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# Football and Marketing

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**Abstract**

From noble beginnings to a global multibillion Euro industry, football has attracted significantly more than devoted fans' attention in recent years. Industry reports suggest, globally, football is currently watched by more than 3.2 billion people, who help to generate revenues of €24.6bn in Europe alone (Deloitte Sport Business Group 2017), positioning it as one of the world's most popular and commercialised sports. Contributing toward such success lies in the way in which modern football marketing management has been undertaken; that is, by exploiting football's inherent advantages and seizing upon the opportunities that have arisen in the contemporary market.

Along with professional football's rapid and considerable growth since the early 1990s, and the media's significant development and expansion, marketing and its use by football clubs, governing bodies, players and sponsors has evolved. This chapter, therefore, will explore this evolution as well as provide insight into current football marketing management, drawing upon real-world case study examples to better illustrate particular aspects of the sport's inherent advantages. A further objective is to consider future developments in football marketing, highlighting issues that are yet to be fully explored within the sport and/or football marketing fields with the intention of encouraging further scholarly interest.

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## Introduction

From football's traditional, working-class cultural heritage and roots, to its present arrangement as a multibillion, global enterprise, the financial, organisational and cultural transformation of the professional game over the past three decades has been prodigious. In that time, Europe's top football clubs have grown to become 'transnational business corporations' (Walsh & Giulianotti, 2001, p.55), functioning collectively as a significant feature of the 'postmodern entertainment industry' (Fürtjes, 2014, p.593), which operate in, and draw diverse revenue streams from, multiple domestic and international markets (see, for example, Downward, 2014). From the 1960s – when English clubs found it necessary to begin diversifying their sources of revenue in response to the increased expenditure associated with gentrifying stadia (Taylor, 1971), the end of the transfer-and-restraint system, and the lifting of the maximum wage (Downward, 2014; Fürtjes, 2014) – through the 1970s, when 'corporate sponsorship increased significantly, as firms sought more direct identification (with clubs)' (Andreff & Staudohar, 2000, p.259), to the present day, in which collective club revenues across Europe equalled €24.6bn in 2015/16 (Deloitte Sports Business Group, 2017), football's vast transformation would not have been possible had it not explored, developed, and enhanced its relationship with the broadcast media. Indeed, of the 12% growth in European club revenues between the 2014/15 and 2015/16 seasons, 59% of this was due to increased income from broadcasting rights (Deloitte Sports Business Group, 2017). Overall, growth in media incomes – primarily since the start of the English Premier League (EPL) in 1992 – accounts for a significant part of the massive transformation of the football industry, and such revenues have long since surmounted more traditional sources of income – i.e., live attendances – and both revealed and augmented revenue-generating opportunities in new and existing markets.

It is through its relationship with the media that football has managed to capitalise on an inherent marketing advantage to evoke strong emotions in its fans, and in doing so encourage loyalty, allegiance, and devotion. As such, football and its numerous brands (i.e., players, clubs, federations, national associations, sponsors, etc.) have expanded their reaches internationally, creating wider supporter bases in more diverse markets than the more traditional local sources. While the same could be argued for many other industry sectors, such as the wider entertainment industry, it is football's cultural, geographical and often political extensions that, one could argue, puts it in a favourable position from a marketing perspective (Conn, 2004; Fawbert, 2017). Football has managed to capitalise upon this inherent marketing advantage and utilise its unique relationship with the media in order to both cope with marketplace changes and challenges, and more importantly to *succeed*, often 'paving the way' for wider sport marketing management. Football's marketing advantage, as it were, and the way in which this has been leveraged will be discussed in detail below, employing relevant case studies to better illustrate the issues highlighted. Finally, this chapter will attempt to draw attention to those areas in need of further scholarly attention.

**Football's marketing advantage**

To better understand the relationship between football and marketing, it is first worth exploring more broadly what marketing is. Marketing is concerned with customers – that is, creating and keeping customers – and communicating to them why they should choose one particular product or service over another. More specifically, an oft-cited definition is that of the American Marketing Association Board of Directors (2013) who describe marketing as:

> "…the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large."

Though its origins are often associated with sales-function and transactional-related approaches that date back before the industrial revolution, with the emergence of the *marketing mix* throughout the mid-Twentieth Century, popularised by McCarthy's (1964) *4Ps*, marketing was, during this time, characterised by more product- and service-centric approaches, with a concentration on profit-related goals (Varey, 2002; Kamboj & Raham, 2015). In the present, however, and in response to rapidly changing marketplaces, continual re-adjustment of demand and supply, rapid technological advances, the multiplication of media, and wide-spread globalisation, marketing has thus evolved into a brand-centric and loyal consumer-focused managerial process (Kotler, 2000; Webster, 2002; Morosan et al., 2014; Homburg et al., 2015; Baker & Magnini, 2016). It is these two processes that give football an additional advantage in developing and harvesting its relationship with marketing. Football, as with any sport, has the power to evoke strong emotions in its fans, thus building loyalty (Conn, 2004; Fawbert, 2017). Yet unlike, unlike other sectors, its aforementioned cultural, geographical and often political extensions can often provide football brands with a ‘head start’ in marketing, specifically with regard to building **brand equity**.

**Brand equity** has been described as ‘a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers’ (Aaker, 1991; p. 15). For the sake of clarity, and given the context of this chapter, we might instead consider **brand equity** in a football context as: a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a football club (or player), its name and logo, that add to or subtract from the value provided by said club (or player) and/or its supporters. Thus, it can be considered ‘the “added value” endowed to a [football club or player] in the thoughts, words, and actions of consumers’ (Keller, 2006, p. 546). The four dimensions of **brand equity** according to Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) include *brand awareness*, *brand associations*, *perceived quality* and *brand loyalty*.

*Brand awareness* refers to a brand’s presence in consumers’ minds, asking both whether and to what extent a consumer is aware that the brand exists, and is thus able to recall and recognise it. For example, in the football context, *brand awareness* represents the ability of individuals to recognise a football club’s (or player’s) key characteristics, such as names, badges, colours, locations, etc.. It would also be demonstrated if, when individuals are asked to name a football club or player, a particular club or player is mentioned over another. While preference to supporting a particular club or player is not expected, *brand awareness* suggests that the brand is in fact present to some extent in individuals’ minds. For example, based on a study on the brands of two of the most prominent footballers in the world, Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, data analytics company Nielsen Sport (2014) found that in the 15 markets examined, the overall *brand awareness* of Ronaldo and Messi was 94% and 87% respectively within the sample examined. That would suggest that despite their positive, negative or neutral perceptions of the players, and their interest or lack thereof in the clubs where these players ply their trade, or even the sport of football overall, the vast majority of the participants were aware of these players' brands. While this study was conducted on only 15 markets, using a relatively limited research sample, preventing in this way any generalisation to the whole populations of the countries involved or to other countries not examined, it does suggest that the brands of the two players have a high level of recognition. Hoyer and Brown (1990) argue that *brand awareness* is the easiest dimension a brand can influence through advertising and promotion. Unlike other sectors, football has been on the receiving end of 'free advertising' through regular, multiple and often lengthy mentions in the media. Daily updates on football results and stories on a regional, national and international level are common in print, broadcast and online media worldwide, providing football with 'free' publicity across these formats (Manoli, 2017). As media sources proliferate, and the demand for football grows, 'free advertising' flourishes, providing football brands with an advantage in *building awareness* around the globe.

The second dimension of **brand equity**, *brand associations*, represents the various meanings of a brand for the consumer, encompassing the traits and characteristics that consumers associate with it. In other words, *brand associations* comprise the different consumers' perceptions of the brand, and thus include various levels of favourability, strength and uniqueness, while including negative, positive and neutral attributes and attitudes. The benefits individuals associate with a brand include all functional, experiential and symbolic aspects.

*Brand awareness* in the football context would refer to the image or perceptions individuals have for a club or a player. Some might exhibit a preference over a particular club or player, often demonstrated through professed fandom, while some might display entirely opposite perceptions, including antipathy and animosity for the same clubs and players, occasionally shown through excessive gestures. While extreme cases of both professed fandom, such as tattooing one's body with a football club's emblem or a player's face, or declared animosity toward a club or player, played out through social media exchanges (see, for example, Cleland 2014) or through more zealous cases of fan disorder, violence and hooliganism among supporters of rival clubs (see, for example, Rookwood 2010, 2014, Rookwood & Pearson, 2012), are not foreign to the world of football, such cases are less likely to be observed in brands outside of the football and wider sports industries.

Even on a less extreme nature, *brand associations*, formed due to the experiential and symbolic nature of football, are of great importance for football marketing. Following a commissioned study conducted by Kantar Media (2012), Manchester United FC, one of the biggest global football club brands argued that they have a 'following' of 659 million people worldwide. These include all individuals that demonstrate positive associations with the club, even if they do not identify Manchester United as their favourite team. While the study does not present the number of people who claimed to have negative perceptions of the club, it could be argued that there exists a number of individuals that share unfavourable *brand associations* with Manchester United also. Even though the same could be claimed for any brand, it is the number of individuals that form any meanings, positive or negative, for football brands, as well as the intensity these meanings have, that sets football apart. Although an in-depth discussion on football brand meanings would encompass areas of culture, history, geography, politics, psychology and sociology, grasping the breadth of football brands and their meanings to supporters is exemplified in the following quote from Fawbert (2017, p. 279):

> "Nobody's spreading their grandfather's ashes down the central aisle of Tesco's (supermarket). But every day of the week somebody is spreading someone's ashes on a football pitch in England…it is more like a disciple going to a temple"

Broadly, it is such strong and meaningful associations created with football brands that countenance the industry's aforementioned marketing advantage. More specifically, the benefits that football fans might attribute to particular clubs or players can often be experiential and / or symbolic, originating from their feelings when they are 'consuming' the brand (i.e. watching a football match or a particular player in action) and/or how that reflects on them. As a result, the excitement of a football fan when 'consuming' something produced by their favourite club, by buying a match-day ticket, watching a match on TV, visiting the stadium, purchasing a branded mug or even liking a Facebook post of their team, as well as their view on how this 'consumption' echoes in them, might differ from the benefits the same individual would ascribe to another brand (for example, drinking Coca-Cola or Pepsi). One could argue that from all aspects of *brand associations* that Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) examined, it is the uniqueness element that sets football and other sports apart from most brands. As both these authors argue, in order for a brand to have a sustainable competitive advantage, the consumers need to be provided with a compelling reason for buying into that brand. In the context of retail branding, this might occur through extensive direct comparisons with competitors (for example, Apple's "Get a Mac" advertising campaign conducted between 2006 and 2009 which played on the perceived weaknesses of non-Mac PCs, particularly Microsoft Windows-based machines) or implicitly through emphasis on a brand's unique selling proposition (for example, Apple's "Think Different" slogan between 1997 and 2002 aimed to communicate to customers that they were buying into a company at the forefront of technology). However, and despite the brand's emphasised functional, experiential or image benefits, unless there is a complete lack of competitors, some shared direct or abstract associations among brands are to be expected. In the context of football, brands consider themselves unique, offering a selling proposition and a set of benefits that are inimitable and thus incomparable to any of the other brands in the same category. While the functionality is rarely discussed, it is the experiential and image benefits that football brands highlight without nevertheless making a direct or indirect comparison with their competitors. In fact, despite the on-the-pitch emphasis on competition, brand comparisons are not a common phenomenon off-the-pitch among football brands. Yet, *brand associations*, and consequently *brand loyalty*, are built based on this uniqueness that fans assign to particular football brands. Overall, as the aforementioned Fawbert (2017) quote above highlights, it is these intense and unique benefits or even detriments that football brands are associated with in consumers' minds, which form the basis of football marketing.

The third and fourth dimensions of **brand equity**, *perceived quality* and *brand loyalty*, better illustrate football's marketing advantage. *Perceived quality* refers to a consumer's perceptions of the overall quality of a brand and its subjective superiority over available alternatives. For football consumers, the *perceived quality* of their favourite team is what encourages their support and viewing it as superior to any other football team available. *Perceived quality* is not to be mistaken with objective quality which focuses on the technical, measurable and verifiable aspects of a brand (see, for example, Mitra & Golder, 2006). Instead, perceived quality is the subjective judgement of a consumer, which might include some quality control measures of the intrinsic attributes of a brand (e.g., its appearance), but is mostly formed from the assessment of its extrinsic aspects, such as its *brand associations*. In other words, a decision on *perceived quality* in football is not made on the objective superiority of a club or a player, but on its intrinsic and extrinsic attributes, such as a player's physical appearance, a club's colours, or the brand meaning that the club or individual might have in fans' minds. While the perceived quality of football brands is a subjective concept and thus difficult to generalise or measure universally, based on the strength and uniqueness of football *brand associations* discussed above, their corresponding *perceived quality* is partially to blame for the excessive pricing strategies of various football brands (Nash, 2001). As Aaker (1991) argued, the *perceived quality* of a brand is a valuable positioning characteristic or advantage that allows the brand the option to charge a premium price. In the context of professional football, it can be suggested that *perceived quality* has in fact been valued as significantly advantageous for football brands, which have correspondingly raised the prices of their products and services. One of the most common examples used to illustrate this price rise based on the *perceived quality* of the brand, is again the case of EPL clubs. As various authors have argued (e.g., Doczi & Toth 2009; Williams 2012), the EPL consists of clubs that have taken their *perceived quality* into consideration when designing their pricing strategies, especially with regard to matchday tickets. While these clubs' pricing strategies are expected to affect the satisfaction of their fans (Biscaia et al., 2013), EPL clubs have succeeded in attracting audiences of more than 13.5 million people to their matches for the 2016/17 season, corresponding to an average capacity / stadium utilisation of 96% (Deloitte Sports Business Group 2017, p. 30). Even though the processes and strategies followed for a price to be set extend beyond the assessment of the *perceived quality* of a brand, the subjective judgement of the consimer/supporter is valued as a key element in the potential success of a brand and its acquirement and attainment of the fourth and final dimension of **brand equity**, *brand loyalty*.

*Brand loyalty*, describes a consumer's attachment and commitment to a brand that can be manifested both attitudinally and behaviourally. The former suggests that individuals have the intention to be loyal to a brand, while the latter indicates that they are demonstrating such loyalty by purchasing it. While all consumers demonstrate a level of loyalty to their preferred brands, sport brands in general, and football brands in particular, are often presented with high levels of *brand loyalty*, based on the strong and unique associations and meanings they can maintain in their supporters' minds. As Bridgewater and Stray (2002) argued, these meanings or values that football supporters associate with their preferred brands include their nostalgic importance, social entertainment and community role. It is in fact these associations that maintain the *brand loyalty* in high levels, even when the subjective quality of the service received is not equally high (e.g., attending a football match in which the supported team lose). In other words, while team success can have a strong emotional impact on the supporters of a club, which in turn might result in them demonstrating their *brand loyalty* behaviourally through purchasing merchandise items, and thus engaging further with the brand in question, it is not a decisive factor of their attitudinal loyalty towards their preferred football club. As studies on fandom suggest, attitudinal *brand loyalty* in football brands, for example a football club, can be significantly high even when the club under question is not successful, if other factors, such as team identification are also high (Campbell, Aiken & Kent, 2004). The fact that football *brand loyalty* can remain in high levels even when performance is relatively low, can be better illustrated in Brand Finance's (2017) report, which attempts to assess the value of major football brands. In their 2017 report, they evaluated that Manchester United is the strongest football brand in the world, worth approximately US$1.7 billion, despite the club's ranking of 6th in the EPL table in the 2016/17 season, capping a poor run of final league standings in recent years compared to the 1990s and 2000s (the last league title won by the club was in 2012/13).

The importance of *brand loyalty* lies in the lack of a tight correlation between success and loyalty, underlying once again the inherent marketing advantage that football has over other industroes. As such, and knowing that once a supporter / customer has been exposed to the brand, thus beginning their journey up the loyalty ladder (Narayandas, 2005), their progression from prospect to advocate is rather quick, through the **brand equity** dimensions discussed above. Most importantly, however, and due to football's marketing advantage and the consequent high switching cost between different football brands (Manoli, 2014), once an individual has become a fan / customer of a football brand, and thus has climbed the first step of the loyalty ladder, the possibility of them selecting a different football brand in the future is reduced. Despite the importance of this inherent marketing advantage is, football would not have managed to build its current status as *'the most popular sport worldwide'* (FIFA 2017), had it not formed and developed marketing management practices that seize its advantage and foster its growth both in terms of popularity and commerciality. These practices, as well as the importance they bear in today's demanding marketplace are examined below in more detail.

**Football marketing management**

Perhaps the best way to illustrate how football has utilised its inherent marketing advantage, and thus how football marketing management has been conducted, is through an examination of the development of its relationship with the media. Football, through its remarkable exploitation of its symbiotic relationship with the media, did not only achieve significant financial profits, but also, most importantly, it succeeded in gaining wide-ranging increased exposure through them, that has in turn allowed for football brands to be broadcasted and promoted worldwide. By doing so, football has achieved to be admitted into an immense, international pool of prospective loyal consumers, who, due to football's marketing advantage of evoking strong emotions, can begin to climb the loyalty ladder of football brands. As the switching cost between football brands is considerably high, once the first step of this ladder is climbed and individuals become supporters of a brand, football often gains their loyalty for life. It could be argued that it is the way in which football has utilised its relationship with the media in order to capitalise on its inherent marketing advantage that has in fact shaped today's flourishing football marketing landscape. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 1 and can be better elucidated in the case study that follows.

**Case Study: The English Premier League**

English football, and in particular its top division, the English Premier League (EPL), is considered one of the fastest growing industry sectors in the UK, with a remarkable growth difference when compared to any other UK sport (Deloitte Sports Business Group, 2016). Yet the significant growth in audiences, popularity and subsequent brand recognition of the EPL and its constituent clubs could not have been possible had there not been a reciprocal relationship between the EPL and the broadcast media (most notably, Sky). The way in which this relationship has developed from the EPL's inaugural season in 1992 to the present day, has worked to re-position the media in the wider ecosystem of the football industry from a mere intermediary between football and its supporters / consumers, as it was in English football prior to the start of the EPL, to a key supplier, as is shown in Figure 1. Apart from the significant monetary value of this relationship (see Table 1, for example) that has allowed football to improve and grow, the media's main benefit to football has been the exposure it has provided. By televising football's main product, live matches, the media have allowed for a global audience to be exposed to the sport, capturing in this way their attention and potentially long-term interest. FIFA (n.d.) reports that the 2014 World Cup final was watched by 1.013 billion people who tuned in to watch, or consume, football through the media. In other words, football was able to reach over one billion people, who were exposed and thus given the opportunity to consume and potentially enjoy the sport which would not have been possible without the assistance of the media. The extent of such media coverage (and for other mega-events, such the Olympic Games), ‘simply cannot be reliably achieved by other means short of natural disasters or wars’ (Black, 2007: p.264). In marketing terms this symbiotic relationship has allowed football an immense, international pool of prospective loyal consumers, while making football brands some of the most recognisable in the world.

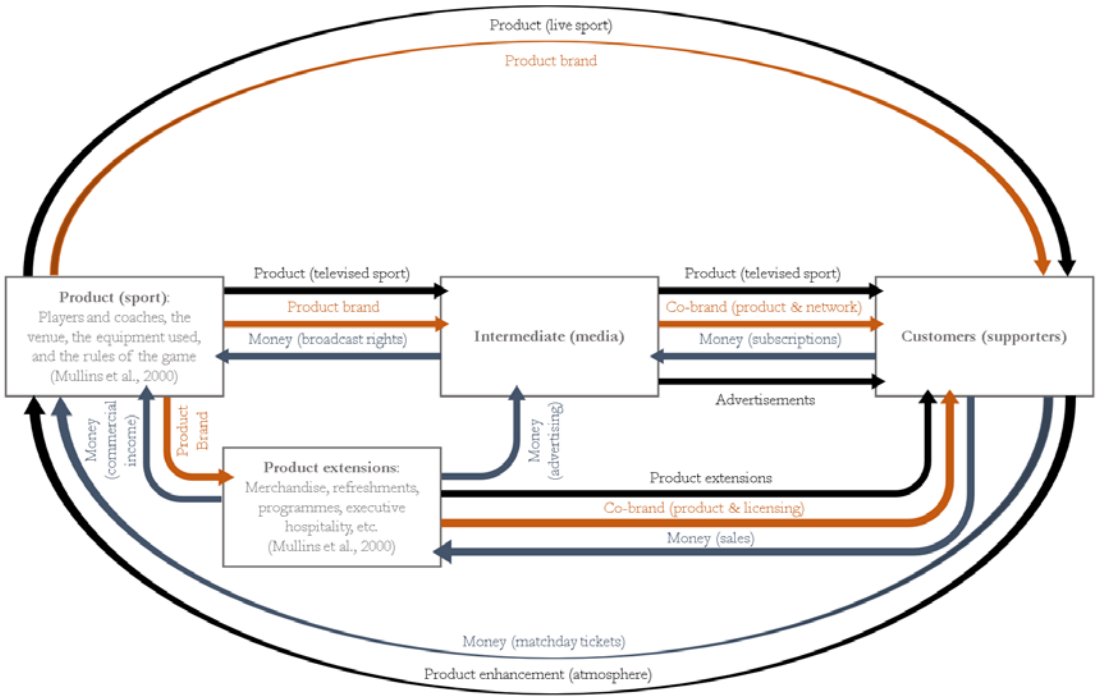


Figure 1 – Football’s unique marketing/media relationship (adapted from Manoli, 2014, p.10)

| Year | 1992 | 1997 | 2001 | 2004 | 2007 | 2010 | 2013 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Main broadcaster | BSkyB | BSkyB | BSkyB | BSkyB | BSkyB Setanta / ESPN | BSkyB Setanta / ESPN | BSkyB BT | Sky BT |
| Length of contract (years) | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Rights fee (£m) | 191.5 | 670 | 1100 | 1024 | 1706 | 1782 | 3018 | 5136 |
| Annual rights fee (£m) | 38.3 | 167.5 | 275 | 341 | 569 | 594 | 1006 | 1712 |
| Live matches per season | 60 | 60 | 66 | 138 | 138 | 138 | 154 | 168 |
| Fees per live match (£m) | 0.64 | 2.79 | 4.16 | 2.47 | 4.12 | 4.30 | 6.53 | 10.2 |

Sources: Cox, 2012; Downward, 2014; Taylor & Gratton, 2002

Table 1 – Broadcast Rights Fees for the English Premier League, 1992 to the present day

As the above case study has demonstrated, football marketing management has been able to exploit both its inherent marketing advantage and its symbiotic relationship with the media in order to further flourish. Taking the rapidly changing marketplace into consideration, football's marketing landscape can be expected to also transform, presenting football with both opportunities to further develop and challenges to be faced. Firstly, the multiplication of media that has occurred in the past ten years is expected to intensify, with new and social media often replacing traditional media in sports communication (Manoli, 2017). These new media call for user content creation, publishing and promotion, which in turn can revolutionise the way in which communication and brand management occurs (Berthon et al., 2012). As a result, and based on this 'horizontal revolution' where the users can communicate with other users directly, while potentially excluding the brand owner / manager from the overall communication process, users or audiences have an increasing power over the way in which a brand is communicated and consumed (see, for example, Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In fact, as new forms of media are introduced, and more overlapping occurs among different stakeholder groups (e.g., employees become customers), the power relations between audiences and brand owners / managers change, with more power invested in the various audiences of each brand. This power lies in the ability to influence other audiences through the use of their word-of-mouth, which when communicated electronically can spread faster and more globally, potentially affecting the views and thus the brand reception of various other audiences of the brand. As a result, brand management, can no longer be considered a controlled process in which the brand owner is able to design and manage the brand in hand, since part of this process is in fact occurring while the audience is interacting with the brand or with other brand users. The *brand's image* and *associations* are therefore co-created during these interactions that help each member of an audience reach their own understanding of what the brand stands for. The brand owner can still aim to influence the functional image of their brand by highlighting its key attributes, such as a football club's history, connection with the local community or titles won, etc., however, the hedonic image of the brand tends to be affected by user-generated content. This hedonic brand image, the image that is linked with feelings and emotions is further exaggerated in the case of football, due to its natural marketing advantage, which could potentially lead in amplified deviations in terms of *brand image*. It is these deviations in *brand image* and their link or lack thereof with the *brand identity* of a football brand that are presenting football marketing management with its biggest challenge thus far: achieving brand consistency. As recent studies on brand consistency and coherency in sports have argued (Kenyon et al., 2018), such a task might prove more demanding in the future, since boundaries world-wide are eliminated, making a global audience the potential audience for any football brand, paired with the increasing overlapping of stakeholders, and the overall philosophy of sharing using the multiple user-controlled media. This challenge can be better illustrated through the following case study.

**Case Study – Exploring the brand consistency of the EPL's 'Big Four' in foreign markets**

**Brand Image**: the total impression of an organisation, product or place in consumers' minds (Aaker, 1991), or 'the characteristics or attributes through which customers evaluate the brand and compare it to others' (Bodet, Meurgey, & Lacassagne, 2009, p. 371).

**Brand Identity**: "the processes by which brand owners and managers endeavour to convey the individuality and distinctiveness of their organisations and products (Nandan, 2005, p. 265) which includes both visual (tangible) components, such as a name, a logo, a theme, etc., and the brand's social and psychological (intangible) components" (Kenyon et al. 2018, p.8).

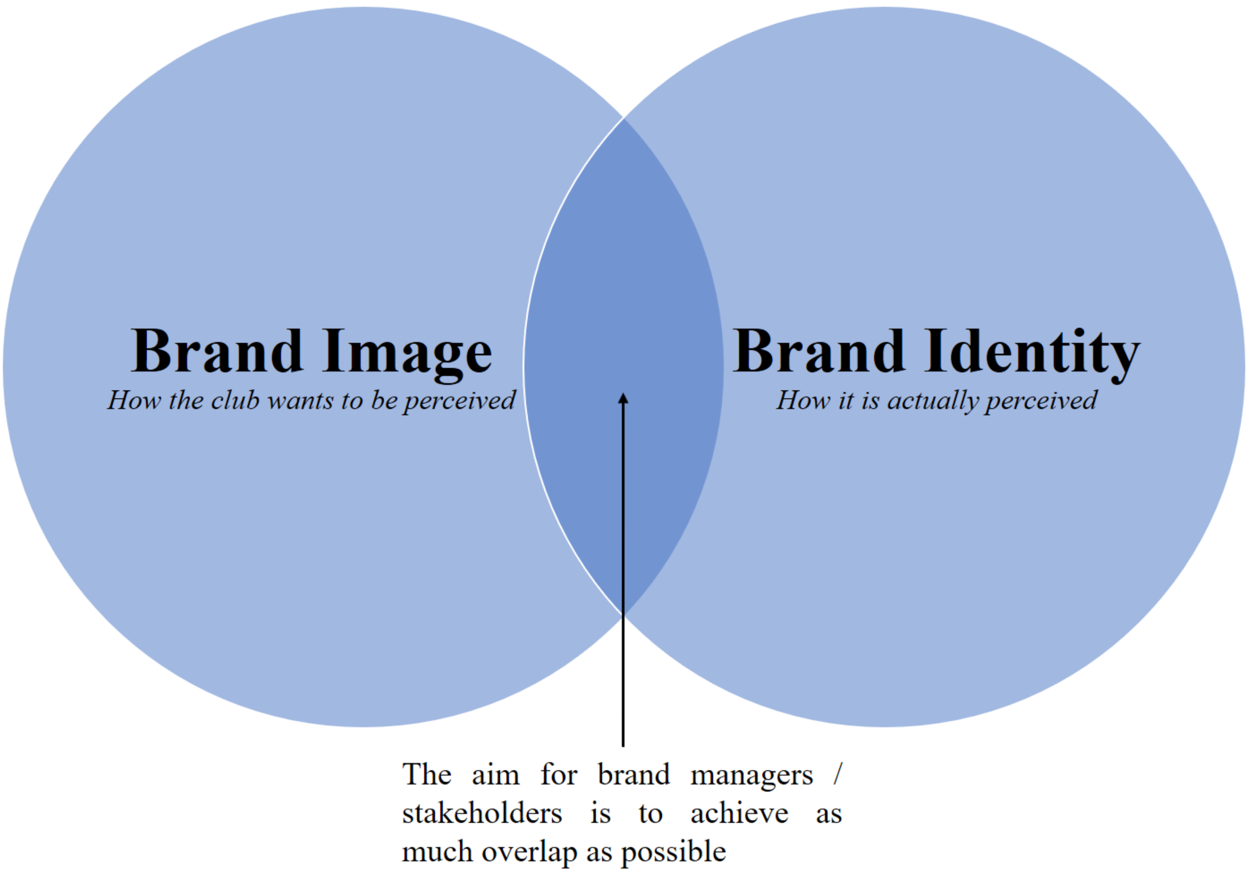


Figure 2 – The brand identity / image link

In 2010, the *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics* published a study by Bodet and Chavanet, the purpose of which was to investigate the brand equity of English professional football clubs in foreign markets, namely China. Specifically, the research sought to investigate Keller's (1993) customer-based brand equity (CBBE) of the EPL's so-called ''Big Four'' among Chinese supporters, these being: Arsenal FC, Chelsea FC, Liverpool FC and Manchester United. Among the various findings of the research, the authors present the strongest features of these clubs' brand images as follows: Arsenal FC was perceived as 'young, dynamic and sexy', Chelsea FC as 'rich, wealthy and sometimes superficial', Manchester United as 'successful, aggressive and dominant', and Liverpool FC as 'steady, honest and pugnacious' (Bodet & Chavanet 2010, p.63). Yet, as the literature suggests, a 'brand's identity – created and managed by the brand owner/manager – does not always correspond to the brand image as perceived by customers or broadcast by the media' (Kenyon et al., 2018, p.6). Taking Liverpool FC as an example here, the brand image characteristic of the club being 'pugnacious', meaning quick to argue or quarrel, does not coincide with the brand identity that the club have tried to create, both domestically and internationally, as being a family club (see Kenyon & Bodet, 2017). Similarly, it is unlikely that those responsible at Chelsea FC for the club's brand management, set out to have their club perceived as superficial. If the brand consistency is to be achieved, therefore, those responsible for the brand management of these clubs must work to identify how and why these brand images are being engendered and then work to both mitigate these and promote their more desired brand identity characteristics. Interestingly, Bodet & Chavanet (2010) argue that the findings of their research suggest that the brand images of the clubs in question are influenced, in significant part, by the "image transfer from the players, the coach and even the chairman" (ibid, p.63). If indeed then these clubs' brands are the product of interaction between the brand owner/manager and its stakeholders (the players, for example), the challenge for those responsible for the brand management of these clubs is addressing such issues with said stakeholders.

## Conclusion and future research

In countries aiming to expand upon their own domestic sports industries, it is hardly surprising that football is seen as an appropriate avenue through which to achieve such aims. One only has to look to Qatar's hosting of the 2022 World Cup, for example, or the ambitious target of Chinese President Xi Jinping who aims to have created an $800bn sport industry in his country by 2025 (Chadwick, 2015) and a World Cup winning team by 2050 (Chadwick, 2017). And in achieving such aims, whether for Qatar or China, understanding the needs and wants of their customers and consumers, alongside the successful intermediation by the media, will be key in delivering successful versions of these stakeholders' visions.

More broadly, the growth of football's relationship with the media has not only benefited the two parties involved, but also created, shaped and helped the development of new sub-sectors of the sport industry. Following the increasing global demand for football, and paired with the rapid multiplication of media, the broadcasting rights sub-sector was created, in which a number of broadcasters from both traditional media, such as TV and radio stations, and new media, like Amazon and Google, are expressing interest, bidding and buying the rights to broadcast football matches to be played to a world-wide audience (Guardian, 2017). Apart from football clubs, federations and media outlets, this sub-sector has also attracted the attention of intermediaries or outsourcing agencies, which assist in this bidding, buying and distribution process of broadcasting rights (Manoli & Hodgkinson, 2017). Marketing outsourcing overall and in particular the bidding, sale and distribution of broadcasting rights are two important areas in football marketing that are still under researched, despite their immense impact in the industry. With the demand for football ever increasing and new media outlets joining the broadcasting process, the future of this symbiotic relationship, how it is marketed, and its commercial implications are expected to be nothing but fascinating.

Finally, the aforementioned move away from its traditional, working-class cultural heritage and roots (e.g. Duke, 2002; Hognestad, 2012) toward a more commercially-oriented structure has seen football's various bodies, and wider sport organisations for that matter, come to consider and manage themselves as brands in recent years, particularly in international markets (Bouchet, Hillairet, & Bodet, 2013). For example, in those years, Asian markets have proved a particular target for European football brands, with their populous nations (e.g., almost 1.4bn in China in 2016) and increasing levels of purchasing power, among other factors, proving a particular draw (Desbordes, 2007). In such markets, the regarding of football clubs as brands, and subsequent marketing of these brands has proven a successful strategy in “extend[ing] their visibility in new solvent markets” and generating international consumer bases (ibid, p.10). Yet, in domestic markets, there is much evidence to suggest that football fans are often sceptical and sometimes resistant to marketing rhetoric (e.g., Chadwick and Beech, 2007; Chadwick and Holt, 2006; Giulianotti, 2005; Numerato, 2015); an approach which considers them as customers and consumers and no longer as fans (e.g. Oppenhuisen & van Zoonen, 2006). So, if understanding the needs and wants of customers and consumers is at the heart of successful marketing (Keller, 2008), but being identified in such a market-focused way is criticised by those very individuals regarded in such a way (Giulianotti, 2005) – who often see such approaches as exploitation of their communal identities (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2012) –, how then are football clubs to proceed? With this question in mind, the challenges raised by domestic and international football marketing strategies – an issue of which some professional clubs do seem aware (see, for example, Kenyon & Bodet, 2017) – is an area in which future research might be aimed.

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