialities in sports and football marketing communications' academic theories and managerial practices.

The most obvious finding is the inability of existing sports/football marketing theorists, as well as practitioners, to *break the mold* of classical marketing theories and rethink the fundamental principles and elements of the critical marketing processes. The predominant view of sports, in general, and football, in particular, is that the product is essentially a service of entertainment; along with its auxiliary characteristics, such as excitement, fun, etc. The marketing implications of this view is overwhelming as the marketing mix and its consequent marketing communications mix are shaped and executed in the same context, frequently resembling the marketing approaches of the movie industry and show business.

This phenomenon has two fundamental deficiencies: on the one hand, it *forces* the core and expanded product of football into a *cast* that does not really correspond to its shape; and, on the other hand, it significantly

limits the marketing opportunities offered by the true nature of the core and expanded product.

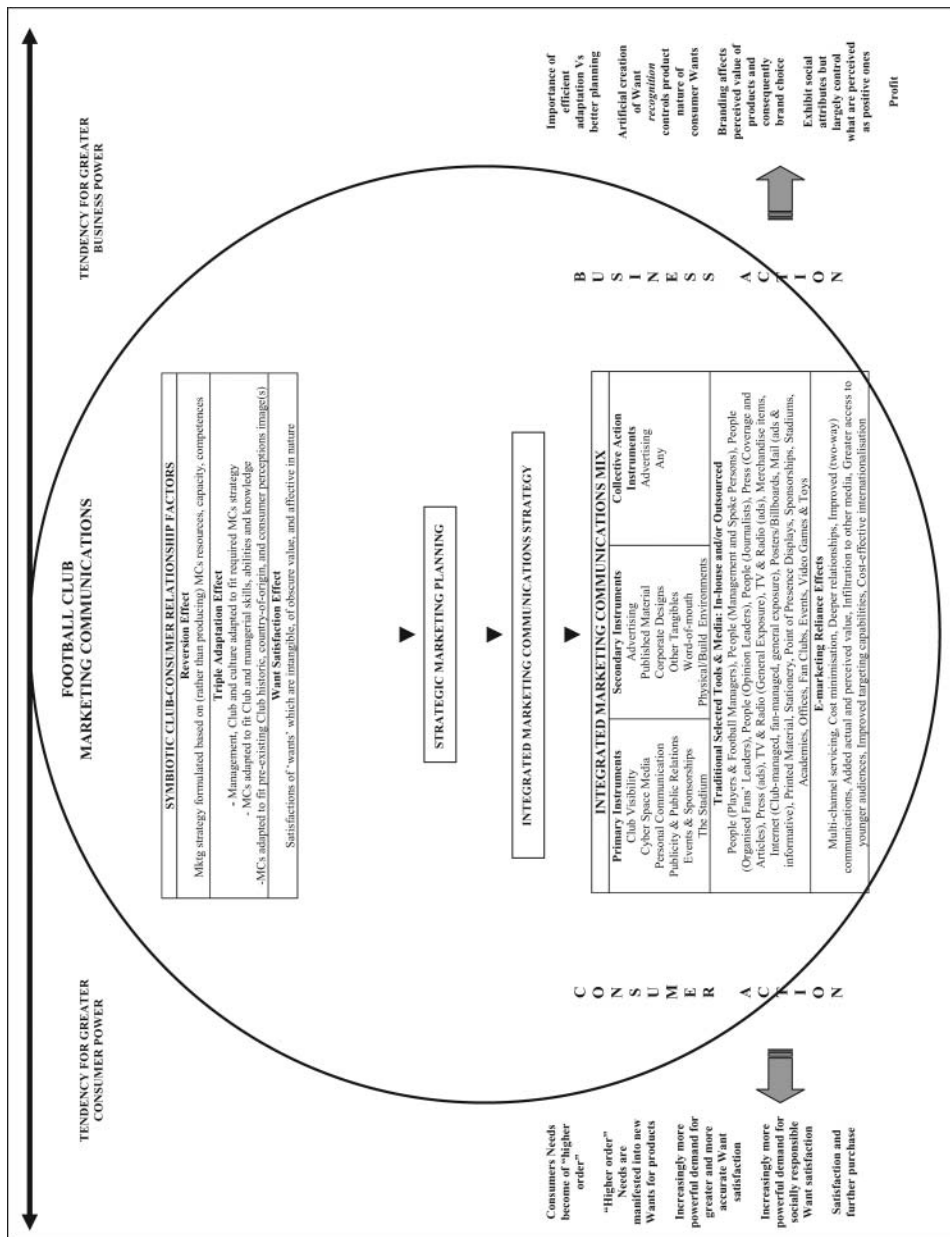
More specifically, investigating the football product through the contemporary consumer market perspective, it is clear that it is regarded differently by different segments of the market. Though entertainment and others may be the core product for a significant portion of football customers, it is evident that the complexity of contemporary markets demands for a redefinition of this football core product in other socio-cultural terms, as well as based on individual motivators and factors. Football, for example, is the means for a sense of belonging; a statement of culture, lifestyle, locality, social group, nationality, socio-economic class, political orientation, history, and much more. Football as a product is frequently not an end, but the means to building an image for one self; a mirror of aspired social and self-image; a reason of and for being; and in general, a medium for satisfying an extended spectrum of the contemporary customer's needs and wants. This *plastic* quality of football as a product, its ability to fit the needs and wants of significantly different market segments, is its strength and business potentiality, which current marketing approaches appear to overlook.

Though much of the aforementioned theories and research findings are directly applicable to sports in general, this research differentiates and focuses on football for two main reasons: (a) football, more than any other sport internationally, has historically infiltrated most aspects of life, including social, political, cultural, national, etc.; and (b) football is the most widespread sport internationally, with proportional core product diversity across markets, as well as consumer behavior implications.

### Provisional Football Marketing Communications Framework for Football Clubs

Figure 5 proposes a new consumer-based, innovative and prescriptive football marketing communications framework. The framework components are schematically enclosed by the business-consumer symbiotic forces, thus depicting both the context, but also the boundaries of the sport marketing communication process. These forces encompass the two entities of sport and consumer in a system of co-existence and interdependence, prescribing that each will ensure the well-being of the other in the interests of its own existence. This situation evolves naturally from twenty-first century environmental conditions that interweave consumer behavior with corporate strategy. The two act continuously as equal and opposite forces resulting in a dynamic equilibrium, which achieves the balance and assures the durability of this new symbiosis (Thrassou & Vrontis, 2009).

In the spirit of the aforementioned research, and with comparative, but football adapted elements as they arise from this paper, the various marketing communications components are portrayed. First, the model notes the three



**FIGURE 5** A provisional marketing communications framework for football clubs. (*Continued*)



**PRIMARY INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS: PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT**  
Shape customer perceptions of the Club according to what is plausible, profitable, and sustainable



**PRIMARY INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS VEHICLE: BRANDING**  
Develop Branding as the primary aim and means towards and of Perception Management



**TERMINAL INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AIMS**  
Shift of focus of MCs from the products and their attributes to the product experience, the product intangibles and in essence product higher-order value additions  
(Lifestyle, History, Culture, Religion, Nationality, Country, Politics, Class, Locality, Profession, Values, Beliefs, etc.)

**FIGURE 5** (Continued)

major effects of the symbiotic framework: the *Reversion Effect*, that is, marketing strategy formulated based on, rather than producing, marketing communications resources, capacity, and competences; the *Triple Adaptation Effect*, that is, management, organization, and culture adapted to fit required marketing communications strategy and vice versa; and the *Want Satisfaction Effect*, that is, the call for satisfaction of *wants* that are intangible, of obscure value, and affective in nature. Subsequently *strategic marketing planning* and *integrated marketing communications strategy* are depicted but left unprescribed owing to their subjective nature. The integrated marketing communications mix, nevertheless, is presented to differentiate between primary and secondary instruments and to also note the consideration of collective instruments; that is, the marketing communications collaboration of clubs, either to increase total product usage/market or to competitively *flock* smaller clubs/leagues against larger ones. Perception Management is then shown to be the primary integrated marketing communications process and Branding is its primary vehicle. Finally, instead of a number of potential integrated marketing communications aims (improved service, customer education, etc.), a single *terminal* aim is provided: shift of focus of marketing communications from the products and their attributes to the product experience, the product intangibles, and, in essence, product higher-order value additions.

## CONCLUSIONS (OBJECTIVE 5)

### Managerial Implications

The composed framework is really a conceptual proposition for a new approach to sports and football marketing communications, consequent to evolutionary changes in the relationship between businesses and consumers. In spite of its conceptual nature, nevertheless, even at this stage of its development, the framework does bear a number of practical implications. First, its *symbiotic* context allows marketing planners to comprehend contemporary consumers and to utilize that knowledge. Second, it shifts the focus of marketing communications from the products and their attributes to the products' value in terms of product experience and higher-order need satisfaction. Third, it identifies Perception Management as a primary aim and Branding as a primary vehicle, in effect, changing the role of marketing communications from functional message transmitters and image-builders to *stipulators of reality*. Overall, the framework demands the concentration of business activity on the dynamic intervention in the processes by which consumers perceive the world and frame their expectations.

In practical (practitioners') terms, the findings and framework call for sports/football business managers (additionally to current practices) to:

1. *Break through the sterile perspective of the football product as entertainment and related services.*
2. *Segment the market according to potential customers' full spectrum of needs, to cover social, cultural, and individual ones.*
3. *Target those segments that provide the maximum profitability, while allowing for synergies in marketing communications.*
4. *Develop the marketing and communications strategies with a long-term outlook, which means to look for the long-term sustainability of the club and not the immediate profitability only.*
5. *Develop marketing communications mixes that target the selected segments both collectively, but individually as well (multiple marketing communications mixes).*
6. *Design a marketing communications system that is multi-channeled and resting increasingly on electronic means.*
7. *Facilitate the physical communication/contact of the customer (fan) with the club, through match physical attendance, fans' club visits, meeting players, etc.*
8. *Strengthen parallel product sales promotion (shirts, memorabilia, etc.) both toward additional income and as the means to cementing the bond with the club.*
9. *Pay special attention to tangible marketing communications elements, especially the stadium, academies, fans' clubs and other built environments.*
10. *Retain communication with fans, both as the means to understanding their needs better, but also to enhance the feeling of participation.*
11. *Where logical, develop marketing communication strategies with an international outlook, paying attention to potential contradicting communications between local, national, and international audiences*
12. *Utilize indirect pre-existing branding associations, for example, country-of-origin effects (see also Vrontis & Thrassou, 2007b).*
13. *Differentiate qualitatively and quantitatively between casual customers/audiences and fans.*
14. *Develop marketing communications strategies that create value for the various segments, according to their needs, and aiming for long term relationships and also non-financial support.*
15. *Retain a balance, through marketing communications, between what the fans want the club to be like and what the club wants the fans to be like.*
16. *Design marketing communications messages to assure that the customer basis (fan support) is detached from actual sporting results, to allow for a solid customer basis and better long term planning.*
17. *Maximize the holistic experience of the offered product, through a marketing communications orchestrated combination of core, actual, and expanded products offered.*

In short, football business managers are called to design and utilize the marketing communications system to ensure that customers (fans and causal supporters) receive a holistic experience of the football product that transcends a mere sporting experience to become a multi-dimensional satisfaction of needs, even a lifestyle. This has the triple benefit of maximizing the customer basis, solidifying it, and harvesting the maximum profits both collectively and individually.

### Further Research

This theoretical conceptualization of a new football marketing communications concept has deliberately applied an out-of-the-box approach to also incorporate macro-environmental elements into a unique and innovative framework. The outcome is by no means presented as definitive or complete. Rather, it is offered as a starting point for a new and distinctive analysis and as a stimulus to intellectual discussion and further research. Regarding the latter, it is necessary for the framework to be empirically tested and, subsequently and consequently, refined. The scope of factors involved do not allow for a single research to achieve this goal, with multi-objective and multi-foci researches required to rebuild our understanding and very philosophy regarding sports and particularly football marketing.

Further research, therefore, primarily needs to investigate the needs and wants of contemporary consumers that are potentially satisfied through sports. It is also imperative to segment the market according to these needs and also according to the more typical attributes (age, gender, class, income, location, etc.). Research must also correlate between the segments and the ideal means of marketing communication with each one, with relative weights in mind too. Further research should also investigate the internationalization potential of football clubs, as those who achieve it are handsomely rewarded, but at the same time only a small percentage actually can achieve it. Additionally, research must define the most effective means of marketing communication, extrapolating also on the present to predict means that need to be strengthened or even invented to maximize both the efficiency and the effectiveness of sports marketing communications. Finally, research must be performed on the question of the multiplicity of marketing communications channels and, more importantly, the degree to which a multiplicity of messages can co-exist to target different segments.

### Catalexis

On a catalectic note, it is a scientific inevitability, that sports/football marketing communications shall shift direction at both the theoretical and managerial levels. Sports/football marketing communications have historically adopted and adapted mainstream marketing theories and practices and



shall continue to do so diachronically. This research is innovative in its sports/football marketing focused propositions, but not so in the context of contemporary generic marketing theories. The innovation, thus, is not really a philosophical innovation, but simply a statement of the fact that sports/football marketing theory and practice need to catch up with the more forward thinking service industries. The framework developed and its consequent theoretical and managerial implications ultimately aspire to jump start a much needed process of change on the subject offering, at the same time, a solid platform for its implementation.

## REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Ambler, T. (1992). *Need-to-know-marketing*. London, UK: Century Business.
- Ambler, T., & Styles, C. (1997). Brand development versus new product development: Towards a process model of extension decisions. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 6(1), 13–26.
- Beech, J., & Chadwick, S. (2004). *The business of sport management*. London, UK: Prentice Hall.
- Beech, J., & Chadwick, S. (2007). *The marketing of sport*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.
- Bhattacharjee, A. (2002). Individual trust in online firms: Scale development and initial test. *Journal of Management and Information Systems*, 19(1), 211–241.
- Blackwell, R. J., Miniard, P. W., & Engel, J. F. (2001). *Consumer behavior* (9th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: South Western-Thomson Learning.
- Blackwell, R. J., Miniard, P. W., & Engel, J. F. (2006). *Consumer behavior* (10th International ed.). Cincinnati, OH: South Western-Thomson Learning.
- Brassington, F., & Pettit, S. (2003). *Principles of marketing* (3rd ed.). Harlow, UK: FT Prentice Hall.
- Brooksbank, R. (1999). The theory and practice of marketing planning in the smaller business. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 17(2), 78–90.
- Churchill, G. A., Jr., & Peter, J. P. (1995). *Marketing—Creating value for customers*. Homewood, IL: Austen Press Irwin.
- Clarke, I. III (2001). Emerging value propositions for M-commerce. *Journal of Business Strategies*, 18(2), 133–148.
- Esch, F. R., Langner, T., Schmitt, B. H., & Geus, P. (2006). Are brands forever? How brand knowledge and relationships affect current and future purchases. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 15(2), 98–105.
- Evans, A., James, T., & Tones, A. (1996, April). Marketing in UK sport associations. *The Services Industries Journal*, 16(2), 207–222.
- Gladden, J. M., & Funk, D. C. (2001). Understanding brand loyalty in professional sport: Examining the link between brand associations and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 3(1), 67–94.

- Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (1998). The importance of brand-specific associations in brand extension: Further empirical result. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 7(6), 509–518.
- Grant, N. (2006). *New sport teams and the development of brand community* (Unpublished master's thesis). Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Gupta, S., & Lehmann, D. R. (2002, Summer). What are your customers worth? Not all customers are created equal. You need to know their lifetime value, then compare the cost of acquiring, serving, and keeping them. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 22(3), 207–209.
- Hawkins, D. I., Best, R. J., & Coney, K. A. (2004). *Consumer behavior—Building marketing strategy* (9th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Hobmeier, M. (2001). Professional multichannel management. *CEO*, 3, 36–38.
- Howcroft, B., Hamilton, R., & Hewer, P. (2002). Consumer attitude and the usage and adoption of home-based banking in the United Kingdom. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 20(3), 111–121.
- Jary, M., & Wileman, A. (1998). Managing retail brands. In S. Hart & J. Murphy (Eds.), *Brands: The new wealth creators* (pp. 152–160). New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Joseph, M., and Stone, G. (2003). An empirical evaluation of U.S. bank customer perceptions of the impact of technology on service delivery in the banking sector. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 31(4), 190–202.
- Kotler, P. (1989). From mass marketing to mass communication. *Journal of Planning Review*, 17(5), 10–13.
- Kotler, P. (1991). *Marketing management: Analysis, planning and control* (8th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kotler, P. (1997). *Marketing management: Analysis, planning, implementation and control* (9th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (1991). *Principles of marketing*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (1993). *Marketing an introduction* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Saunders, J., & Wong, V. (2005). *Principles of marketing* (4th European ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Kriemadis, T., & Kartakoulis, N. L. (2011). Management and marketing for marketing clubs—Good governance and marketing applications. Nicosia, Cyprus: University of Nicosia Press.
- Kumar, N. (2003). Kill a brand, keep a customer. *Harvard Business Review*, 81(12), 86–95.
- Laforet, S., & Li, X. (2005). Consumers' attitudes towards online and mobile banking in China. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 23(5), 362–380.
- Lagae, W. (2005). *Sports sponsorship and marketing communications: A European perspective*. Essex, UK: Pearson Education.
- Levin, A. M., Beasley, F., & Gamble, T. (2004). Brand loyalty of NASCAR fans towards sponsors: The impact of fan identification. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 6(1), 11–21.
- Lovelock, C. H., & Wright L. (2002). *Principles of service marketing and management* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Masteralexis, L. P., Barr, C. A., & Hums, M. A. (2008). *Principles and practice of sport management* (3rd ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.
- McArthur, D. N., & Griffin T. (1997). A marketing management view of integrated marketing communications. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 37, 19–26.
- McCarthy, E. J., & Perreault, W. D., Jr. (1990). *Basic marketing* (5th ed.). Homewood, IL: Richard Irwin.
- McCullough, M. E., Tsang, J., & Emmons, R. A. (2004). Gratitude in intermediate affective terrain: Links of grateful moods to individual differences and daily emotional experience. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(2), 295–309.
- Mukherjee, A., & Hoyer, W. D. (2001). The effect of novel attributes on product evaluation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(13), 462–473.
- Mullin, B. J., Hardy, S., & Sutton, W. A. (1993). *Sport marketing*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Mullin, B. J., Hardy, S., & Sutton, W. A. (2000). *Sport marketing* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Naumann, E., Jackson, J. D., & Rosenbaum, M. (2001, January). How to implement a customer satisfaction program. *Business Horizons*, 44(1), 37.
- Palmer, A., & Ponsonby, S. (2002). The social construction of new marketing paradigms: The influence of personal perspective. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 18, 173–192.
- Patricio, L., Fisk, R. P., & Cunha, J. F. (2003). Improving satisfaction with bank service offerings: measuring the contribution of each delivery channel. *Managing Service Quality*, 13(6), 471–482.
- Peterson, R., Balasubramanian, S., & Bronnenberg, B. (1997). Exploring the implications of the internet for consumer marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Services*, 25(4), 362–380.
- Rayner, L., & Easthope, G. (2001, August). Postmodern consumption and alternative medications. *Journal of Sociology*, 37(2), 157–178.
- Reedy, J., & Schullo S. (2004). *Electronic marketing—Integrating electronic resources into the marketing process* (2nd ed.). Cincinnati, OH: Thomson-South-Western.
- Richardson, B., & O'Dwyer, E. (2003). Football supporters and football team brands: A study in consumer brand loyalty. *Irish Marketing Review*, 16(1), 43–53.
- Sarel, D., & Marmorstein, H. (2003a). Marketing online banking services: The voice of the customer. *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, 8(2), 106–118.
- Sarel, D., & Marmorstein, H. (2003b). Marketing online banking to the indifferent consumer: A longitudinal analysis of banks' actions. *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, 8(3), 231–243.
- Schiffman, L. G., & Kanuk, L. L. (2004). *Consumer behavior* (8th international ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Schlossberg, H. (1996). *Sports marketing*. New York, NY: Blackwell.
- Sevier, R. A. (2002). *Building a brand that matters: Helping colleges and universities capitalize on the four essential elements of a block-buster brand*. Hiawatha, IA: Strategy.
- Shank, M. D. (1999). *Sports marketing—A strategic perspective*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Shilbury, D., Quick, S., & Westerbeek, H. (1998). *Strategic sport marketing*. Crows Nest, NSW, Australia: Allen and Unwin.

- Shilbury, D., Quick, S., & Westerbeek, H. (2003.) *Strategic sport marketing* (2nd ed.). Crows Nest, NSW, Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Singh, S., Vrontis, D., & Thrassou, A. (2011). Green marketing and consumer behaviour: The case of gasoline products. *Journal of Transnational Management*, 16(2), pp. 84–106.
- Skiera, B., & Gensler, S. (2003). Multi-channel management and its impact on customers' purchase behavior. In G. Fandel, J. E. Staufenbiel, M. Schluter, & U. Backes-Gellner (Eds.), *Modern concepts of the theory of the firm—Managing enterprises of the new economy* (pp. 122–138). Berlin, Germany: Springer-Verlag.
- Solomon, M. R. (2007). *Consumer behavior—Buying, having and being* (7th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Stanton, W. J., Etzel, M. J., & Walker, B. J. (1994). *Fundamentals of marketing* (10th ed., international ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Stavros, C. (2005). *Relationship marketing in Australian professional sport: An organizational perspective* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia.
- Styles, C., & Ambler, T. (1995). Brand management. In S. Crainer (Ed.), *Financial times handbook of management* (pp. 581–593). London, UK: Pitman.
- Theakou, E., & Kriemadis, A. (2005, June). *The role of public relations in the promotion of athletic enterprises*. Paper presented at the 1st World Congress in Sport Management, Sparta, Greece.
- Theakou, E., Kriemadis, A., & Leivadi, S. (2008, September). *A management oriented approach to understanding customer value: The case of a private fitness club in Greece*. Paper presented at the 16th European Association for Sport Management Congress, Heidelberg, Germany. Retrieved from <http://www.easm2008.de/fileadmin/user-upload/pdf/easm-programme.pdf>.
- Thøgersen, J., & Olander, F. (2002). Human values and the emergence of a sustainable consumption pattern: A panel study. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 23(5), 605–30.
- Thrassou A. (2007, October 19–20). *Internet marketing by professional services' SMEs—A strategic orientation perspective*. Paper presented at the First Global Conference on eCommerce & Internet Governance, Sousse, Tunisia.
- Thrassou, A., & Vrontis, D. (2006). A small services firm marketing communications model for SME-dominated environments. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 12(4), 183–202.
- Thrassou, A., & Vrontis, D. (2009). A new consumer relationship model: The marketing communications application. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 15(4), 499–521.
- Thrassou, A., & Vrontis, D. (2011). The dawn of a new business-consumer relationship in developed countries. In R. Kaufmann (Ed.), *International consumer behavior: A mosaic of eclectic perspectives*, (pp. 305–319). Lancashire, UK: Accent.
- Thrassou, A., Vrontis, D., & Kotabe, M. (2011). Towards a marketing communications model for small political parties—A primary principles strategic perspective for developed countries. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 17(3), 263–292.

- Thrassou, A., Vrontis, D., & McDonald, M. (2009). A marketing communications framework for small political parties in developed countries. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 27(2), 183–202.
- Underwood, R., Bond, E., & Baer, R. (2001). Building service brands via social identity: Lessons from the sports marketplace. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 9(1), 1–13.
- Verow, R., Lawrence, C., & McCormick, P. (2005). *Sports business: Law, practice and precedents* (2nd ed.). Bristol, UK: Jordan.
- Vrontis, D., & Thrassou, A. (2007a). A new conceptual framework for a business-consumer relationship. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 25(7), 789–806.
- Vrontis, D., & Thrassou, A. (2007b). Adaptation vs. standardisation in international marketing—The country-of-origin effect. *Journal of Innovative Marketing*, 3(4), 7–21.
- Vrontis, D., Thrassou, A., & Czinkota, M. R. (2011). Wine marketing: A framework for consumer-centered planning. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(4/5), 245–263.
- Vrontis, D., Thrassou, A., & Rossi, M. (2011). Italian wine firms: Strategic branding and financial performance. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 19(4), 288–304.
- Vrontis, D., Thrassou, A., & Vignali, C. (2006). The country-of-origin effect on the purchase intention of apparel: Opportunities and threats for small firms. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 3(3/4), 459–476.
- Yi, S., & Baumgartner, H. (2004). Coping with negative emotions in purchase-related situations. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14, 3–17.
- Zeithaml, V., Bitner M. J., & Gremler D. (2006). *Services marketing – Integrating customer focus across the firm* (4th International ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill Higher Education.
- Zeithaml, V. A., & Bitner M. J. (2003). *Services marketing—Integrating customer focus across the firm* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Zikmund, W. G., & D'Amico, M. (2001). *Marketing: creating and keeping customers in an e-commerce world* (7th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College Publishing.