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The impact of digital transformation on the football fan experience: an analysis of how football clubs could improve their monetization through digital fan engagement

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by

Dalia YOUNIS

Bachelor Project Mentor:
Mark SHEPHERD, Lecturer in Marketing at HES-SO

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Executive Summary

This research paper analyses the ways in which football clubs could enhance the fan experience while at the same time improving their own monetization. The first main objective of this study is to define the ways in which football clubs could provide more personalized digital contents to their fans. The second one consists in determining which emerging technologies enhancing the fan experience could be both believed as valuable by fans and approved by football professionals.

One of the main discoveries of this study is that the majority of people would be willing to give their data directly to football clubs by receiving in return a more personalized experience. Therefore, a recommendation for football clubs is to ask directly to fans for their data as they have the chance to have customers which are willing to give it to them. However, it is key for clubs to mention that this data is going to be used for the purpose of providing them with a personalized experience.

By combining the point of view of people and the one of football professionals, it came out that the 5G arrival is imminent, and that it will help implementing various in-stadium activities and services which would enhance the fan experience. However, the service which people appreciate the most concerns having real-time information on the shortest queues, which is something that professionals approved but found more complex to implement. Therefore, football clubs should take in consideration this people's preference and work more on this service.

The outside-the-stadium activity which people like the most is to select a specific player's perspective. However, professionals believe that it is complex to place cameras on players. As a consequence, football clubs should look for the broadcasters' consent and eventually collaborate with technological companies to obtain cameras which do not disturb players during the match.

Another finding concerns the demand for football, which is decreasing among new generations. Therefore, football clubs should also focus on this target and propose a differentiated type of content, which young fans might find appealing.

As of today, it is not enough for football clubs to have a large digital community: football clubs should create fan engagement in order to improve both the fan experience and their monetization.

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1. Introduction

In today's world, immense changes are being experienced due to digital developments. The football industry has already been extremely impacted by those transformations. This is why, as of today, the football fan experience goes way beyond the ninety-minutes game at the stadium: fans now expect to live a connected and appealing experience, delivered by their favourite clubs. Certainly, fans are currently living an improved experience thanks to digital transformation: for instance, they stream video clips, they buy ticket for the stadium online, and they interact with the club on social media (Dellea et al., 2014).

However, technology is offering football clubs vast opportunities to progress which are not yet being optimized: there is therefore a gap between what these clubs are doing and what they could do in order to take full advantage of all the opportunities of interaction with fans offered by the digital age (Tejedor, Cervi & Gordon, 2019).

Football clubs need to keep up with the times and adapt to the technological changes which are being experienced. In this way, they would be able to offer fans an enhanced experience compared to the current one, which could also lead to an economic improvement (Dima, 2015).

This thesis aims to find possible ways in which football clubs in Europe could use digital tools to further enhance the fan experience. Therefore, the research question is the following: how could football clubs use digital tools to further enhance the fan experience in Europe?

With the purpose of replying to this question, two main goals are pursued: the first one is to determine in which ways football clubs could provide more personalized digital contents to their fans. This is crucial as the demand for personalized contents is increasing and therefore offering them would allow both to uplift the clubs' monetization, and to enhance the fan experience (Salvat, T. 2019). Moreover, the second goal is to establish which emerging technologies enhancing fan experience could be both truly appreciated by football fans, and realistically integrated in the football world in the near future. Nowadays, there are plenty of emerging technologies which could be potentially implemented to improve the fan experience both outside and inside the stadium (Billington, 2020). However, there is the need to understand which ones could be used to both enhance the fan experience and increase the clubs' monetization.

This report is organized in four main section: the literature review, the methodology, the results, and the discussion. First of all, the literature review provides a clear understanding on the main knowledge behind the research question: it describes what is already known about the subject of this thesis and which gaps still need to be filled. Then, there is the methodology, which describes the procedures used to reach the research objectives, which in this case consists in the collection and analysis of secondary and primary data. The latter, contains a combination between fans' and football businesses' perspective, which has been obtained respectively through a survey and two interviews. Subsequently, the report displays the results' section, in which the findings which support or contradict the research question are described. Lastly, there is the discussion section, in which the various discoveries coming from the literature review, the survey and the two interviews are compared, leading like this to a conclusion.

2. Literature review

2.1 The digital age

The digital age can be described as the information age, which started in the 1970s with the introduction of the personal computer, and has continued with the development and presentation of countless other technologies (Kormoczi, 2020).

These technological advancements have impressively impacted people's day-to-day lives: as of today, individuals are digitally involved all day long through various digital assets. Those assets are connected to internet, which is an entryway to an entirely new world. Internet allows people to save time, to economise money, to access education, to enjoy entertainment, and to be connected with other people (Lopamudra, 2020). As of today, big part of the social interaction moved online: this happened due to the creation of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and LinkedIn. These platforms permit people to communicate and to share their experiences without having border or time constraints anymore. Moreover, these innovations are being developed and adopted with an increasing speed, and this is due to the fact that the population is continuously growing, increasing like this also the number of internet users (Bonev, 2017).

Many companies, operating in all the sectors, are struggling to deal with the multiple challenges they are facing due to the changes taking place during the digital age. As of today, customers are empowered and therefore, businesses failing to fulfil their expectations might risk to not survive in the digital age. However, various technological advancements allowed companies to have at their disposal data which can help them to better understand their customers, and to consequently be able to properly respond to their needs. Apart from that, the digital age offers companies a wide range of new technologies, such as virtual reality or increased sophisticated automation. Still, many enterprises fail to take full advantage of them.

However, it is not all about technology itself: it is about the entire culture of a business, which needs to change and become more innovative and disruptive with the aim of surviving in the digital age (Rossi, 2018).

2.1.1 Digital transformation

Digital transformation is the process of implementing new digital technologies to reshape key processes, operations, and services, in order to better meet the continuously-changing market demands (Felter, 2019). It consists in integrating technology in every

functional area of the company, impacting like this not just its operational processes, but also its culture. The latter will change as it will highly promote innovation, creativity, and attentiveness to developing meaningful customer experiences.

Digital transformation has multiple benefits for the companies who decide to implement it: it helps to improve reputation, to reduce expenses, to drive efficiency, to beat the competition, to keep up with the times, to not fall behind, and to better address consumers' needs (Bibla, 2019).

2.1.2 Football in the digital age

Digital developments have impacted football clubs and will carry on to do so. Fast technological changes, coupled with new demands of the digital natives, have led football clubs to continuously innovate to survive in the digital age. Digital natives are all the people who were born surrounded by technology and who therefore perceive computer and internet as natural components of their lives (Dingli & Seychell, n.d.). Namely, the process of selling tickets and official merchandise is becoming more digital than physical, as it is increasingly being done online. Moreover, social media is permitting football clubs to reach out to an enormous number of fans through digital contents. In this way, fans now have the chance to actively engage and feel involved with their favourite club.

As of today, football clubs need to carefully listen to their fans to empower them as much as possible. Accordingly, fans will feel they have been listened and will therefore trust and appreciate the club more, unlocking new opportunities for fan engagement, which clubs did not even consider before (Dellea et al., 2014).

Football clubs, as any other brand, are currently facing the challenge of communicating through new digital tools: this issue is still alive as there is scarce research applying digital communication sciences to the football field. Furthermore, it is known that clubs do not fully take advantage of the opportunities of interaction with fans presented by the digital scenario (Tejedor, Cervi & Gordon, 2019).

2.1.2.1 Football clubs' digital footprint

The table 1 shows the digital footprint of the top-ten European football clubs as of March 2021. In this case, the digital footprint consists in the results of the online activity of each football club, including posts number, app existence, and number of followers on each platform. The total number of followers on the various social media for each football club is shown as "digital community" at the end of the table.

The data related to the club's UEFA rankings and coefficients come from the UEFA official website (UEFA, 2021). Moreover, the clubs' revenue comes from a 2021 Deloitte report (Ajadi et al., 2021). The rest of the table has been filled in with data coming from the various social media accounts of the ten football clubs.

Table 1 – Digital footprint of the top-ten European football clubs

	Bayern	Barcelona	Real Madrid	Juventus	Atlético Madrid	Manchester City	PSG	Manchester United	Liverpool	Sevilla
UEFA ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
UEFA coefficient	129'000	121'000	119'000	118'000	115'000	112'000	108'000	99'000	97'000	97'000
Revenue (in million €)	634.1	715.1	714.9	397.9	331.8	549.2	540.6	580.4	558.6	142.5
Instagram posts number	13'000	14'000	4'100	9'900	12'800	12'300	7'500	17'000	15'000	4'100
App existence	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Facebook followers	52.1mln	103.3mln	110,9mln	43.9mln	13.7mln	39.9mln	42.2mln	73.4mln	37.2mln	1.9mln
Instagram followers	25.6mln	94.1mln	95.6mln	47.1mln	11.0mln	39.3mln	33.6mln	39.3mln	30mln	1.2mln
Twitter followers	5.3mln	35.6mln	36.2mln	8.9mln	4.8mln	9.2mln	8.6mln	24.6mln	16.6mln	0.9mln
TikTok followers	4.2mln	7.5mln	4.6mln	2.4mln	2.1mln	2.7mln	5.2mln	1.7mln	3.9mln	0.3mln
YouTube subscribers	1.9mln	11.1	6.2mln	3.3mln	0.2mln	3.0mln	2.8mln	3.8mln	5.5mln	0.1mln
DIGITAL COMMUNITY	**89.1mln**	**251.6mln**	**253.5mln**	**105.6mln**	**31.8mln**	**94.1mln**	**92.4mln**	**142.8mln**	**93.2mln**	**4.4mln**

2.2 Fan experience

The fan experience is the perception that a fan has before, during, and after an event, which allows clubs to create a fan engagement which is immersive at all levels (Stendall, 2016). Therefore, fan experience is related not just to the match day, but also to the rest of the process, which starts long before and continues long after the match day. For instance, it can refer to the experience of a fan when visiting a club's website, when interacting with the club through social media, when calling the club, when visiting the stadium, and so on.

At the end of the day, what counts the most for clubs is the fans' perceived value of the experience as a whole, as it can lead to an increase in revenue. Indeed, a club which focuses on the fan experience, and which therefore decides to take a customer-centric approach, will have both strong attendance results and valuable relationships with its fans. Moreover, fan experience can lead to an increased revenue also because of sponsorship deals: sponsors find extremely more valuable an audience which is engaged and active, compared to one which is not. As a consequence, sponsors who notice that a club proposes an enhanced fan experience, will see that the fan base of this club is already engaged and loyal, and will therefore want to collaborate with this club ("What is meant by fan experience", 2018).

2.2.1 Fan engagement

Fan engagement is the immersion experienced by a football fan with a club's brand. Moreover, it indicates the fan's emotional investment and long-term commitment into the club's brand, which makes it become a significant forecaster of buying decisions (Stander, 2016). In order to improve it, football clubs need to understand their fans' motivation, behaviours, and expectations: in this way, they will be able to provide them with services enhancing their experience (Wilson & Connolly, 2015).

2.2.2 Personalized contents

Content personalization is the customization done by marketers as a means to offer customers pieces of content which are aligned with their interests, beliefs, goals, and tastes. However, it is not just about the message sent: content personalization changes the whole customer experience, which becomes personalized. Consequently, the creation of a personalized experience for the audience allows a business to generate more sales, and to increase people's trust towards the company (Salvat, 2019).

Football clubs are not exempted from providing personalized contents to their fans. Indeed, fans' expectations for contents which are personalized and hyper-targeted are becoming something natural and are therefore increasing. As a consequence, football clubs need to fulfil their fans' demand and therefore deliver personalized contents, which would enhance their experience (Dellea et al., 2014).

2.3 Fans' data

Football clubs need to focus on fans' data to leverage technology: data related to each individual provide clubs with the opportunity to create personalized contents, which would help enhancing the fan experience. Nevertheless, this represents a challenge as people are starting to mistrust the way in which organizations use their data. Consequently, football clubs should transparently share with their fans the process used to collect, analyse, and protect their data. Furthermore, it is crucial that clubs clearly display the benefits that fans would receive by giving them their data (Burghes, 2020).

Currently, the amount of data produced every day is massive, and it is something which reached this dimension just in recent years. To understand this concept, it is enough to think that in 2017, 90% of the worldwide data had been created just in the previous two years (Petrov, 2021).

2.3.1 Data collection

Collecting fans' data represents a superb opportunity for football clubs. Data can allow clubs to deeply understand their fans, and can therefore help them to generate accurate forecasts which can assist them to get closer to their fans. This can help clubs to generate and sustain relationships, which can also assist them on the generation of new revenue streams.

Once clubs are engaging with their fans through different channels, they could collect data such as address, email, and preferences. This data, if used well, can help clubs to dig deeper on the knowledge they have of their fans, creating like this a complete customer view. As a consequence, this data would allow them to create a clear profile of each fan, which is helpful to deliver an experience which is personalized, relevant, engaging, and profitable.

The more data a club manages to collect and analyse, the greater the number of opportunities it has to engage with its fans and to create new revenue streams which are valuable (Berry, 2017).

In order to collect data, clubs need to be aware that fans decide whether to share their data or not, depending on two factors: the level of trust and the quality of the reward. Therefore, football clubs need to look trustable in the eyes of their fans, and need to show them that it is worth it to share their own data, because in this way they will receive in return content which is relevant, engaging, and personalized (Hopkins, 2019).

2.3.2 Data analysis

A proper analysis of the enormous amount of data existing nowadays could be the key to provide fans with personalized contents (Polemitis, 2019).

Fans' data is something which should be analysed by every club. More precisely, there are four main data points on which clubs should focus, with the purpose of both enhancing the fan experience and increasing the club's revenue. First of all, they should look at fans' spending habits, as this could allow them to optimize their marketing and propose fans products and services which they are more likely to purchase. Secondly, they should obtain fans' email addresses and analyse the habits of the people on the email list. In this way, clubs would be able to target people with certain habits and to connect with them in a personal manner via email. Thirdly, they should look at fans' motion data while at the venue. This could help them to improve the fan experience for instance by localizing where fans are bottlenecking in the stadium. As a consequence,

they would allow their fans to have more time to visit bars or merchandise stands, which would improve also the club's revenue. Lastly, clubs should be analysing fans' frequency of visit: knowing the number of times fans have come to the stadium could help them offering, for instance, specific incentives to come back or loyalty programs, depending on this data.

Data analysis is extremely important for football clubs to know their fans and to know what they want from the football experience. Consequently, they would be able to better respond to fans' wants and needs and to target the right fan, at the right moment, with the right message (Kacicki, 2019).

2.3.3 Privacy laws

Football clubs cannot ignore that major browsing platforms such as Google are on the way to increase the users' privacy, which will make data collection not as easy as it is today. At the same time, fans are requesting football clubs to live a personalized experience. Consequently, there is going to be the creation of a new digital landscape in which both the respect of privacy and the offer of personalized content are going to be crucial.

Therefore, football clubs will have to find new data collection metrics with the purpose of both dealing with the increased level of browsing platforms' privacy, and satisfying the fan demand for personalized content. In order to do that, football clubs could rely for example on fan registrations, surveys, or loyalty programs. In this case, it will be key to transparently inform fans about their plan and to manage to persuade them so that they will be willing to share their data. When persuading them, it will be crucial for a club to prove that their data are going to be needed for the purpose of making their own experience better (Wapinski, 2020).

2.4 Monetization

Monetization is the process of originating revenue from the value offered to users. A company therefore monetizes when it offers value and receives in exchange a monetary compensation (Cherubini, 2020).

2.4.1 Football clubs' monetization

Football clubs generate revenue from multiple sources. First of all, revenue comes from the sale of stadium tickets for home games. Then, it comes from merchandise sales, which could be the club jersey, flags, and many other products, all branded with the

club's logo. Moreover, clubs generate revenue from sponsorship deals with various brands, which provide clubs with a monetary compensation in exchange for various advertisement of those brands. Moreover, player transfers are also a common way used by football clubs to make money. Additionally, there is money coming from the various tournaments in which clubs are competing. Furthermore, broadcasting rights given to specific broadcasters are also bringing money to football clubs (Rukky, 2021).

Figure 1 shows the combined revenue of the top-twenty European football clubs. Moreover, it shows the way in which this revenue is divided between the main revenue streams which are, in order of size, commercial, broadcast, and match day revenue (Pereira, 2021).

Figure 1 – Profile of football clubs' revenue
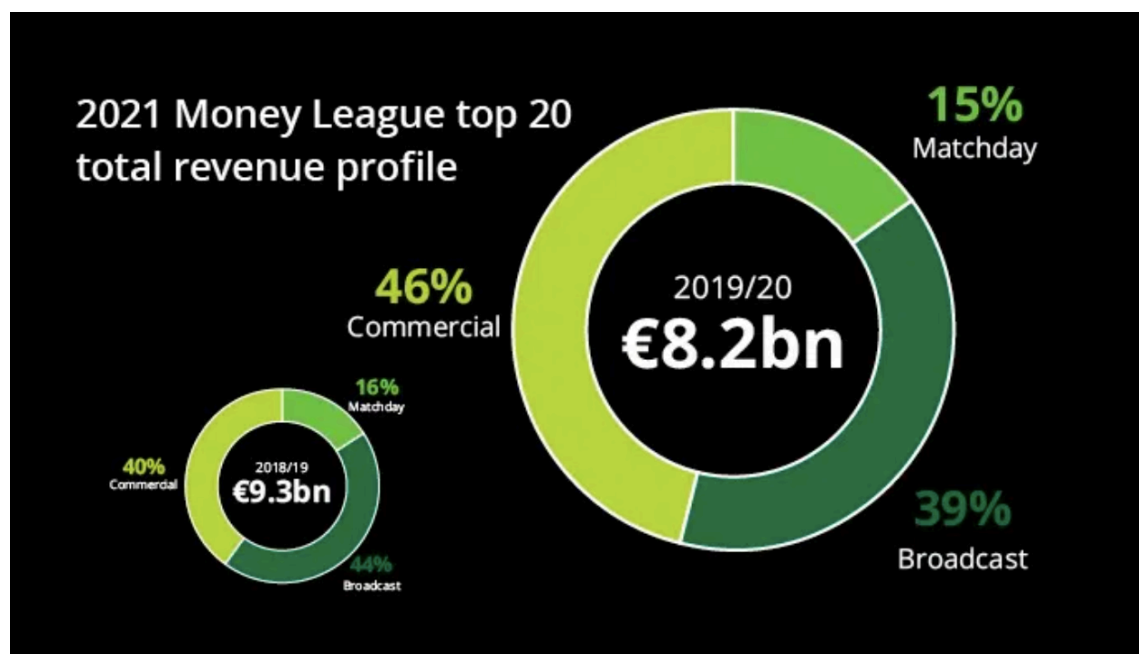
Source: Pereira (2021)

As of today, thanks to digital technologies, there are countless ways for football clubs to interact and build direct relationships with their fans. This is key as clubs have the opportunity to collect valuable data each time there is an interaction with a fan. As a consequence, football clubs having more data about their fans are able to offer them a more personalized experience, which can generate revenue as they are able to provide fans with promotional campaigns and contents which are more targeted. Moreover, an engaged audience can lead to an increase in sponsorship deals.

Football clubs should engage with their fans in four ways: by hosting their fans at the stadium on non-match days, by connecting fans which are at home on non-match days,

by improving the live experience of fans at the stadium on match days, and by bringing fans closer to the live action when they are at home. Engaging in these four ways is key as football clubs are more likely to generate a higher profit if they interact with their fans not just on the match day, but also every day (Pearce, 2019).

2.5 Social media

Social media benefits football clubs by permitting them to amplify their messages, to interact with their fans, and to reach an audience which is wider and therefore which includes not just local people, but also national and international ones. Moreover, it is useful also for football fans as it gives them a voice and it allows them to interact with clubs and other fans in an ongoing way (Fenton, 2020).

2.5.1 Digital reach and fan engagement

It is acknowledged that the digital reach of a football club and its revenue are strongly positively correlated. This comes from a study which calculates the correlation coefficient between the economic performance of the richest 30 football clubs worldwide and their digital reach (Dima, 2015). In order to obtain a higher digital reach, there is the need to uplift the level of fan engagement, as the latter affects the visibility of the posted contents. In fact, a greater level of fan engagement increases the visibility of the content which has been posted: it uplifts the probability that what has been published appears on people's newsfeed. For instance, the fact that someone engages with a post by sharing it, increases its reach and improve the confidence that fans have in the club. This happens as newsfeeds prioritise contents which are coming from people in a person's network, rather than the ones published by a page (Escobedo, 2017).

Football clubs should provide fans with organizational insights such as news regarding the whole team or an individual player, or behind-the-scenes information. Moreover, they should give fans a more active role on social media channels by posting pieces of content which could drive people to comment and share them. In this way, clubs would manage to receive an uplifted level of engagement as fans recognise the value of such content. (Anagnostopoulos, Parganas, Chadwick & Fenton, 2018).

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that fans are motivated to engage with clubs due to their need for integration, social interaction and empowerment. This is why, it is important that the pieces of content posted on football clubs' social media, provide fan-to-fan social interaction: fan expression should be at the core, for instance through discussion boards or polls in which people can vote on specific topics related to the club. However, it is

important to mention that studies correlating social medias and fan engagement are still limited (Vale & Fernandes, 2018).

2.6 Emerging technologies

Another important aspect to consider is the use of emerging technologies in football. A study conducted by the Capgemini Research Institute displayed that for 69% of fans, the use of emerging technologies both inside and outside the football stadium enhances their overall viewing experience.

As of today, football clubs are presented with a big opportunity which consists in using emerging technologies to evolve fan expectations and engage with them in a more personalized way. In order to do that, football clubs should, first of all, reassure their fans on the usage of their personal data by being transparent and by demonstrating that this data is going to bring value. Secondly, clubs should make sure to identify the fans' needs before starting to invest in emerging technologies. Then, they should try to convert normal fans to avid, by, for instance, offering an experience which is more personalized. Finally, they should transform the club's culture by investing in digital innovations and skills to embrace and optimize the use of emerging technologies (Billington, 2020).

2.6.1 Outside-the-stadium technologies

It is key to notice that 99% of a football club's audience is located outside of the stadium. Therefore, football clubs need to find ways to connect also with all these fans: they need to grasp the opportunities coming from the vast range of technologies which are being continuously developed. Thanks to these technologies, a football club is no longer restricted to connecting with fans which are located inside the stadium: it can now reach the whole fan base by using innovative means.

Moreover, it is known that the younger generations' way of consuming content is different: they use various online platforms which allow them to engage with football. Therefore, football clubs need to make sure to provide digital content which is unique, across the various online platforms existing nowadays. In this way, they will manage to take care also of younger fans.

Additionally, some clubs are also exploring emerging technologies such as virtual reality. This technology could be used to stream live matches and to therefore provide visual improvements to the fan experience through a headset. Moreover, it can also be used to allow the fans to live exclusive experiences, such as meeting the club's players or assist to a virtual tour of the club's stadium.

Football clubs must reconsider the way in which they use new technologies to connect with their modern fans. This is something needed as fans' behaviours are rapidly changing and technologies are continuously being developed. As a consequence, fan bases are getting wider and they are experiencing their fandom in a different way. This is why, football clubs now need to work on preserving and on strengthening their relationships with fans, by embracing innovation (Madincea, 2020).

2.6.2 Inside-the-stadium technologies

As far as the in-stadium experience is concerned, a study shows that fans coming from Asian countries, compared to fans coming from European ones, are more likely to have experienced emerging technology inside the stadium. In fact, the highest rates of fans having experienced emerging technologies while visiting the stadium belong to Asian countries: the rates are 88%, 68%, and 66%, in respectively India, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Differently, the rates amount to 50%, 45%, and 41% when considering respectively Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, which are the European countries having the highest results (Billington, 2020).

The fan of today has particularly changed: In the past, fans were interested in a good match, while today, fans want much more: they want to also have a good in-stadium experience including entertainment and an exciting atmosphere. Currently, engagement is no longer just about the match, it is about the experience as a whole.

Fans want to enjoy the whole in-stadium experience, and therefore all the moments before, during, and after the match. Moreover, the new generations want to always have the chance to use their smart devices and to therefore be connected to internet everywhere they are (Mons, 2020).

Therefore, one of the main emerging technologies which will impact the in-stadium experience is 5G. This technology will guarantee a better connectivity to fans who are located inside the stadium. Moreover, fans will probably have the chance to live a premium experience at the stadium thanks to the club's mobile application which is going to be connected to 5G. Within the app fans will probably have vast opportunities which are premium such as ordering food and products and having them delivered at their seats (Wapinski, 2021).

Another technology which might become key in fan entertainment is the holographic technology which allow three-dimensional representations. Holograms are not anymore something belonging to the far future: they are something which is already possible. For

example, stadiums could propose shows in which holograms are projected with the aim of entertaining fans.

Fan involvement is also going to be crucial: this could happen through the same app, in which fans might have the chance to vote on specific topics. Football clubs will try to involve their fans before, during, and after the game, as involvement is something which is increasingly demanded by fans in the digital age (Mons, 2020).

3. Research methods

3.1 Data collection

In order to reach the research objectives, a combination of secondary and primary data has been collected.

3.1.1 Secondary data

Secondary data has been analysed with the purpose of providing a clear understanding on the background behind the research question. Therefore, secondary data has been useful to build up the literature review, which provides an analysis on the digital age, on football during this age, on monetization, on social media, on emerging technologies, and on fans' data. Furthermore, these sources have been useful to build up clear and specific questions for both the survey and the interviews.

3.1.2 Primary data

As far as primary data is concerned, a survey and two interviews have been conducted, with the objective to analyse both the perspectives of football fans' and football businesses.

3.1.2.1 Football fans' perspective

A survey using Google Forms has been used. It has been shared in two ways: on personal social platforms and on Amazon Mturk. The latter has been used to avoid biases and to therefore obtain answers which come not just from a country-wise restricted network, but also from people all over Europe. As a consequence, the combination of these two methods allowed the gathering of 210 answers, coming from 13 different European countries.

In this survey, participants were asked questions aiming at understanding their level of football fandom, the extent to which they interact with football clubs, and their willingness to give their data to clubs in order to live an enhanced football experience both inside and outside the stadium. Moreover, they were asked a large set of questions aiming at understanding which emerging technologies they would be happy to use. In this case, emerging technologies include various technologies which could enhance the fan experience both outside and inside the stadium, which are: virtual reality, 3D, cameras on players, holograms, and 5G, which allows the creation of various in-stadium services and experiences.

A mix between multiple choice, yes/no, and open questions have been set up, to cross-tabulate the data to deeply understand the fans' position on these topics.

3.1.2.2 Football businesses' perspective

Two interviews to professionals working in the football industry have been conducted.

First of all, a person who worked in the UEFA Innovation Hub, and who is currently working for FIFA, has been interviewed. The first goal of this interview was to understand the relation between UEFA and the European Football Clubs. In order to reach this goal, questions related to the way in which UEFA works with these clubs, with a particular focus on the shared work on fan experience, have been asked. The interview's second objective was to figure out what UEFA is doing to enhance the fan experience through digital tools. For this purpose, questions related to digital personalized content and fans' data have been asked. The last aim of the interview was to get the picture of the way in which UEFA is considering emerging technologies, and of which ones could be realistically integrated in the football world in the near future. With the aim of doing that, questions related to UEFA investments on emerging technologies, and to the professional's opinion on which ones could be realistically implemented, have been asked.

Secondly, a person who has been working for twelve years in the marketing department of one of the biggest European Football Club, has been interviewed. The first objective of this interview was to understand what the football club is doing to engage with its fans, with a particular emphasis on the digital activities aiming at improving the fan experience. For the purpose of achieving this objective, questions related to digital personalized content, social media, and fans' data have been asked. The second goal of this interview was to obtain knowledge of the work that this important football club is doing on emerging technologies. For this purpose, questions related to the club's investments in emerging technologies, and to which emerging technologies the club is planning to concretely use in the near future, have been asked.

3.2 Data analysis

First of all, the transcripts of the two interviews have been made, with the aim of allowing a thorough analysis of them. Then, some themes have been selected: they needed to be both present in the interviews, and relevant to the research question. Consequently, the most relevant parts of the interviews have been written down and a further summary of those parts have been made through a table showing each finding combined with its relation with the research question.

Then, the survey's answers have been analysed by first of all understanding who the respondents are in terms of demographics and then, in terms of behaviour towards football. Consequently, all the answers related to emerging technologies have been analysed to understand the fans' preferences. Finally, their willingness to share their data with football clubs has been analysed first of all with the whole sample's answers, next by considering just the super fans, and then by considering just the casual fans. This has been done to understand whether there is a correlation between the level of football fandom and the willingness to share data with a club.

Moreover, a comparison between the results obtained thorough the UEFA's interview, the Football Club's interview, and the survey results has been made. This allowed a deep evaluation regarding the most realistic ways in which football clubs could provide more personalized digital content to their fans. Moreover, this comparison permitted an assessment on which emerging technologies could be both realistically introduced by a football club in the near future and appreciated by football fans.

4. Results

4.1 UEFA's interview

A person who worked with UEFA and who is currently working with FIFA has been interviewed. This person helped UEFA to build the Innovation Hub, which broadly looks at digital transformation with the aim of enhancing the fan experience through the use of digital technologies. As of today, he works with FIFA on the way in which innovation links with their strategy and on the global development of football.

The full transcript of this interview can be found in the appendix 1.

4.1.1 Findings

4.1.1.1 Relation between UEFA and football clubs

Football clubs are ultimately part of UEFA. However, the role of UEFA is not to help individual clubs with activities such as fan engagement or use of data. Differently, its role is to protect the development of the sport.

Therefore, UEFA is generally not working with football clubs on fan experience. This is due to the fact that increasing a club's fan engagement is useful to fill its fan base but also to increase its monetization as engaged fans are willing to spend more on a club's products, services, and match tickets. Consequently, UEFA does not get involved in the enhancement of a club's fan engagement as it is something which bring specific interests to the clubs rather than to the European football.

4.1.1.2 Personalized content

UEFA is extensively working on digital personalized content. For instance, they launched UEFA TV, in which they cannot show live matches due to broadcast deals in place, but in which they focus on providing fans with personalized content: they do so by leveraging the data generated from what people are watching. Moreover, they recently announced that TikTok is going to be one of the official partners of the UEFA European Championship. Therefore, fans will have the chance to interact with each other and with the football clubs on TikTok. This shows the shift towards providing a different type of content as well: it is not anymore just about showing match highlights and match clips, it is also about the whole experience around that.

Clubs could easily enhance the fan experience at home through personalized content: for instance, if a club knows that a person is a massive Ronaldo fan, then they can start

pushing clips of Ronaldo scoring goals ahead of the game, to get this specific person excited for the match.

4.1.1.3 Fan base expansion

Fan experience enhancement could be a way for a club to catch up to other clubs which are bigger in terms of historic fan base. For instance, City Football Group, which owns Manchester City and other clubs, is investing a lot in emerging technologies which could improve the fan experience. They do so for two main reasons: first of all because they have the money to do so, and secondly, because they realised that they do not have the historic fan base which Liverpool has. Therefore, to be competitive with Liverpool, they try to grow their fan base not just necessarily with on-pitch success, but also with the offer of a better fan experience.

4.1.1.4 Data analysis and data collection

In the past twenty years, the sports industry has grown predominantly thanks to television deals bringing revenue to sports businesses: UEFA is a clear example of this as the majority of their revenue used to come from television broadcasting money. This is why, organizations like UEFA, have not seen the benefit of investing time and money in things such as data collection and data analysis. In fact, they did not need to adapt and innovate as what they were doing was enough to bring them money. However, in the past five years this has vastly changed as money coming from broadcast got stagnated and in some cases even decreased. This is why, as of today a lot of data exists, but due to the lack of investment it is not in any structured format, it is not coherent, and therefore UEFA cannot really gain anything from it. In order to make this data useful, UEFA should make some big changes and invest a lot in cleaning and analysing it: in this way, they would be able to really identify what are and what are not the trends which could potentially enhance the fan experience.

Moreover, it is important to consider that regulations related to data privacy are going to get stricter over the next five to ten years. Therefore, it will become harder for football businesses to deliver a personalized experience to fans. This is due to the fact that it will become increasingly challenging to know a person, which is something needed to create an experience which is personalized specifically for that individual.

4.1.1.5 Emerging technologies

The biggest emerging technology which could be realistically implemented in the near future is 5G. It could be a really great way to improve the broadcasting experience and to reduce the costs coming from it. This can happen as 5G would allow broadcasting

with a very scaled back number of people, cameras, cables, and all these sorts of things, which are very expensive and which at the moment are needed in a large number. Moreover, 5G could also be implemented in a stadium, allowing like this the implementation of multiple in-stadium experiences such as giving the chance to fans to vote in real time for who they think the man of the match is. At the moment, it is really hard for fans to even get signal on their devices, which is something which is going to clearly improve with the implementation of 5G.

Differently, virtual reality is something which could work in America, but which risks to not work in Europe, as it is a continent in which football is much more traditional. Additionally, cameras on players are also something which might not be implemented as there might not be enough people who want them, and as they would require an adaptation from both federations and broadcasters, which might be perceived by them as unnecessary.

However, from a UEFA perspective, it is difficult to play a big hand in emerging technologies as it is a non-profit federation.

4.1.1.6 Football demand

Football fans across the world did not have the chance to go at the stadium to watch their favourite team playing during this whole pandemic situation. This is why, as of today, they are all looking forward to finally assist to live football matches. Consequently, a pent-up demand for live football can be expected by clubs, which need to be ready to grasp this massive opportunity to grow.

However, there is an issue regarding football demand: it is decreasing within people below the age of 14 in Europe. The number of fans watching football matches is decreasing amongst them as they would rather look at someone streaming PlayStation, than watch a match. This is why, one of the main challenges UEFA is facing in the developed nations, consists in finding ways to increase the love for the game among children. This love has been eroded because football is not just in the sports industry anymore, but also in the entertainment one. Therefore, football clubs are competing not just with other sports, but also with other entertainment activities which might take people's time. For instance, as of today, a person can decide whether to watch a Champions League match or a movie on Netflix. Consequently, the competition for sports organizations has become tougher as it now includes also the entertainment industry.

4.1.2 Findings' relation with the research question

Table 2 – UEFA's findings

Finding	Relation with the research question
UEFA is generally not working with football clubs on fan experience.	Football clubs need to work on their own on the fan experience enhancement. They should not count on the support of UEFA, as the improvement of their fan experience is something which increases their monetization, without benefitting UEFA or the football development.
Clubs could easily enhance the fan experience at home through the proposal of a different type of content.	Content sent to fans through digital tools can help football clubs to improve the fan experience. For instance, content on TikTok provide fans with the chance to interact with each other and with football clubs. Moreover, personalized content could increase the excitement of a fan.
Fan experience enhancement could be a way for a club to catch up to other clubs.	When clubs do not have an historic fan base, the use of digital tools could help them grow their fan base through the offer of a better fan experience.
As of today, a lot of data exists but due to the lack of investment it is not in any structured format.	Football clubs need to work on data cleaning and on data analysis in order to identify the trends which could enhance the fan experience. However, there are going to be stricter regulations on data privacy, which will make it harder for football clubs to deliver a personalized experience to fans.

The biggest emerging technology which could be realistically implemented in the near future is 5G. Conversely, virtual reality and cameras on players risk to not work.	5G could both decrease the costs for a football club, and improve the fan experience. Differently, virtual reality might not be liked by many fans, and cameras on players require an adaptation which might be complex.
A pent-up demand for live football can be expected by clubs. However, football demand in general is decreasing among young people, below the age of fourteen.	The increased demand for live football provides club with massive opportunities. However, football clubs are dealing with a decreasing demand among youngster, forcing them to compete also with the entertainment industry.

4.2 Football club's interview

A person working in the marketing department of one of the biggest European Football Clubs in Europe has been interviewed. This person has been working for this club for twelve years and is currently working in the integrated marketing department in which he follows, with his team, the whole side related to commercial communications, and therefore related to marketing, sponsorship, stadium, and merchandising.

The full transcript of this interview can be found in the appendix 2.

4.2.1 Findings

4.2.1.1 New fans' engagement

The Football Club has been working on a rebranding for four years, having the objective to involve also a new target which goes beyond the traditional fan. They want to communicate not just as a football brand, but also as a real brand: their core business remains football, but they are moving towards a brand in the entertainment field. Therefore, they are aiming at reaching entertainment enthusiasts, which are the ones interested mostly at living experiences which go beyond the simple football match. In order to do that, they try to create new contexts which could be for instance related to e-sports or to clothing having specific styles such as streetwear. Concerning the latter, the club already created a collection aiming at reaching a target which is looking for products

having a fashion side: it does not involve the fan in first person, but someone who is closer to the fashion world and who therefore looks at the novelties of the moment and wants to have products in line with the current trends: they collaborated with stylists and famous people, which allowed them to reach a positioning which allows the club to be perceived not just as a football brand, but also as a brand which aims to reach new horizons by following the various trends of the moment.

Moreover, they want to reach also the sports' fans: the ones which might not be interested in football at all, or which do not follow football as much as a traditional fan, but which follow the club for instance because of a specific player, the club's history, or the participation in big competitions. With the purpose of reaching this target, the club created, for instance, an event in collaboration with basketball teams, allowing the club to involve also an audience which is fan of another sport.

4.2.1.2 Digital content

Personalization is fundamental as it is bringing an added value to the classical content. In the club's website, they provide fans with personalization: when a person logs-in in his website's personal account, he will be able to see all of his personal information, and the history of his previous purchases. However, it will become increasingly important to work on providing an experience which is more personalized and therefore the website will improve: at a certain point the fan will be able to see the home page of the website personalized with all the contents he might find interesting, shown in the same manner as for instance YouTube, Instagram, or Netflix.

Moreover, the club is communicating via email to a great extent, as it is an instrument which allows them to properly target fans. In this case, they use fans' data to send messages which are personalized as they are not addressing everyone, but each person specifically.

4.2.1.3 Data collection

The club has multiple instruments to collect fans' data. First of all, they give the chance to people to subscribe to their newsletter at the bottom of the website: in this case they just ask for the email address. Similarly, on social media they create activities in which users need to give their email address. Moreover, the club obtains fans' data also through membership options and ticketing. Then, they also have a platform in which they create contests containing also user generating content. For instance, in the past, they gave the chance to fans to draw the club's logo which, in case of win, would have ended up on the players' shirts during a match. In order to do that, fans had to draw the logo,

go on the platform, register, and then they had the chance to send their creation. To complete the registration on this platform, people needed to provide certain data: name, surname, date of birth, place of residence, gender, and phone number. Therefore, this type of contest is useful not just to create fan engagement, but also to obtain the data of people participating.

Generally speaking, the club uses mainly primary sources to obtain fans' data: they try to make fans register and give their data on various platforms each time they interact with them. Conversely, they also use cookies with the aim of retargeting people and leading them to the conversion. However, cookies are likely to disappear due to new privacy laws aiming at protecting people's privacy. Therefore, the football club, as all the other enterprises, will have to adapt and find new strategies to obtain people's data. The main idea on this purpose is to create as many occasions as possible in which the user has to register himself and to therefore give the club his data.

4.2.1.4 Social media

With the aim of creating fan engagement, the club tries to follow the trends on social media. For instance, the club was one of the firsts football clubs creating a TikTok profile, in which they try to follow the various trends and to implement them in the football world. For the purpose of doing this, they try to involve players if possible, or they ask fans to participate by, for instance, recording a video related to that trend.

The content posted on the club's social media depends highly on the platform used, so that it is appealing for the platform's users. For instance, the content posted on TikTok is limited to video and is aiming at reaching the generation Z. Differently, Instagram is more related to pictures and therefore the club posts content related to the team's activities such as trainings and matches. Conversely, Twitter is associated mostly with news which could be institutional or related to the matches.

Fan interaction is the primary objective of the club when posting content on social media. This is why, many stories or posts' descriptions end with a question mark, or give the chance to fans to choose between various options. In fact, keeping fans engaged helps the club's profile to be more relevant and to make fans more receptive when the club wants to communicate something commercial.

4.2.1.5 Outside-the-stadium emerging technologies

The club already tried to implement virtual reality with the purpose of making the fan feel closer to the club, for instance through a virtual visit of the club's museum. However, it is something which did not have a big success and which became out of fashion, which

is why the club decided to stop working on it. They never considered offering live football matches through virtual reality also because it would be technologically complex. Similarly, 3D is a technology which might get fans bored and therefore which would provide a nice experience once, but which over time would not last. Moreover, these two technologies require fans to have respectively the headset and the glasses at home, which makes the whole process more complex. In order to work, a technology needs to be easily accessible to fans, which is why technologies accessible through the phone of people are the ones which might really work.

As far as cameras on players are concerned, it is up to broadcasters and football players to decide whether it is worth it or not to implement them. The club sees this option as something difficult to apply at the moment because players do not want to be disturbed during the match. In fact, even their shirt is studied to be as light as possible so that it does not disturb them while playing. However, if there is going to be a camera having a dimension which is not even noticeable, then players might accept it. Therefore, this technology could be eventually implemented in the future, but it is going to be complex.

Consequently, the club believes that emerging technologies enhancing the fan experience at home are not likely to be implemented in the near future. Fan experience at home is going to be improved mostly through social media.

4.2.1.6 Inside-the-stadium emerging technologies

At the moment, with 4G, fans' phones struggle to even get connection at the stadium. However, the arrival of 5G is imminent, and it will help dealing with this problem and, as a consequence, will allow clubs to improve the fan experience fans at the stadium through their phones. The football club is going to launch soon the stadium's app, which is going to be fully dedicated to fan experience enhancement. Thanks to this app, it is highly probable that fans will have the chance to, first of all, deal more easily with operative actions such as the entrance at the stadium, as there will be a QR code on the app for this purpose. Moreover, this way of accessing the stadium will allow people to enter in a faster manner, and will therefore enhance the fan experience as they will not have to do long queues anymore. Differently, it is less likely that people will enter the stadium through biometrics such as face recognition. It is a technology which would require an important investment and which would risk to even worsen the fan experience as it is likely to slow down the process of entry.

Moreover, thanks to 5G, the app will probably allow people to order food and beverages through their phones and to receive them directly at their seat. Inversely, it is going to be

more complex to provide fans with real-time information on the shortest queue of services offered by the stadium. This is due to the fact that it would require a service such as Google Maps, which identifies the shortest queue by being aware of how many phones are located in a certain place: it is something more complex, which will perhaps require more time, but which probably will be implemented.

Additionally, 5G will allow fans to be directly involved at the stadium through their phones: it is likely that fans will connect to the stadium's app or to a web page, and that some choreographies will be created through the synchronized images on the audience's phones. However, the in-stadium emerging technology which is most likely to be implemented in the near future, is the hologram technology, which would allow the three-dimensional projection of animations. This is due to the fact that it does not cost too much, it would entertain fans, and it would be useful also to the club's sponsors, as the projected content could be sometimes related to them.

4.2.1.7 *Dealing with a different football demand*

As of today, the football demand is decreasing among new generations, which consists of people below the age of fourteen, as for many of them it is too much to follow a 90-minutes match. These young people are used to obtain everything in a fast and immediate manner, which makes a whole football match not appealing to them. The club is trying to get closer to this target by offering alternative products or activities which might be appealing to them. However, they admit that they should do more on that purpose and that La Liga is ahead on this topic, as it is trying harder to get closer to this target through innovation. For instance, Budweiser, the official sponsor of La Liga, created a freestyle battle in which two famous freestylers improvise on the best actions of a match. This battle is targeting young people which might not even watch the match, but which might prefer to see a freestyle battle about it. However, it is likely that not all people will be like this: there are still going to be fans willing to watch a 90-minutes game. Nevertheless, fans will surely be more connected to this new world which is being created by platforms such as Twitch, YouTube, and TikTok.

4.2.2 Findings' relation with the research question

Table 3 – Football club's findings

Finding	Relation with the research question
Football clubs have the objective of involving also a new target.	Clubs are working on entering in new contexts, such as fashion, to improve the experience of people who are not necessarily just the traditional fan.
It will become increasingly important to work on providing an experience which is more personalized.	Clubs can bring an added value to fans by providing them with content which is personalized, for instance through their website or via email.
Cookies are likely to disappear and football clubs will have to adapt and find new strategies to obtain people data.	Clubs cannot rely just on cookies as they are likely to disappear. They therefore need to create as many occasions as possible in which fans need to register themselves, allowing like this the club to collect data, which are helpful to enhance the fan experience.
In order to create fan engagement, clubs try to follow trends on social media.	Social media can be used to provide fans with content which is appealing to them. Therefore, clubs need to adapt the posted content to the platform used, and to create fan interaction.
Virtual reality and 3D are out of fashion and complex. Differently, cameras on players could be eventually implemented in the future, but it is going to be complex.	Football clubs are not considering VR and 3D anymore as means to enhance the fan experience at home. However, they might consider to use cameras on players on that purpose, but it is something which is going to be complex to implement. Fan experience at home is probably going to

	be improved through social media rather than through emerging technologies.
The arrival of 5G is imminent and it is going to improve the fan experience.	5G is going to be used by football clubs to enhance the fan experience at the stadium, from many points of view.
The football demand is decreasing among new generations (people below the age of fourteen)	Clubs are trying to get closer to younger generations by offering them alternative products or activities. They are therefore working on innovating with the aim of adapting also to a type of fan which is more connected to the new world created by new digital platforms.

4.3 Survey

A Survey has been conducted all over Europe with the purpose of understanding the people's level of football fandom and their preferences as far as football experience is concerned. It obtained 210 answers.

All the questions with the respective answers can be found in appendix 3.

4.3.1 Respondents

The survey has been replied by people living in thirteen different European countries. However, the majority of answers came from six countries: Italy, Spain, France, Germany, UK, and Switzerland. The survey has been shared in two different ways. First of all, on personal social platforms, which explains the high rate of Swiss answers. Secondly, it has been posted on Amazon Mturk, in which people coming from all over Europe had the chance to reply to the survey, bringing like this answers from other twelve European countries. The exact distribution is shown in figure 2.

## Figure 2 - In which country do you live?
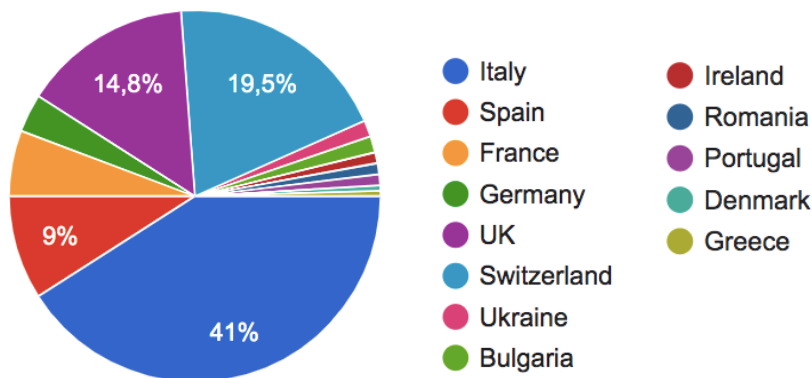
The respondents are 71.4% men, and 28.6% women, while both their age and education level are variegated, with a prevalence of people having a bachelor degree (46.7%).

Participants were also asked the way in which they consider themselves as football fans: just the 2.9% of them consider themselves as "not a fan", while there is a significant amount of answers coming from people belonging to each of the other four fandom categories, as shown in figure 3.

Figure 3 – How would you consider yourself as a football fan?
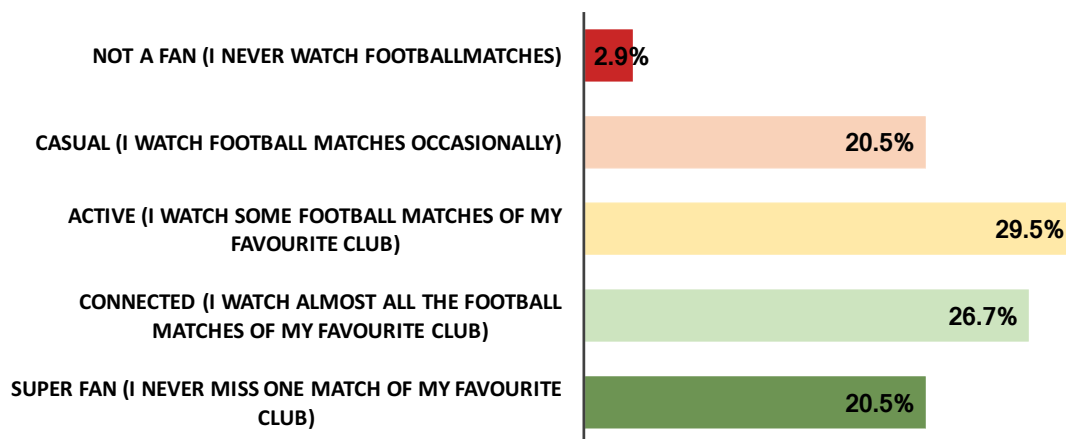
4.3.2 Behaviours towards football

Participants were asked a series of yes/no questions, in order to further define their level of football fandom. The results show that 89% of the people who completed the survey support a particular club, that 74.3% of the respondents follow a club on at least one social media, and that 88.6% of the people questioned have already been at the stadium to see a match. It is therefore clear that the majority of the participants appreciate football.

However, the results are different when it comes to questions related to paying a subscription to watch football: just 49% of the respondents pay a television subscription which allow them to see football, and just 31.3% of the people who completed the survey have already had a seasonal ticket for a football club. Therefore, the majority of respondents, even if they appreciate football, are not willing to pay a subscription to see football both at home and at the stadium.

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents have already bought both an official shirt and other merchandise from the store of a football club: the rates in this case are respectively 81.9% and 72.4%. This shows that nowadays it is extremely common for a football club to obtain money also from other sources of revenue which are not related to the football match, such as the sale of shirts and other merchandise. However, the rate of participants having a subscription on the website of a football club is low as it amounts to 33.8%, which shows that football clubs have room to improve this rate.

4.3.3 Outside-the-stadium emerging technologies

The survey's results showed that the majority of the participants (65.3%) would like to have the chance to select a specific player perspective while watching a match. The exact distribution of each answer is shown in figure 4.

Figure 4 – Would you like to have the chance to select a specific player perspective while watching a match?
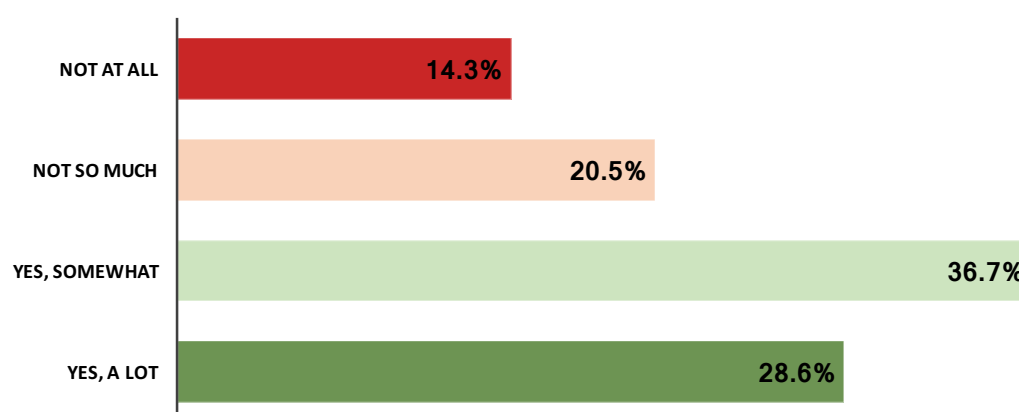
Moreover, the survey analysed whether or not people would like to see a match through virtual reality or in 3D. The results show that 60.9% of the respondents would like to watch a football match through virtual reality. This rate decreases to 57.7% when talking about watching it in 3D. The exact distribution of each answer for both virtual reality and 3D is shown in figures 5 and 6.

Figure 5 – Would you enjoy watching a football match through virtual reality?
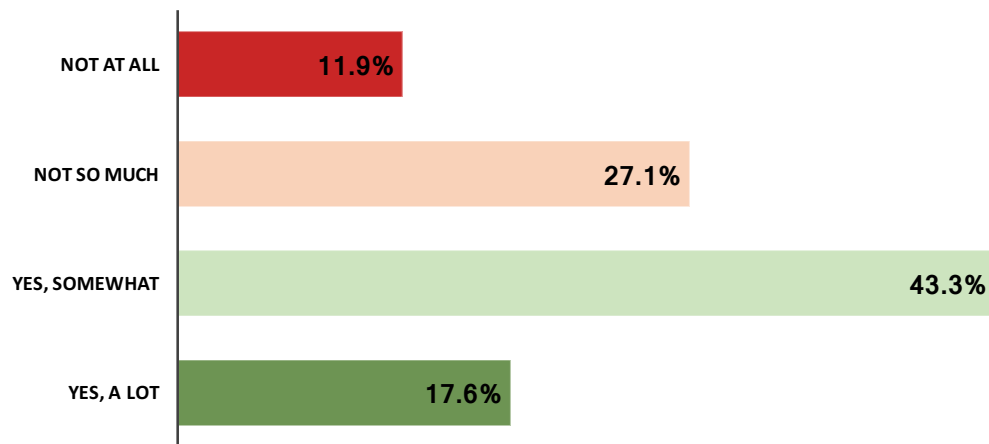
Figure 6 – Would you enjoy watching a football match in 3D?
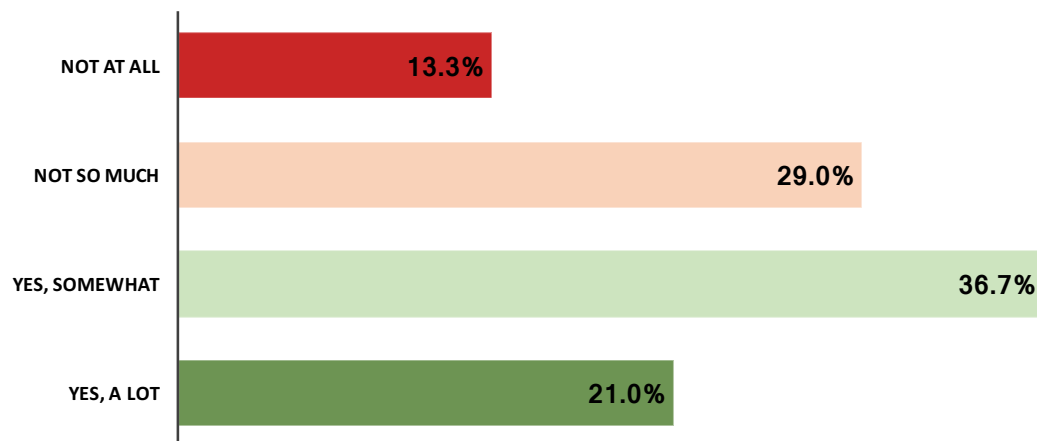
It is therefore noticeable that the majority of participants would like to see both a match through virtual reality and in 3D, with a slight preference for virtual reality. However, when participants were asked the way in which they prefer to see a match from home, and therefore to decide between virtual reality, 3D, and a normal television, the majority of them chose the latter, as shown in figure 7.

Figure 7 – How would you prefer to see a match from home?
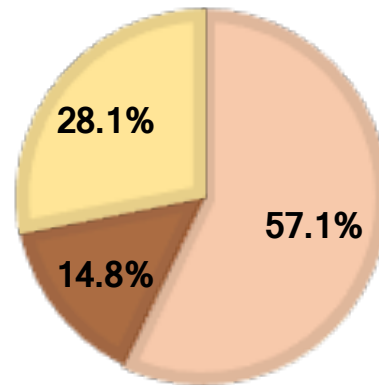
4.3.4 Inside-the-stadium emerging technologies

The vast majority of the respondents (75.8%), would like to order food and beverages online and receive them at their seat at the stadium. This rate becomes even higher, reaching 81.9%, when talking about having real-time information on the shortest queue of services offered by the stadium. It is therefore clear that these two services would be highly appreciated. Figures 8 and 9 show the exact distribution of the way in which participants replied to these two questions.

Figure 8 – Would you like to order food and beverages online and receive them at your seat?
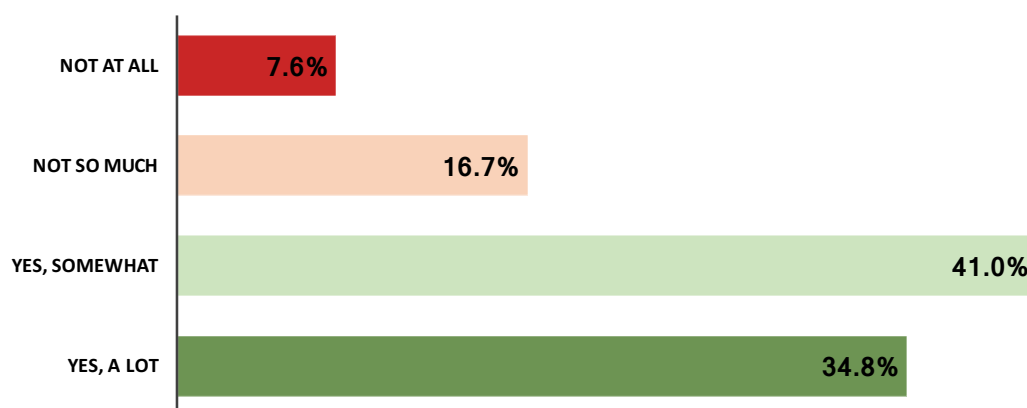
Figure 9 – Would you like to have real-time information on the shortest queue of services offered by the stadium?
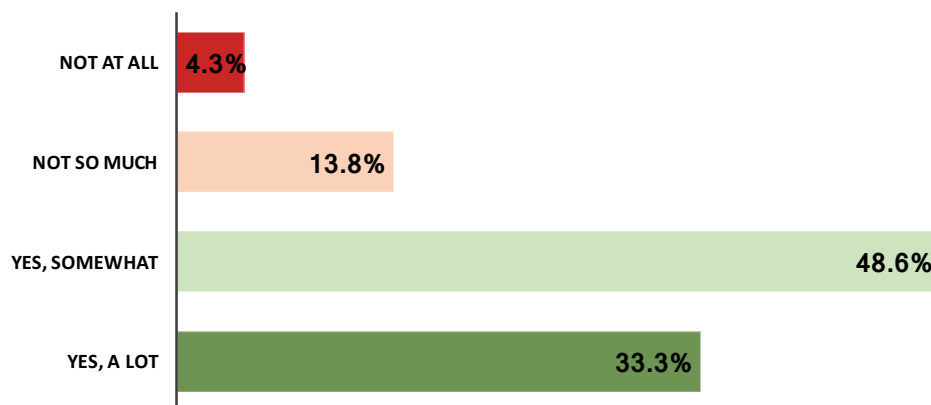
Subsequently, participants were asked whether or not they would like to participate in a light show which uses their phone screen and the ones of all the other people in the stadium. The concept in this case is that each person at the stadium would need to connect to a link or an app and then on the phone of each person there would be images, which synchronised with the ones on all the other people's phone, would create graphical choreographies. Also in this case, the majority of people (61%) replied that they would like to participate in this activity. Then, they were asked whether or not they would like to see a holograms' show before the match. In this case the amount of people who replied yes, and who therefore would like to see this type of show, further increased, reaching a rate of 70%. Consequently, it is visible that both activities would be appreciated by the majority of people. However, the preference in this case falls on the holograms' show. Figures 10 and 11 show the exact distribution of the way in which participants replied to these two questions.

Figure 10 – Would you like to participate in a light show which uses your phone screen and the ones of all the other people at the stadium?
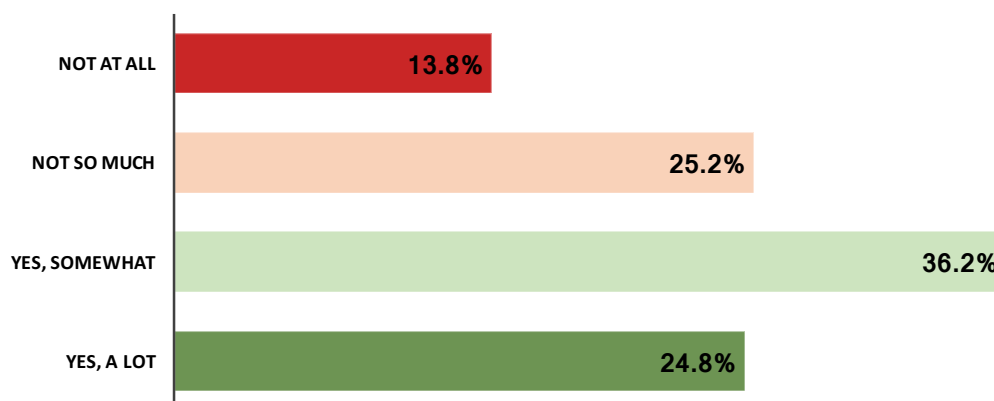
Figure 11 – Would you like to see a holograms' show before the match?
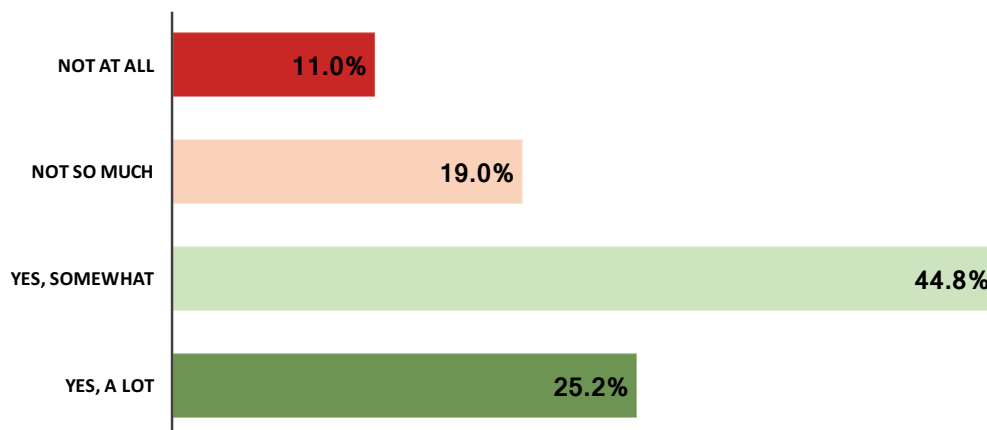
The in-stadium experience which got the highest percentage of yeses, and which therefore appears to be the participants' favourite, is the possibility of having real-time information on the shortest queue of services offered by the stadium.

Then, the survey also aimed to analyse the way in which people prefer to access the stadium, between paper ticket, ticket on the phone (e.g. QR code), and biometrics (e.g. fingerprint/face recognition). The results show that the vast majority of participants prefer to enter the stadium through a ticket on their phone, as shown in figure 12.

Figure 12 – In which way would you prefer to access the stadium?
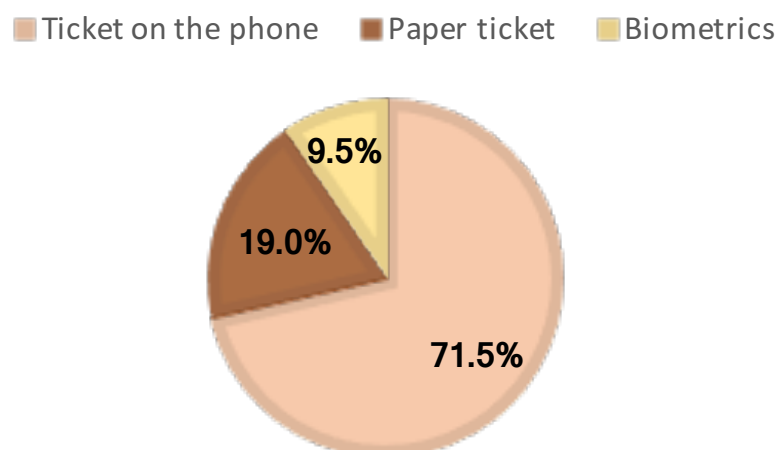
4.3.5 Data

One of the main questions of the survey, aimed at understanding whether or not people would be willing to give their data directly to their favourite football club in order to receive more personalized digital contents. In this case, by data it is meant information which could be collected through a questionnaire, such as country of residence, email, and various football preferences.

When taking in consideration the whole sample, 55.2% of people replied yes. However, when studying just the people with the highest level of football fandom, which are the super fans, this rate increases to 69.8%. Conversely, when considering just the people with the lowest level of football fandom (not considering the ones who are not fans), which are the casual fans, this rate dramatically decreases to 44.2%. Therefore, it is visible that the willingness to give to the club personal data, depends on the level of football fandom: the more someone is a fan, the more likely this person is to give personal data to a club. Figure 13 shows the answers to this question with the three different samples of respondents.

Figure 13 - Would you be willing to give your data directly to your favourite football club to receive more personalised digital contents?
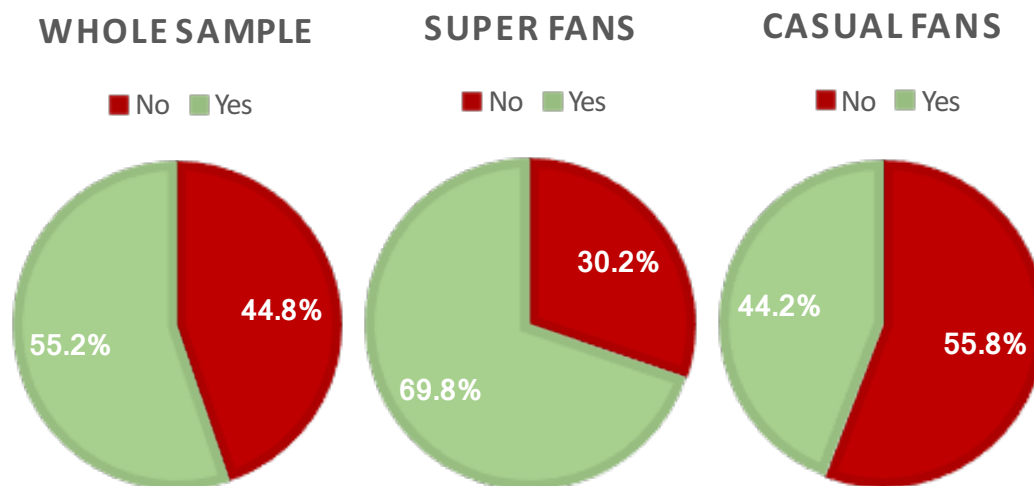
4.4 Relationship between digital community and revenue

Figure 14 shows a comparison between the top-ten European football club's revenue (Ajadi et al., 2021), and the size of their digital community which comes from table 1, showing the football clubs' digital footprint.

Figure 14 – Digital community vs revenue
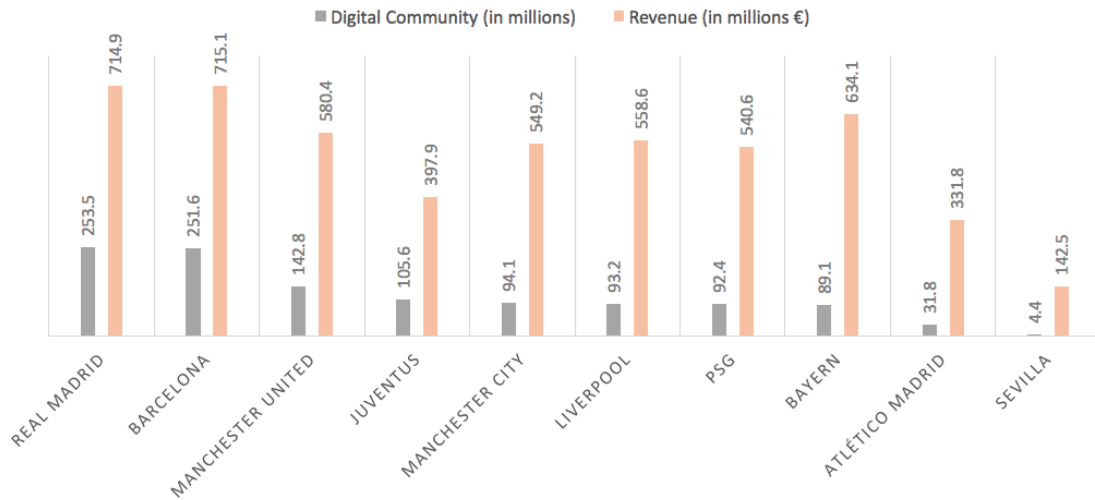
The clubs are shown in order from the one with the biggest digital community (Real Madrid), to the one with the smallest one (Sevilla). Therefore, the grey bars, showing the digital community, are constantly decreasing. Differently, the coloured bars, representing the revenue, are not continuously decreasing: they are going up and down showing discontinuity.

5. Discussion and recommendations

5.1 Personalized content

The creation of a personalized experience serves two purposes for businesses: it generates more sales, and it improves people's trust towards the company (Salvat, 2019). Moreover, fans' expectations for personalized content are increasing as it is something that would enhance their experience (Dellea et al., 2014).

The importance of content personalization discovered in the literature review, is also recognized by both the interviewed people working for UEFA and for one of the biggest football clubs in Europe. In fact, both businesses are working on digital personalized content. For instance, UEFA created an app on that purpose, while the football club is sending personalized emails and is working on the way in which the website is personalized for its users.

5.1.1 Fans' data

Football clubs need to focus on fans data in order to deliver personalized contents. However, this is a challenge as people are starting to mistrust the data usage done by organizations. This is why, clubs should be transparent on data collection, analysis, and protection, and should show fans the benefits they would receive by giving away their data (Burghes, 2020). This is important because data are key to football clubs in order to create a profile for each fan which would allow the delivery of an experience which is personalized, relevant, engaging, and profitable (Berry, 2017). Moreover, major browsing platforms are going to increase the level of privacy of their users (Wapinski, 2020).

Both the interviewed people working for UEFA and for one of the biggest football clubs in Europe confirmed the literature review on the fact that data privacy is going to increase in the near future. The football club in which the person who has been interviewed is working, is already dealing with this issue as they use many primary sources to obtain fans' data, and as they have the idea to create as many occasions as possible in which users spontaneously give their data to the club. Differently, the person who worked in the marketing department of UEFA recognized that the football association has not particularly invested in data collection and analysis. As a consequence, UEFA is currently having a lot of unorganized data, which would need vast investments in terms of data cleaning and data analysis.

It is important for football clubs to know that they cannot count on the UEFA's support when it comes to fans' data and engagement. This is due to the fact that the enhancement of football clubs' fan engagement is something which does not bring specific interests to UEFA as its role is to protect the football's development. Differently, fan engagement enhancement does bring a benefit to football clubs: it increases their monetization as an engaged fan is more willing to spend money on products, services, and tickets offered by the club.

The survey showed that the willingness to give data to a football club depends on the level of football fandom. Figure 15 shows a comparison between the rate of casual fans who are willing to give away their data to a football club in order to receive more personalized digital content, the one of the whole sample, and the one of super fans.

Figure 15 – Rate of people who are willing to give their data to football clubs
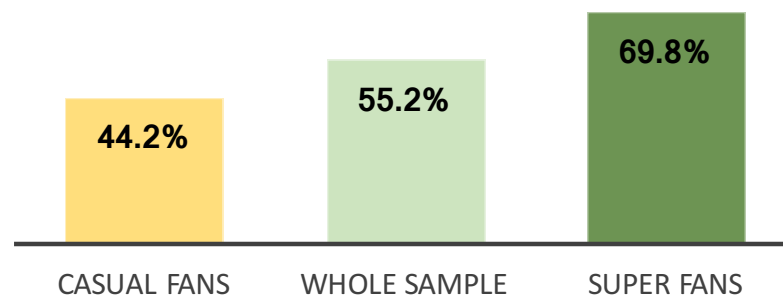
Casual fans are the ones having the lowest level of football fandom, without considering the ones who are not fans at all, while super fans are the ones having the highest one. It is therefore clear that the people having a higher level of fandom, are more willing to give away their data. However, it is interesting to notice that also the people who are not particularly following football such as casual fans, are not clearly against giving away their data to football clubs: almost half of them would accept to do so. Moreover, when taking in consideration the whole sample, the results show that the majority of people would give their data in exchange of more personalized content. This represents an enormous opportunity for football clubs as it means that they could collect data simply by asking for it and by mentioning that it will be used to provide more personalized content. In this way, football clubs would also overcome the issue mentioned in the literature review and shared by both the interviewed people, regarding the uplifted level of data privacy which will take place in the near future.

5.2 Social Media

The presence on social media benefits football clubs in multiple ways: it consents them to amplify their messages, to interact with their fans, and to reach a wider audience (Fenton, 2020). Furthermore, a greater level of fan engagement uplifts the visibility of the posted content (Escobedo, 2017).

The survey proves that social media is highly used in relation to football. In fact, the vast majority of the survey participants (74.3%) claimed that they follow a football club on at least one social media.

Therefore, football clubs should take advantage of this high rate by providing fans with organizational insights and by giving them an active role, which would allow them to enhance their level of engagement (Anagnostopoulos, Parganas, Chadwick & Fenton, 2018). This is important because fan engagement increases a club's digital reach (Escobedo, 2017), which is positively correlated with the club's revenue (Dima, 2015).

Conversely, it is surprising to notice that as of March 2021, football clubs' digital community size does not seem to be correlated with their revenue. Table 4 shows the revenue (in millions of Euros) gained by each club per one million people in the digital community.

Table 4 – Correlation between revenue and digital community

Real Madrid	Barcelona	Manchester United	Juventus	Manchester City	Liverpool	PSG	Bayern München	Atlético Madrid	Sevilla
2,82	2,84	4,06	3,77	5,84	5,99	5,85	7,12	10,43	32,39

It is clear that there is no correlation between the numbers showed in the above table, which indicates that there is no direct relation between the revenue and the size of the digital community of the top-ten European football clubs.

There is therefore a contradiction between the literature review and the results coming from the analysis of the current situation. This difference could be explained by the fact that Dima's study was conducted in 2015 on thirty football clubs, while this analysis uses 2021 data and is based on ten football clubs. As of today, as revealed by Pereira, football clubs' revenue is extremely high, exceeding eight billion Euros. This revenue comes mainly from traditional sources which are essentially broadcast, match day, and commercial. Therefore, it is clear that football clubs make a lot of money already without the help of social media, which could explain the lack of correlation between the size of

the clubs' online communities and their revenue. However, football clubs can optimize the way in which they use their social media, in order to create fan engagement. As mentioned by the person who worked for UEFA, engaged fans are willing to spend more money on the clubs' tickets, products, and services. Furthermore, having an engaged audience can give rise to an increase in sponsorship deals for a football club (Pearce, 2019).

Therefore, as of today, just having a big online community is not enough to improve a football club's monetization: clubs should work on optimizing the way in which they use their social media. In this way, they could increase fan engagement and uplift their monetization, which could ultimately create a correlation between their digital community size and their revenue.

5.3 Emerging technologies

A study conducted by the Capgemini Research Institute revealed that 69% of fans believe that the use of emerging technologies both inside and outside the stadium improves their general experience (Billington, 2020). The results of the survey confirm this study as in all the questions in which participants were asked whether they would like the implementation of a specific technology or not, the majority always replied yes.

5.3.1 Outside-the-stadium technologies

The two people who have been interviewed agree on the fact that virtual reality is a technology which will probably not be implemented. The person who worked for UEFA sustains that it could work in America but it probably would not work in Europe, as in this continent football is more traditional. Similarly, the person working for the European football club believes that virtual reality would not work but in this case, it is because the club already tried to implement it, receiving a scarce success. Additionally, they never considered offering live matches through virtual reality because it would be technologically complex. Similarly, he believes that also 3D will not be implemented as it provides a nice experience once, but it is not something which would last over time. As far as his point of view is concerned, the ease of accessibility is crucial for a technology to be successful: both virtual reality and 3D require fans to possess respectively the headset and the glasses, which is also a reason why he believes that these technologies would not be prosperous.

However, it is surprising to notice that the majority of the survey respondents would like to see a match both through virtual reality and in 3D. Football clubs should therefore

reconsider the implementation of those technologies as the majority of people would like to use them. However, as shown in figure 16, the rates for these two technologies are not extremely elevated and therefore football clubs should do a cost-benefit analysis, taking also in account that there is a big portion of fans which would not like to use them.

Figure 16 – Rate of people who would like to do these outside-the-stadium activities
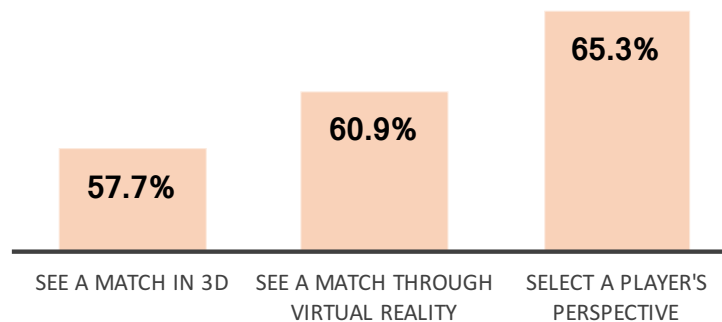
Figure 16 shows that the activity which would be appreciated the most by people consists in selecting a player's perspective while watching a match. However, the interviewed people working for football businesses believe that this is something which might be difficult to implement in the near future. On one hand, the person who worked for UEFA believes that the application of this technology would require an adaptation from both federations and broadcasters, which they would probably perceive as unnecessary. Moreover, he sustains that there might not be enough people who want to select a player's perspective: this has been contradicted by the survey, which shows that more than 65% of people would like to do it. On the other hand, the person working for the football club also believes that this technology would be difficult to apply. This is due to the fact that he sustains that players do not want to be disturbed during the match and wearing a camera could represent a big issue for them. He therefore sees this technology as more complex to be implemented: it could be doable just from the moment in which there is going to be a camera which is not even noticeable and therefore players might accept wearing it.

There is an incongruence between what people would like to use and what football clubs plan to offer in the near future: clubs might therefore consider to give fans the option of selecting a player's perspective. In order to do so, they should find out whether broadcasters are willing to implement this change or not. Moreover, they could collaborate with technological companies which might help them developing cameras which would not disturb players during a match.

Table 5 shows the above-mentioned technologies related to the outside-the-stadium experience and whether they have been approved or not by the survey respondents and by the football businesses.

Table 5 – Outside-the-stadium technologies approval

	People approval	Football businesses approval
See a match in 3D	YES (57.7%)	NO
See a match through virtual reality	YES (60.9%)	NO
Select a player's perspective	YES (65.3%)	MAYBE (depending on cameras and broadcasters)

5.3.2 Inside-the-stadium technologies

Both the person who worked for UEFA and the person who is working for one of the biggest European football clubs, agree on the fact that the emerging technology which is most likely to be implemented in the near future inside the stadium is 5G. They both share the idea that the arrival of 5G is imminent and that it will solve the connection issues which are being experienced by fans nowadays with 4G. Moreover, their point of view is also corresponding on the fact that 5G will allow the creation of in-stadium experiences which do not exist at the moment. This idea is also confirmed by the literature review, in which it is described that 5G is one of the main technologies which will improve the in-stadium experience (Wapinski, 2021).

The interviewed person revealed that the football club is practically working on this as it is planning to launch soon an app fully dedicated to fan experience enhancement within the stadium. He believes that the app will allow people to order food and beverages online and to receive them at their seat. Moreover, he believes that it will permit the direct involvement of fans as they will be able to participate in a light show using their phone screens. As shown in figure 17, both the just-mentioned enhancements have been approved by the survey respondents, as in both cases the majority of them replied that they would like their implementation. Consequently, football clubs should work, or keep

working, on the implementation of these activities as they are both doable and liked by people.

Figure 17 – Rate of people who would like to do these inside-the-stadium activities
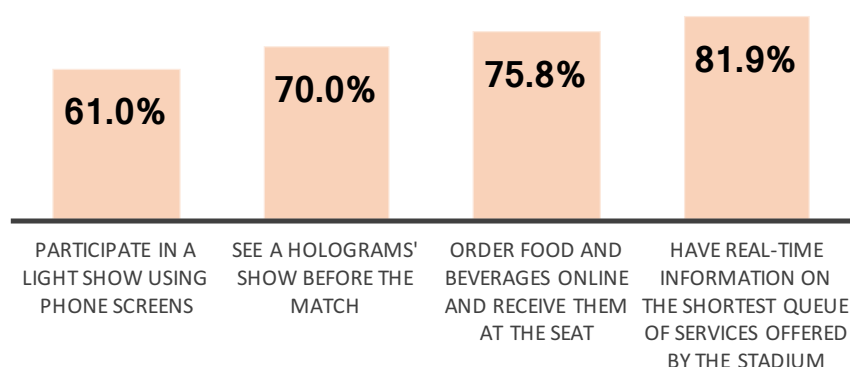
However, as shown in figure 17, the inside-the-stadium enhancement which gained more acceptance within participants consists in having real-time information on the shortest queue of services offered by the stadium, which obtained a rate of acceptance above 80%. Nevertheless, the person interviewed working for a football club believes that this improvement is going to be more complex to apply: it is something which might therefore require more time but he is confident on the fact that it will be implemented at the end.

Football clubs should consider that having real-time information on the shortest queue is something which is particularly appreciated by people, and should therefore work more on the implementation of this technology even though it is something more complicated to realise.

Moreover, there is one activity which is not directly related to 5G as the three improvements which have been previously mentioned, but which also obtained the participants approval, as shown in figure 17: it consists in seeing a holograms' show before the match. The professional working for the football club believes that the hologram technology is the one which is most likely to be implemented in the near future inside the stadium. Therefore, there is once again an equivalence between people's preferences and the football club's point of view, which should lead football clubs to work on the implementation of this technology.

Another key inside-the-stadium activity in which technology could be implemented is the entrance at the stadium. The participants were asked to choose their favourite way to access the stadium between paper ticket, ticket on the phone, and biometrics. In this case, there were no doubts and the vast majority's preference was the entrance through

ticket on the phone, chosen by 71.4% of the respondents. This data matches with the point of view of the professional working in the marketing department of a football club: he believes that the stadium app which is currently being created will also improve operative actions and will therefore allow people to access the stadium with a QR code. He sustains that the switch from paper tickets to QR code on the phone will allow people to enter the stadium in a faster way and will therefore improve their experience. Differently, the entrance through biometrics is not being considered by the football club as it is expensive and as it might even worsen the fan experience by slowing down the process of entry. On one hand, it is positive for clubs to know that people do not prefer the biometrics option, as it would require a bigger investment. On the other hand, it is positive for football fans to know that clubs are working on implementing the entrance through QR code as it is their preference and as it will improve their experience through shorter queues.

Table 6 shows the above-mentioned technologies related to the inside-the-stadium experience and whether they have been approved or not by the survey respondents and by the football businesses.

Table 6 - Inside-the-stadium technologies approval

	People approval	Football businesses approval
Participate in a light show using their phone screens	YES (61%)	YES
See a hologram's show before the match	YES (70%)	YES
Order food and beverages online with at-seat delivery	YES (75.8%)	YES
Have real-time information on the shortest queues	YES (81.9%)	MAYBE (more difficult to implement)
Enter the stadium with the ticket on the phone	Preferred over paper ticket and biometrics (71.4%)	YES

5.4 Football demand

Both the interviewed people agree on the fact that the football demand is decreasing among new generations including people below the age of fourteen. The person who worked for UEFA believes that this is due to the fact that football clubs nowadays are competing not just within the sport industry, but also within the entertainment one. Differently, the main explanation given by the person working for the football club is that young people are used to obtain everything in a fast way. Therefore, he sustains that new generations struggle to follow a 90-minutes match as it is too long considering their habits. However, both UEFA and the football club are facing the issue of getting closer to this younger target. For instance, the person working for the football club admitted that La Liga is ahead on this topic, by creating activities such as freestyle battles which aim to reach younger generations. However, the club is also working on attracting a new target which goes beyond the traditional fan. In order to do so, they are entering in new contexts by for instance providing e-sports content or producing pieces of clothing in collaboration with stylists.

Therefore, football clubs should be aware of the fact that the football demand is decreasing among young people, and should act accordingly. They cannot anymore simply provide people with the 90-minutes match: they need to offer also a differentiated type of content, which targets young people and also the ones who are not necessarily football fans.

Moreover, the person who worked for UEFA believes that there is going to be a pent-up demand for live football at the stadium. This is due to the fact that the pandemic situation did not allow people to go at the stadium and therefore, as soon as people will have the chance, they will want to go to see live matches. This is an enormous opportunity for football clubs, which should work on enhancement of the in-stadium fan experience. If they do so, the massive amount of people which will come at the stadium right after the pandemic, will be willing to come back as they lived a great experience.

5.5 Behaviours towards football

Figure 18 shows certain behaviours towards football and the rate of people who affirmed to have this specific behaviour in the survey. They are shown in order from the one having the highest rate, to the one with the lowest.

Figure 18 – Behaviours towards football

89.0%	SUPPORT A PARTICULAR CLUB
88.6%	FOLLOW A CLUB ON AT LEAST ONE SOCIAL MEDIA
81.9%	HAVE ALREADY BOUGHT AN OFFICIAL SHIRT
74.3%	HAVE ALREADY BEEN AT THE STADIUM
72.4%	HAVE ALREADY BOUGHT OTHER MERCHANDISE
49.0%	PAY A TELEVISION SUBSCRIPTION TO SEE FOOTBALL
31.3%	HAVE ALREADY HAD A SEASONAL TICKET
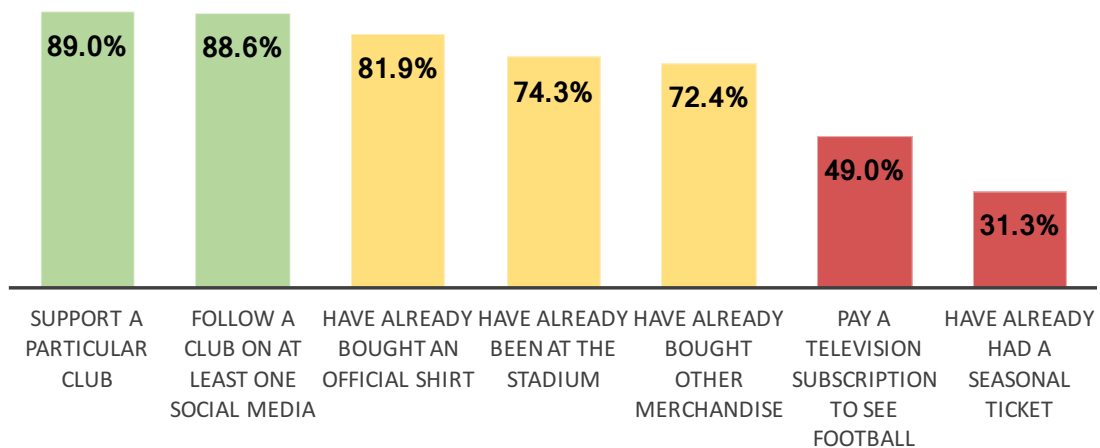
This comparison shows that the behaviours which do not require any type of payment such as supporting a particular club and following a club on at least one social media are the ones which are being done by more people. Right after in the chart, there are the three behaviours which require a single purchase, which are buying an official shirt, going at the stadium, and buying other merchandise of the football club. Finally, the last two in the chart are the ones which require a long-term payment, which are paying a television subscription to see football, and having a seasonal ticket.

It is therefore clear that football clubs cannot base their revenue on long-term payments, as just the minority of people decide to do such subscriptions. As mentioned by the person who worked for UEFA, the sport industry has grown predominantly thanks to broadcasting deals. However, as of today, money coming from broadcast got stagnated and in some cases decreased, which put football clubs in the position of needing to innovate.

However, it is surprising to notice that the vast majority of people has already done single purchases related to football. As a consequence, football clubs should take this as an opportunity and work on the quality, on the diversification, and on the advertisement of the products they are selling. In this way, they would be able to reach a wider target and they would manage to generate further monetization.

6. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to understand the ways in which football clubs could use digital tools to further enhance both their monetization and the fan experience in Europe.

As far as personalized content is concerned, one of the main discoveries is that the majority of people would be willing to give their data to football clubs in order to receive a more personalized experience. Moreover, this study revealed that people having a higher level of football fandom are even more willing to do so. Football clubs should take advantage of this and should therefore ask directly to fans for their data, by mentioning that it will be used to provide them with more personalized content. In this way, clubs would both enhance the fan experience and overcome the incoming issue concerning the uplifted level of data privacy, as they would possess data which has been consensually given by fans.

With regard to digital communities, football clubs should be aware of the fact that as of today, just having a big online community is not enough to improve their monetization. However, football clubs should optimize the way in which they use their social media, by creating fan engagement. In this way, they would be able to have engaged fans, which are willing to spend more, and which might lead to an increase in sponsorship deals, uplifting like this their monetization.

Concerning outside-the-stadium technologies, the one which people liked the most is cameras on players, which would allow them to select a player's perspective. However, both the interviewed football professionals believe that it is a technology which is complex to implement. Therefore, football clubs should first of all find out whether broadcaster would be willing to accept this change or not, and secondly, collaborate with technological companies in order to obtain cameras which do not disturb players.

Both the interviewed individuals believe that the inside-the-stadium technology which is most likely to be implemented in the near future is 5G. This technology will permit fans to participate in a light show using phone screens, to order food and beverages online with at-seat delivery, and to have real-time information on the shortest queues. These options are all both liked by people and approved by professional. However, the latter is the one which obtained the biggest consensus, but it is the only one which professionals believe is more difficult to implement. Therefore, football clubs should not stop in front of complexity: they should take in considerations people preferences by working more on the implementation of real-time information on the shortest queues, in order to enhance their experience. Furthermore, the use of holograms should be considered by football

clubs as it is appreciated by people, it does not cost too much, and it could be useful also to sponsors as their products or services could be projected. Moreover, they should give fans the possibility to access the stadium through QR code as it is cheaper for the club itself, faster for fans, and the most appreciated way of entering the stadium by people.

Following what was mentioned by the two professionals, the football demand is decreasing among new generations. Therefore, football clubs should innovate and target also young people, which might not be willing to see a 90-minutes match, but which might find interesting a differentiated type of content such as clothing or e-sports. However, football clubs should be ready to grasp the opportunities given by the incoming pent-up demand for live football: they should work on the enhancement of the in-stadium fan experience to ensure that the initial high number of visitors will live a great experience and will be therefore willing to come back.

The vast majority of people has already done single purchases related to football. Differently, the minority of them pays a subscription in order to see football either at home or at the stadium. Therefore, football clubs should work on the diversification, on the quality, and on the advertisement of their products which are obtainable through a simple single purchase. In this way, they would manage to reach a wider audience and to generate further monetization.

In conclusion, in order to both enhance the fan experience and improve their monetization, football clubs should:

- Ask for data directly to their fans

- Create fan engagement on social media

- Work on offering fans the chance to select a player's perspective

- Use 5G to offer fans in-stadium services and activities

- Create holograms shows

- Allow fans to access the stadium through their phone

- Offer a differentiated type of content targeting young people

- Enhance the in-stadium fan experience while there is a pent-up demand

6.1 Limitations and further opportunities

This study is not exhaustive as it takes in consideration just the point of view of two professionals working within the football industry. Moreover, the survey has been replied by 210 people, which is not enough to represent the European population as a whole.

This paper could be further enlarged by looking at the way in which football fans experience gambling, considering that gambling sites could be clubs' competitors as they also try to engage with fans during matches. Therefore, further research might be helpful in finding out what football clubs could do in order to deal with gambling sites, for instance by directly offering fans the opportunity to predict matches results, in order to get a reward from the club.

Moreover, this study could be further expanded by analysing the way in which e-gaming is perceived by fans, and the way in which football clubs could integrate it to both enhance their monetization and the fan experience.

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Appendix 1: Interview script - UEFA

<u>What were you doing in your previous position at UEFA and what are you currently doing in FIFA?</u>

I was working for UEFA. I joined them about two years ago now, and we created an innovation hub which was looking at digital transformation more broadly, but I think actually that to support digital transformation the first thing you need is the cultural change within the organization. To be completely honest, UEFA wasn't in a position to help, support things like enhancing the fan experience because they didn't have the people to drive the methodologies in place internally to support that so the first stage was obviously creating a cultural shift and then, creating that shift that allowed UEFA to start to target fan experiences, among other things, using digital technologies basically, so that was the goal behind it.

I left UEFA close to a year ago. Now I'm working as a strategy consultant and I'm working mostly with FIFA, which is quite a change going from European to now global.

<u>So now you're working globally for FIFA?</u>

Yes, I work as a freelance consultant so it's not specifically for the organization, I sort of work for myself but I'm contracted by them to do various bits to do their strategy basically.

<u>Are you still working in the innovation department?</u>

I work on Innovation but more broadly on their strategy, so on how innovation links into their strategy as well.

<u>How does UEFA work with the clubs?</u>

I think it's a very complex landscape politically and I think that the last day with the Super League stuff has probably showed that and you know you have actors who are operating sort of together, in line with the same interest but also, sort of separately as well. Ultimately the clubs are part of UEFA and obviously FIFA as well and the role of UEFA is to protect the development of the sport, not really to help the individual clubs with their fan engagement with their use of data, with those sorts of things: that's very much for the clubs to manage themselves.

Part of the things that we did was to try to create a platform where we can share ideas between clubs, between leagues, between you know all sorts of different stakeholders within the football environment, so to create a working group. You google something called "reimagine football" so that was the last thing I sort of worked on when I was at

UEFA but the idea was bringing together leagues, clubs, stadiums, to look at the fan experience and not just the fan experience but how with COVID we could try and adapt use new technologies to, improve how, football was offered to its fans and the idea was to bring together that pool of different groups to get the different insights from different groups because, of course, what UEFA has, what their insights are, what their focus areas are, are very different to the clubs, to the stadiums, so we worked with the KMBB, the Dutch football federation, the Amsterdam arena so stadium, city football group as well, and so there's a big range of different sort of actors we worked with, but it becomes very political again in working with clubs in particular and so you know that did include city football group but obviously now with what's happened in the last day it's very unlikely that UEFA would do something like that with city football group because even though the innovation team aren't involved in the super league conversations, as a political thing it's very difficult to have those discussions anymore so I would say that they sort of leave the clubs to it, because of politics more than anything else, but again, I should stress that what I'm sharing with you are my own views.

Which kind of information were they exchanging in this platform?

Initially it was a platform to exchange problem, and potential solutions within fan experience, within stadium experience, within at home experience, all sorts of things. It was to share challenges around innovation a lot of those are also internal, so I talked a little bit about the importance of having the internal platform, to be able to innovate as an organization, to transform internally as well, and a lot of it was to share the challenges because there are very common challenges you have across the industry, and it was to share the challenges and try and solve them together.

With COVID obviously, the idea was to see if there are there start-ups in the industry which have new technologies that potentially we could use to try and enhance the fan experience now that we have to play football behind closed doors. Obviously having a group where you've got a stadium, you've got a league, you've got federation, it was a really great way to try and assess what can be done sort of from an industry-wide perspective and I think that it was sort of like a start-up challenge, but specifically focused around COVID and that period time period.

Do you, know if this platform is still going on?

There was a time limited sort of application, the idea was that you apply and then, they select winners and the winners are now working I think conjointly with some of these organizations to try and actually implement their solutions but there's a lot of information

online about that specific thing. I was there for the launch and the conception but then in terms of the results that's what I left so I'm not sure actually what's happened to it since then.

<u>Was it about general issues within the industry or about specific ones?</u>

It was more general, high level, it was about what challenges do we face as an industry and how can your start-up with your new technology help to solve those general challenges. Let me share a link actually: you can check that out, it's quite useful and there's a lot of press releases that were done not just by UEFA but the KBB and others, so if you just google it and go to news as well you'll probably get quite a lot of good material.

We created a group of different federations so, UEFA was based here in Nyon, in Switzerland, and obviously we have a lot of the other federations close by, so we worked with the FIBB, so the volleyball federation, the basketball federation, the skateboarding federation, the equestrian federation, and we created a similar sort of group, and the idea again was to share thoughts around how we can improve the fan experience but this is from a higher level it's not just how we can help each specific club achieve that goal, it's how we, as a federation, can improve what we're doing. We don't work with individual clubs to help support, that is very much from a more holistic point of view.

<u>So, there's not really a connection between UEFA and the individual clubs?</u>

Specifically around fan experience, no.

There is a lot of connection because ultimately, they're part of UEFA, each of the clubs, but in terms of fan engagement we leave the clubs to it. Ultimately the increasing fan engagement serves two purposes: one is to fill the fan base, but the second is obviously a monetary thing and if you have fans who are engaged, they're willing to pay more and spend more on your products, services, buy tickets to the matches, so UEFA obviously isn't going to get involved in that side of things because it's for the club's own commercial game, it's not for the interest of European football, but for the club's sort of specific interest about it.

<u>Is UEFA or FIFA working now on digital personalized content?</u>

Yes massively. I think about a year, maybe even two years ago now, UEFA launched UEFA TV, and I think in the sports industry in general, there's a massive shift towards OTT platforms as a way of showing content. It's a bit difficult with UEFA's OTT platform because it doesn't show live games at least for the main competitions because obviously

there's broadcast deals in place and all sorts of legal agreements, but the idea is to grow that platform as much as possible in order to leverage the data that you can generate from what people are watching, but also provide personalized experiences for fans. It's in the same way that clubs use their Instagram, feeds, their TikTok feeds, to do those sorts of things. I'm not sure if you've seen but the Euro, it's still called Euro 2020 but it's 2021, and TikTok is now one of the official partners and that was actually announced only quite recently as well, so again, you can see the shift there towards providing a different type of content as well. It's not anymore just about providing match highlights and match clips: it's also about the experience around that, as well having fans TikTok interacting with other fans, interacting with mascots, interacting with the teams, etc. All of those things are becoming bigger and bigger and part of what UEFA and all federations are trying to offer.

<u>I read a lot about it and I saw that in order to deliver personalized content, there is the need to gather and properly analyse data: how are those associations dealing with that?</u>

It's a very difficult question to answer, and I'm going to give you quite a long-winded answer to quite a simple question, but I think it's worth it. So, if you think about how the sports industry has grown in the last 20 years, even 30 years, it's grown predominantly off the back of TV deals, of the money coming in for TV revenues: I think something like 80 percent of UEFA's revenue comes from TV broadcasting money and that's the same or similar for the premier league, not quite as high as an example, and it's sort of been a wave and UEFA, the premier league have just been riding the wave and when you're on the wave you don't need to adapt, you don't need to innovate, you can just keep riding that wave and you can keep making more money, and that's worked for the last 20 years, and I think now in the last two years, and now especially with COVID, that's changed massively. The impact is that during those 20 years, organizations like UEFA haven't really seen the benefit, in my opinion a little bit foolishly, of investing money in things like data, in things like managing data, collecting data, analysing data in particular: they haven't spent time and money in those things and I think that now that has become very detrimental because they have a lot of data, it exists, but it isn't in any structured format, it's not coherent, there's nothing you can gain from that data at the moment. The big challenge now involves a lot of investment, which is obviously difficult, with the COVID situation as well, but it requires a large amount of investment in creating data lakes, data stores. It's not just having that data accessible, it's then cleaning the data, so it's usable, and then having the people to analyse the data, to be able to deliver insights. So, sort of the sure answer is that data exists but there needs to be a significant amount of

investment and work into that data to really identify what those trends are and, potentially, how they can support fans.

I think that's why UEFA does sort of leave clubs to it, a little bit because they have the profit motives to be able to do that: clubs are driven by, I think we've seen in the last day in particular, they're driven by financial incentive to grow, to generate more money, whereas UEFA is a non-profit, organization, so of course whilst the clubs have the incentive to invest money for commercial growth, for UEFA investing money is always for a very different reason because it's a non-profit organization and that's a big difference, I think, between how clubs approach digital transformation versus how UEFA as a federation would approach digital transformation.

Is this an issue for UEFA at the moment? Are they trying to do something about it, to invest in resources, or they want to leave it like that?

If it wasn't an issue then these 12 clubs wouldn't have yesterday said that they're going to create their own league, basically replace UEFA. Clearly if they invested money in research and development, in improving the experience for fans, clubs, players, then they wouldn't be in the situation they're in now, I think that's very clear so your thesis is coming at a very interesting time.

I think I talked about how the industry grew with broadcast money and over the last five years actually that started to stop increasing, it's actually stagnated and in some cases declined, and that's forced UEFA in actually investing a bit more in these sorts of things. I think that's why the innovation hub was created at UEFA for example, so there is a massive push towards these things. UEFA's OTG platform is a great example, is a really great service: even though they don't have live games, they've got some great archive footage on there that they use, so they are moving in that direction, whether it's too little too late, I think we'll find out in the next weeks. My suspicion is that it will be fine, I don't think the Super League will work, but I think UEFA realized they'll need to make some big changes, and potentially that will involve investing more heavily in data, for example in an analysis of data and how they can potentially support clubs with the fan experience, because that seems to be a big problem at the moment.

What about privacy? Because I read that the level of privacy is going to increase in the future years, so probably the data available today is not going to be available in the future. Therefore, clubs or association might need to go directly to fans. Do you know something about that?

It's a big challenge. I work with quite a range of companies in my current role as a consultant: I work with three or four different companies and for all of them one of the hottest topics is data privacy, so there is a GDPR, which I don't know if you've heard of, but it's I think European-wide regulations which have been put in place around how you protect data of individuals and it is a big change, people have to consent to their data being shared, no data can be collected without the individual being aware of that. So, one way around obviously having launched UEFA TV, when people sign up they have to agree to a lot of sort of things around GDPR and that helps or you know there's privacy issues but it's a really massive challenge, across not just the sports industry though I'd say it's across all industries.

Do you think this is something changing even more right now or in the near future?

That's a good question, I don't know the answer. Considering the way technology is moving I can imagine these things are going to get stricter and stricter and regulation is going to increase and increase and increase over the next five years ten years, which would obviously make all of these things harder, particularly around personalized experiences.

I think a really big challenge is how can you create personalized experiences without knowing the person and if data privacy and regulations are increasing, to know the person is becoming increasingly challenging so definitely a big issue, but I don't know, specifically, what might change in the next few years, in terms of data privacy and data collection.

Is UEFA or FIFA considering this? Are they discussing about it, or is it more of a future problem for them?

I'm sure they are within some teams. Within the UEFA TV team, I'm sure they're quite thinking about that a lot, within the legal team I'm sure they're thinking about that a lot as well. What you find with a lot of federations is they've grown in a very fragmented way, so the marketing team won't speak to the Europa TV team, who won't really speak to legal unless they need something specific, so each of them will be doing different things around data privacy. It's not often that they have one common solution to the challenges around that so I'm sure there's stuff that UEFA is doing, I just don't know what in particular.

I also wanted to talk about emerging technologies, and I wanted to know: are these associations investing in emerging technologies right now? With "emerging technologies" I mean the ones enhancing the fan experience

It's a good question. Clubs are investing massively in it, obviously it depends on the profile of clubs and the amount they have to invest but City Football Group, which owns Manchester City and a whole host of other clubs, they're probably one of the best in how they're using emerging technologies. I think one because they have the money to invest in it but two they realize that if you compare Liverpool, for example, to Manchester City, Liverpool had this historic fan base, a massive historic fan base, and their popularity globally is built a lot on that brand "you'll never walk alone", those sorts of ideas. Differently, City don't have, City is a club that didn't really have a massive fan base in the UK, then they've been up and down between the leagues and now, obviously, they've had this money come in and the way that they're trying to catch up to those biggest clubs in terms of fan base is to offer better experiences: that's how they're competing with Liverpool, in terms of growing their fan base, globally. It's not obviously to do with on-pitch success, but it's also to do with the experience that they offer to fans: actually, City Football Group invest heavily in emerging technologies, everything from in-stadium, to fan experience at home, personalization, all sorts of things. Thinking about AR and VR, they invest heavily in all of these things, and but that's not just them, I think that's all clubs that have the budget and the ability to do so, are starting to think heavily about those things. I think AC Milan is another really good example: recently they've launched a whole new digital initiative as well, so that might be worth looking into.

From a UEFA perspective, as I mentioned, it is difficult as a non-profit federation to play a big hand in these things, so one of the big things we did within the innovation hub was to create a start-up challenge: the idea was that we invited start-ups from around the world, to come and work with us, I think we had something like 49 start-ups who applied, and we selected seven of those, and really there was a massive range of what they did. Some were festival experiences for games, some were in-stadium experiences, some had to do with data collection during matches: there was a real range of start-ups that we worked with and the idea was to give them an opportunity to showcase their technology within new wafers structures, within UEFA's competition so we tested, for example, two years ago in the Champions League, one of the start-ups, and of course the idea was eventually that we start working with these start-ups longer term. I think there's something like four start-ups that UEFA signed partnerships with now, but again it becomes difficult for UEFA, because the commercial model is very different to what clubs would have: the club can do it with the idea of generating more money. UEFA doesn't have that same profit motive, so it needs to be something that really enhances the experience for players, fans, and all clubs or federations of all National Associations as well.

<u>What were the selected start-ups about?</u>

A real range of things, I'll give you a few names: one was called "Formalitics", for which on your mobile phone you can create a goal and it gives you the the speed and accuracy of penalty kicks. Another called "LiveLike" in which we had some just broadcasting things, so more functional for UEFA.

When you say digital transformation a lot of people think of fan engagement, fan experience, personalization, all those sorts of things, but actually some of the biggest advantages for UEFA with technology and digital transformation come from more functional things, so broadcasting is a great example. At the moment, when a game is broadcasted, you have to have x number of people on site, you have to have trucks bands, cables, all these sorts of things that are all very expensive to do. 5g is a really great example, one of the best solutions that 5g can solve is that you can broadcast with a very scaled back number of people, number of cameras, number of everything: you can save yourself a lot of money from that. I guess the investment UEFA make in emerging technology is more around saving costs or improving processes, than it is necessarily around the fan experience.

<u>In your opinion, what are the emerging technologies that could be realistically implemented in the near future?</u>

It's a very good question, a very difficult question to answer. I think 5g is definitely the big one, because like I said it has benefits beyond connectivity, it can be a really great way to improve the broadcasting experience, to reduce your cost from broadcasting, but you could also use 5g in very different ways. If the stadium implements 5g, fans in stadiums can vote in real time for who they think the man of the match is, for example, and technologies like 5g help to enable that because at the moment it's terrible trying to have signal when you're in a stadium but if you've got these new technologies, they can help implement that. It can help implement loads of in-stadium experiences, it can really improve, so 5g is definitely a big one because it's not just fan experiences, but it's also about broadcasting and improving the more logistical elements of football as well, so that's definitely a big one I think. Also, big data, how data is used, analysed, and applied is going to be a big one. So, definitely personalization I think is also the way things are moving.

I'm a little bit sceptical of AR and VR, I think in principle is a great idea to have that experience at home: you put on this headset or whatever it might be, and you have this 3d experience of the game, but as a football fan that's not how I want to watch football,

it's not how I associate with football and I think it's a very American thing, I think that would work in America, with how they want to engage with football and not football, soccer, basket, baseball, NFL, all their sports. I think that's how American fans associate with those sports but I think the football in Europe is much more traditional and I don't think AR and VR, for me personally, is going to take off.

<u>Would it be expensive to create streaming for virtual reality?</u>

It is a high cost up front to invest in the technology and to create something. Then operating it can be lower but then it's also the cost of individual headsets, they're expensive, now the cost is coming down, but it's a difficult one like I said, I just don't personally think it will work in in Europe, I think traditional football fans don't want to sit there, and watch with this massive headset on and see things in 3d: they just want to see the ball and the players on the pitch.

I think the other big trend has more to do with player performance as well, so there's a whole host of technologies being created and not just created but they're becoming very cheap, so the idea of player tracking. I'm sure you've seen in training a lot of these players wear these vests now that track their heart rate, they track the distance they've run: it attracts so much data and I think that's becoming more and more affordable so it's not only the big clubs that can do that but even second division, third division clubs are starting to implement that. I think player performance and how tech can enhance that, is definitely going to be one of the things that continues to increase a lot in the next years.

More generally, clubs in particular using digital channels as a source of revenue, it's not really a trend or an emerging technology, but I think how clubs use digital channels to increase revenue is going to become bigger and bigger and bigger, and I think commercial models will change, which is quite a big claim, but again, like I mentioned, I think UEFA, but not just UEFA, also clubs, are so reliant on broadcast revenues as a source of income. I think they need to diversify those channels. I think COVID has highlighted that we should diversify our channels away from match their revenue as well, so digital channels will become more important as not just ways to engage with fans, but also how can clubs monetize that as well, as well as just sort of offer better experiences: how can they monetize those experiences as well, and I think that's going to become a big big thing we see in the next five years.

<u>Do you work on social media and on how clubs or UEFA are managing their profiles?</u>

Not a lot, I'm not a social media expert, I don't think I've ever been on TikTok so, that sort of says it all, but maybe just showing my age there a little bit as well, but I'm not a social

media expert, I just know that it's a very important channel now for clubs, leagues and federations to grow. Football clubs are global now, particularly the big ones: I was reading a statistic, I think Liverpool has 175 million fans globally, or something like this, and something like 5 millions of those are in the UK, and the rest are global, which just shows that it's a global game, and social media is so important in supporting that global growth. That's why, the Super League has come about: it's not because fans in England want their six teams to play against Barcelona and Real Madrid, it's because a person sitting in China, Dubai, or America really wants to see the two, wants to see Messi playing against Ronaldo more often, and that's what's driving a lot of this stuff around the Super League

Have you heard, or did anyone discuss in UEFA or FIFA, about cameras on players?

It's a really good question and I think trends are driving that way: you have fans who are fans of players more than they are of teams. Cristiano Ronaldo is a great example: when he moved from Real Madrid to Juventus, the social media following for Juventus increased exponentially, their share price I think more than doubled or something like this, something crazy, which just goes to show that fans really care about individual players, so a massive consideration is actually do we need to offer third person views of just one single player during games? Gamification is also a really big trend that's going on, like fantasy football is a really big trend and again, if you're really keen on fantasy football and you have players from, let's say, the premier league, you have two from Arsenal and you have three from Manchester United, you want to watch those individual players rather than watching the games, that's also something that I think a lot of people have started to think about, so they're definitely questions that are being considered and talked about, it's just whether or not there's the incentive, whether there's enough people that would want those things that really would drive change in the industry towards those. I don't think there are enough people, and I also don't think that broadcasters and federations are adaptive enough to say yes let's change completely how we're doing something that's working because it's been working for years, they generate so much money: they don't really need this.

I thought this might also be an incentive to broadcast legally: many people do it illegally, so maybe if they add some features, for instance allowing people who pay to choose the player perspective from the remote, then maybe that could be an incentive for them to pay and broadcast legally.

Potentially, but then the more people are willing to pay for those things, the more likely it is that they'll also be pirated. The entire sports industry loses something like 28 billion

pounds a year from piracy, and it just puts it really into perspective, I think a lot more needs to be done to tackle piracy as well. It's another big challenge, I'm not sure potentially emerging technology might be able to solve that, but for me the sports industry, FIFA, UEFA, should take a step back and say, what are our big problems, what are our big challenges, why does this group of 12 clubs want to break away from us, and for example piracy is a massive, massive reason and then from there you can look at what technologies might be able to solve those issues. I think too much of what is done is based on how cool would it be to have VA, VR, or AR for fans, when actually you should be looking at the other way, it should be what the fans want, what are fans problems, pain points, and approaching it from that angle rather than approaching it from the technology angle.

What do you think are the key trends, key emerging tech that you think will be popular in the next five years?

I don't, believe VR and 3D are going to work for real: they might try them, I believe they should do some research before doing it, which is what I'm trying to do with my thesis: to find out whether people really would want that or not, so that then clubs or association can decide whether to implement it or not. I also believe it might be challenging because people need to be willing to invest on a VR headset, which is not obvious. Moreover, I read a lot about in-stadium experience: I think that football clubs might have a more technological stadium containing many features. For instance, they could create an app in which you can find out the shortest queue for services at the stadium, or you can get food delivered at your seat, those kinds of things I believe might be implemented soon in many stadiums.

I think you're completely right, one of the things COVID has done is that it's increased the demand for sport in stadiums. Personally, I have a season ticket for my club, and obviously for the last year I've not gone to watch my team play, and now all I want to do is go and watch them play in the stadium and it's not just me, that's football fans across the world, and sports fans in general across the world. So, I think there's going to be such a pent-up demand for watching live sports that there is a massive opportunity in stadium like all of those things that you said, there's a massive opportunity around those, to exploit that and to exploit the number of people that want to watch games.

As you've said, the experience at home is more difficult to enhance. I think it's difficult to do that during the live game, but potentially you can do things around the live game which might be easier particularly around personalized content. If you know that x person is a massive Ronaldo fan, you can start pushing clips of videos of Ronaldo scoring goals

against this particular team ahead of the game, to get them excited for the game, and also after the game you can do things like that as well.

<u>I was also thinking, for instance, that if a football club knows that someone is living on the other side of the planet, it wouldn't send a newsletter about the tickets for a live match at the stadium. Differently, it could show an ad showing the shirt of a club player of that country. Receiving content really matching with people, could really increase their level of engagement. I also thought that clubs could ask directly for data, by clearly showing what is it for: for instance, the club could say "give me this data and I will provide you with specific personalized content". Personally, I would do that, I would give my data if they tell me this is helpful to provide me with more personalized content, why not, and I believe that many other football fans would do that too.</u>

I completely agree. I've just pinged you another example of a start-up that we worked with, called "WSC Sports". Their technology is great, what they do is: they produce highlights packages but automated, so the game is finished and you can select one minute, three minutes, five minutes, and it will generate an automatically packaged clip of highlights. What you can also introduce within that is personalization, they did a lot of work with the NBA, and in America they would have the three-minute highlight package, or whatever, but for France there was I think two French players who played in the NBA, and they would make sure on the highlights package for those two players that they heavily featured that one player who was French, and of course the French fans love it, and the engagement amongst French fans watching these clips is much higher, so that's a really great example of someone who successfully personalized content, outside of the live sort of atmosphere, to help support that. There is stuff that's being done in live, I would say more by broadcasters than anyone else: I think BT Sport in the UK, they're a great example, they've introduced a great feature where if you join the game after 40 minutes and you've missed the first 40 minutes, it will give you the option to see highlights of the first 40 minutes, and you can click that, you can watch the goals, you can watch the penalties, you can watch yellow cards, whatever it is, you can see the key highlights and again that's a really good example of how you can increase the live experience, but that does fall I think predominantly to broadcasters as opposed to clubs themselves.

<u>What do you think about cameras? Do you think people in the future will be able to choose rather the player perspective or simply a different one?</u>

I think it'll definitely be more choice, I think a lot of broadcasting will become automated, so you only need to have operators for the cameras, you'll just be able to have more cameras. I think the great thing about 5g technology as well is that you don't need these

massive cables and wires and things like this. I think you already see some cameras now where you have the cameraman on the side of the pitch, that when someone scores a goal, the players come and celebrate directly with the camera, because they're able to do that, there's no massive cables with these cameras and I think there's going to be more and more of those things, I think the cameras will be able to approach new angles, different angles, overhead angles, 360 angles. It happens a lot in the premier league, you have these 360 views when someone scores a goal, it will show you it from all angles and it's really great, it's a really cool way, to see the goals happening.

I think there's definitely going to be some big improvements in broadcasting, and a lot of that will come down to reducing costs and overheads of operating with lots of people and operating instead of automated cameras, I think a lot of the companies we've worked with, have automated production, so you could implement two cameras in small stadiums and it would record and stream the whole game from just two cameras. Obviously, the cost of installation is tiny and that becomes so useful for clubs, because they can record the whole game and then they can do two things: they can share with their fans using an OTT platform, but they can also use that feed for analytics, and to improve how the club is performing on the pitch as well. We've talked a lot about off the pitch but there's also a whole load of on the pitch things that can be done from these technologies and to improve player performance and team performance as well.

<u>What are the main issues you're dealing with, at FIFA, right now?</u>

The specific project I'm working on now is looking at global development so it's not particularly related to technology. For the for the World Cup there's only ever been two federations: UEFA and Common Balls, so South America, who had teams in the semi-finals and finals, there's never been a team from Africa, or the America, or North America, or Asia for example and so it's looking at why there is that global imbalance between competitiveness and how we can address that. Technology definitely will play a part in helping with the solutions for those things.

From the UEFA perspective, what other key challenges, well, these 12 clubs are definitely a key challenge for them at the moment. Another challenge is that participation is decreasing among youngsters, and the number of fans watching games is decreasing amongst youngsters. Kids prefer to watch someone stream PlayStation, than they prefer to watch football these days and I think for me the biggest challenge for UEFA in the developed nations, is how you can increase that love of the game that children have again, because I think that's being eroded with technology and also because football isn't really just in the sports industry anymore, it's in the sports and entertainment industry,

because you're competing with people's time, not just with other sports, but also with the entertainment industry. When I'm sitting at home, I can choose to put on the Champions League game, or I can go on Netflix and I can watch whatever I want, so the competition has become even more tough for these sports organizations, so it'd be really interesting to see where it goes with demand over the next five years as well for live events in person, but also at home.

So, do you think that the demand for football is decreasing right now?

It depends where you're looking and at what age group. I think that for people below the age of 14 in Europe it's decreasing, but if you then look at that same age group in Africa, it's increasing massively. It's a very difficult question to answer because it depends massively on the on the region, on the age group, on the country as well, and how the country is promoting football, because don't forget that as well as UEFA, as well as the clubs, as well as the league, you also have the National Federations that are there to support the development of football, so the English Football Association for example.

Do you believe this Super League is a bit related with the fact that UEFA is not investing in data?

Harshly this the super league is based on greed of 12 clubs, of 12 individuals who own these clubs more than anything, that's clearly the basis of it. There's no altruistic aim to improve football, the aim is purely to benefit themselves. At the same time, if UEFA had invested more in data and all of these things, then potentially we wouldn't be in this position where these 12 clubs feel like they have to do something. If they'd operated in a way that made them feel like they were part of the process, then potentially those clubs wouldn't feel like they had to do something. It's easy to point fingers at different people, I think that the greed is obviously the biggest driver, but had UEFA invested differently, had they done different things to help support those clubs in different ways, then potentially we wouldn't be in this position as well.

I think now the damage is irreversible whatever happens from here on in: whether there is a Super League or not I think these clubs have damaged the European football landscape massively and they'll be very long-lasting impacts of that. Like I said, it's being driven by greed and money more than it is by football, which is a real shame, but football clubs are businesses now and in one way it's great because they are adapted to fans, they want to increase fan experience because they benefit from it financially, but in the other sense it's eroding the traditional values of football, which is what many of the fans are there for in the first place. I don't know what's going to happen, but I'm eagerly looking

forward to seeing what UEFA come out with today after the conference that they have, the congress they have, and the rest of the week I guess.

Appendix 2: Interview script – Football club

<u>Potrebbe presentarsi e dirmi che cosa fa nello specifico per questa squadra di calcio?</u>

Io sono qua da ormai più di 10 anni, sono nell'area di marketing, in particolare nell'integrated marketing e siamo l'agenzia di marketing interna. Io seguo con il mio team tutta la parte più legata alle comunicazioni commerciali tendenzialmente legate a tutti i processi che sono nell'area commerciale, che è divisa in quattro aree: marketing, sponsorship, stadio, e merchandising. Noi seguiamo la parte di comunicazione: brand, dati, social, web, e tutto questo genere di comunicazioni che ormai sono sempre più necessarie.

<u>Che cosa sta facendo la squadra per coinvolgere di più i tifosi di calcio?</u>

Con il nuovo rebranding, che è avvenuto ormai 4 anni fa, l'obiettivo è di andare a coinvolgere anche nuovi target, che vanno oltre il tifoso tradizionale. Vogliamo comunicare come un brand vero e proprio e non solo di calcio: il core business rimane il calcio ma ci spostiamo verso una società anche di intrattenimento. Andiamo dunque a captare gli entertainment enthusiast, che sono quelli che sono interessati più che altro ad esperienze, a qualcosa di leggermente diverso dalla semplice partita. Per fare questo, si cerca di intercettarli attraverso altri contesti che possono essere per esempio l'e-sports, o la creazione di abbigliamento legato a degli stili particolari come streetware. Per questo, abbiamo già lanciato diverse linee di una collezione, che vogliono mirare ad un target più vicino alla valorizzazione del lato fashion del prodotto: è un qualcosa che va oltre al tifoso, che non vuole coinvolgere il tifoso in prima persona ma chi è più vicino al mondo della moda, che dunque guarda gli stili del momento e vuole avere dei prodotti in linea con le ultime tendenze. Per fare ciò, abbiamo collaborato con stilisti, o persone famose, in modo da dare questo tocco di originalità e da ottenere un posizionamento che aiuti ad essere percepiti on solo come brand di calcio, ma come un brand che segue le varie tendenze e stili e che vuole allargarsi verso nuovi orizzonti. In più, facciamo anche eventi, per esempio ne abbiamo fatto uno a New York con squadre di basket. In questo modo, vogliamo mischiarci con altri sport in modo da coinvolgere anche tifosi di altri sport.

<u>Queste attività sono fatte per captare nuovi tifosi o per aumentare il livello di tifoseria degli attuali fan?</u>

Prevalentemente per mirare ad un nuovo target e dunque intercettare nuovi tifosi. La differenza tra un club ed un'azienda normale è che il consumatore di un club, e dunque un fan, rimarrà fedele per sempre, per tutta la vita. Il nostro tifoso lo conosciamo bene, ma noi abbiamo andare ad intercettare i nuovi tifosi che sono gli sport fan e quindi i tifosi

che magari non seguono tanto il calcio, ma che seguono il nostro club perché magari c'è uno specifico calciatore, oppure perché ci conoscono perché in passato ci sono stati grandi giocatori, oppure quelli che guardano solo le grandi partite, oppure anche persone che nemmeno seguono per davvero il calcio. Per esempio, all'evento di New York, questi fan possono interessarsi, possono seguirlo, e possono parteciparvi e dunque in qualche modo sono coinvolti.

Qual è la tua opinione in merito ai contenuti digitali personalizzati?

La personalizzazione è sicuramente una cosa fondamentale, che sta diventando e diventerà un valore aggiunto rispetto ad un contenuto classico. Parliamo di personalizzazione anche banalmente sul sito: una persona entra, fa il log-in con le sue credenziali ed ha il suo profilo in cui ci sono tutte le sue informazioni e i suoi acquisti effettuati in precedenza. Rendere l'esperienza personalizzata diventerà sempre più fondamentale e quindi a un certo punto il tifoso sul sito avrà una home page personalizzata con tutti i contenuti che gli interessano di più, un po' come fa YouTube, Instagram, Netflix, e cosi via. Nel nostro caso, quello che noi cerchiamo sempre di fare a livello digitale è di creare contenuti di valore e di creare engagement. Per esempio, noi facciamo attività di user generating content, in cui coinvolgiamo i tifosi nella creazione di contenuti in modo da renderli protagonisti. Per esempio, abbiamo proposto ai fan di disegnare il logo del nostro club che poi sarebbe potuto finire sulla maglietta tramite un contest in cui c'è stata una votazione per decretare il vincitore. Si parla dunque di attività in cui sicuramente i fan possono essere coinvolti in maniera proattiva cosicché loro possano dare il loro contributo.

Per quanto riguarda le comunicazioni che mandiamo tramite mail, noi utilizziamo questo strumento in maniera massiva perché è uno strumento che ci permette di targetizzare bene il fan. Anche in questo caso si parla di personalizzazione, in cui utilizziamo i dati dei tifosi per mandare ad ogni fan un messaggio indirizzato specificatamente a quella persona e non a tutti. Questo è già importante ad oggi e lo sarà sempre di più.

Come fa il vostro club a raccogliere dati? Chiedete direttamente ai fan oppure prendete dati automatici?

Ci sono più strumenti: partiamo banalmente dal chiedere alla gente di iscriversi alla newsletter in fondo al sito. Un altro strumento che utilizziamo è la piattaforma "My Game Room", gestita internamente, sulla quale prevalentemente noi andiamo a creare contest o user generating content. Per esempio, quando abbiamo chiesto alla gente di disegnare il logo, loro andavano sulla piattaforma, si registravano e potevano mandare il loro logo disegnato. Questo serve sicuramente per creare engagement ma anche per avere i dati dei tifosi che partecipano.

In questo caso di quali dati si parla?

Sul sito chiediamo solo la mail, mentre su quella piattaforma chiediamo nome, cognome, data di nascita, luogo di residenza, sesso, numero di telefono. Sui social invece creiamo attività in cui le persone devono lasciare solo la mail. Allo stadio, quando creavamo attività per i tifosi che arrivavano per la partita, loro dovevano riempire un formulario con i loro dati. Dopo di che ci sono i progetti di affiliazioni come diventare member o socio del club, oppure tutto quello che riguarda la biglietteria e quindi ticketing e abbonamenti. A livello generale considera che ogni qual volta interagiamo col tifoso, cerchiamo di fare in modo che si registri per dare i dati.

Quindi utilizzate quasi sempre fonti primarie di questo genere, o ci sono anche dati automatici?

Tendenzialmente sì, utilizziamo fonti primarie. Dopo di che c'è il tema dei cookies, che è un tema diverso. Se vai sul nostro e-commerce perché cerchi una maglietta, accetti i cookies, guardi un po' le magliette sul sito, abbandoni il sito e dopo vai sui social sul tuo telefono e a un certo punto vedi il banner del nostro e-commerce, è perché ti identifica attraverso i cookies. Il tema cookies viene in gioco ogni volta che dobbiamo fare il retargeting, che ci torna utile a seguire l'utente anche sugli altri suoi canali. È una strategia molto utilizzata da molti brand, è fondamentale nella strategia digitale proprio nel flusso, nel funnel dell'utente per poi portarlo alla conversione. Ti insegue fino allo sfinimento ma è per portarti alla conversione, che tendenzialmente è l'acquisto, ma potrebbe essere anche solo semplicemente lasciarci i tuoi dati, o comunque farti iscrivere a qualcosa.

Ho letto che ci saranno sempre più leggi sulla privacy, cosa pensa a riguardo?

Quello sì, il tema dei cookies, da quello che ho letto, verranno tolti e dunque le aziende saranno limitate non riuscendo più a registrare i pixel, che riconoscono il profilo. Dunque, non le aziende non riusciranno più a tracciare l'utente proprio per cercare di rendere la privacy ancora più controllata. Tutte le aziende si adatteranno più o meno allo stesso modo, e dunque dovranno ricorrere ad altre strategie e avranno bisogno di creatività per trovare nuove strade. Secondo me la strada sarà trovare sempre più occasioni attraverso le quali l'utente poi debba registrarsi. Qualsiasi campagna, attività, contest, avrà l'obiettivo di far registrare l'utente proprio perché da azienda vorremmo sapere qualsiasi attività l'utente faccia. Per esempio, se noi sappiamo che un utente ha comprato la maglia gara, quando facciamo quella nuova probabilmente gli proporremo quella nuova. L'obiettivo è proprio di sapere che cosa fa l'utente sui nostri canali, che è una cosa che facciamo già: se noi sappiamo che un utente ha acquistato determinati prodotti, gli facciamo un upselling e quindi gli proponiamo altri prodotti che possono interessargli perché complementari o di una categoria uguale o anche superiore. L'ideale proprio per

un'azienda in generale sarebbe di sapere tutto quello che fa il consumatore perché una volta che lo conosci sai cosa proporgli e quando proporglielo.

Ho letto che il futuro sarà chiedere direttamente i dati al consumatore. Immagino sia così anche per le squadre di calcio, a cui i fan darebbero i dati volentieri sapendo quello che riceverebbero indietro.

Noi usiamo molto i concorsi, come ad esempio diciamo "partecipa a questo concorso dove puoi vincere una maglia autografata". Oppure abbiamo fatto un contest per i fan club, per cui più soci facevano affiliare, più avevano un punteggio alto, e chi vinceva, vinceva per esempio una partita ai campi di allenamento. Ci sono stati dei fan club che si sono veramente impegnati e hanno fanno numeri pazzeschi, e ovviamente tutti quei nuovi iscritti ci hanno dato i loro dati, che per noi sono fondamentali. Il tema è proprio cercare di fare in modo che l'utente possa essere sempre più riconoscibile e conosciuto. In vari periodi dell'anno noi lanciamo varie cose come per esempio la quarta maglia, che magari ha un particolare stile, con un determinato prezzo, che dunque non è per tutti. Dunque, andiamo ad intercettare quelli che hanno già speso un determinato importo sull'e-commerce, o persone che hanno dimostrato di essere interessate a determinati prodotti. In questo modo ci viene più facile mandare le newsletter a quelle persone che potenzialmente sono interessate a quel prodotto.

Cosa fa il club per coinvolgere i fan sui social media?

Il nostro, come gli altri grandi club, segue le tendenze, perché poi l'obiettivo è ingaggiare i fan, fare in modo che i fan siano coinvolti nelle varie piattaforme. L'esempio più recente è TikTok, perché le squadre di calcio ci sono entrate recentemente, altre squadre sono ancora abbastanza all'inizio, mentre noi siamo stati tra i primi. L'obiettivo è di cercare di restare al passo coi tempi. Se per esempio su TikTok c'è una determinata tendenza, si cerca di cavalcarla e fare in modo che venga realizzata nel nostro mondo, si coinvolgono i giocatori se possibile, o i tifosi in modo che possano partecipare a determinate attività come registrare determinati video. L'obiettivo è sempre l'engagement proprio perché ogni piattaforma ha i suoi metodi di comunicazione, i suoi messaggi, il suo approccia a seconda del target che ha quella determinata piattaforma. TikTok ha un target di generazione Z, con una limitazione ai video e dunque un determinato di contenuti. Su Instagram, un po' più legato alle foto, tendenzialmente sono contenuti di campo, dei giocatori, quindi tutto quello che riguarda quello che fa la squadra, segue un po' gli allenamenti, le partite. Twitter è più legato alle notizie anche magari un po' più istituzionali, oltre che anche alla squadra, al live della partita, quindi vieni coinvolto in maniera costante se c'è una partita. Usiamo ogni piattaforma ovviamente per far sì che chi è registrato in quella piattaforma abbia interesse nel contenuto che pubblichiamo. Poi ovviamente la prevalenza è il campo, tranne che per il nostro secondo profilo Instagram

ufficiale che abbiamo, in cui si trova raramente materiale di campo, ma tutto questo nuovo mondo che si è creato, per esempio riguardante la moda, oppure per esempio abbiamo lanciato un video con dei ragazzi skateboarders che indossavano la nostra maglietta, Si parla di tutto quello che non è campo ma che va a raccontare storie a quel tipo di tifoso che non è così interessato al calcio.

<u>Si va anche a fare in modo che il fan interagisca?</u>

Sì, quello è un obiettivo primario di tutto quello che si fa. È un linguaggio di comunicazione sui social che è costante per tutti. Qualsiasi brand, quando crea contenuti, ha l'obiettivo primario di far sì che il tifoso scriva, risponda, che ci sia un dibattito, che ci sia un discorso, che ci sia una condivisione, come l'inoltra su Twitter, il like, eccetera, perché tutto questo aiuta anche proprio a livello di coinvolgimento organico della pagina del profilo del club, ad essere più rilevante. Sicuramente, tenere i tifosi ingaggiati aiuta anche poi a fare in modo che nel momento in cui il club vuole comunicare a volte ovviamente anche qualcosa di commerciale, il tifoso sia anche più ricettivo e possa essere coinvolto anche da quel punto di vista. Tendenzialmente i contenuti commerciali sono un po' più rari perché passano come pubblicità e dunque il tifoso è poco interessato.

Molte volte utilizziamo la piattaforma con l'obiettivo di coinvolgere. Per esempio, molti post, finiscono con un punto di domanda, ti fanno una domanda perché vogliono una risposta nei commenti. Oppure, le varie opzioni, come "opzione A metti mi piace", "opzione B commenta", "opzione C condividi", tutto questo è per far in modo che il tifoso abbia una reazione. Poi ci sono le storie, che sono tutte fatte in modo che l'utente interagisca.

<u>Il vostro club fa tutto da solo riguardo al marketing oppure ricevete consigli da qualcuno, o da società come la UEFA?</u>

Tendenzialmente decidiamo tutto internamente, però abbiamo sicuramente il supporto di determinate agenzie a seconda del contesto. Per esempio, per il logo nuovo, ci siamo affidati ad un'agenzia che ci ha aiutato a sviluppare questo progetto, che non è solo il logo ma e tutto un discorso di posizionamento e di rebranding. Diciamo che tutto viene deciso internamente, però poi ovviamente possiamo avvalerci di aiuti esterni di persone o agenzie specializzate in determinati contesti. Le decisioni finali spettano poi a noi, quando un'agenzia ci propone una soluzione poi siamo noi a dare l'ok finale.

<u>Avete già investito o state pianificando di investire in qualche tecnologia emergente che migliora l'esperienza del tifoso sia fuori che dentro al campo?</u>

Per quanto riguarda il la realtà aumentata, abbiamo già fatto alcune cose ma la percezione è che non abbiano avuto tutto questo successo. Ho la percezione che sia passata come tendenza. Secondo me è un qualcosa che è già passato, non mi sembra

qualcosa che avrà successo. Per quanto riguarda il virtual reality, abbiamo fatto tempo fa per esempio il tour del museo, o la presenza allo stadio in cui la persona ha l'impressione di essere in campo e di vedere giocatori che scendono in campo, l'allenatore che saluta, eccetera. L'obiettivo di questo strumento era di far sentire il tifoso vicino. Però anche qui, l'abbiamo fatto quattro anni fa e non l'abbiamo più ripreso, è un qualcosa passato di moda.

Non avete mai considerato di far partite in diretta con gli occhiali VR?

No, non l'abbiamo mai considerato. Bisogna capire anche se è implementabile a livello tecnologico, perché per avere quel risultato che vedi quando indossi quegli occhiali, ossia di vedere tutto a 360 gradi, devi registrare tutto con una telecamera molto particolare che riprende a 360 gradi, c'è tutto un particolare flusso di preparazione che rende le cose non così facili. Secondo me sarebbe molto complesso permettere alla gente di vedere la partita live tramite quello strumento, ci vorrebbero tante telecamere e tante cose che non credo sarebbero realizzabili attualmente.

Riguardo al 3D, invece, cosa pensa?

Abbiamo fatto veramente poche cose con il 3D. Secondo me per aver successo, una tecnologia dev'essere un qualcosa di fruibile facilmente. Già solo il fatto di dover avere gli occhiali lo rende più macchinoso. Potrebbe essere una bella esperienza, particolare, ma è un qualcosa che resta lì, che è limitato, che rischia di annoiare nel tempo. Questo è il limite di questo tipo di tecnologie, sono un po' limitate da questo punto di vista. Differentemente, tutto quello che è legato al cellulare è molto più facile da sviluppare.

Cosa pensa invece del fatto di dare al tifoso l'opzione di scegliere una determinata prospettiva, per esempio dal punto di vista di un giocatore specifico?

Questo è un tema molto legato al broadcast, è un qualcosa che poi sceglie e decide il broadcast. Per esempio Sky o DAZN possono decidere di fare qualcosa di questo tipo e dunque sono loro che valutano se ne vale la pena o no. Per loro avere una telecamera in più su un giocatore significa un costo in più e vuol dire cercare di capire se è un qualcosa che interessa all'utente oppure se all'utente non gli interessa vedere da quella prospettiva. Noi avevamo lanciato sull'applicazione TV del nostro club una telecamera solo su un giocatore molto famoso che era appena arrivato nel nostro club. Era per rendere l'applicazione più esclusiva, è un qualcosa che sul momento era interessante con l'euforia del momento dovuta all'acquisto del giocatore, ma alla lunga è un qualcosa che perde interesse. Si parla di una telecamera non indossata da lui, ma che filmava lui.

Per quanto riguarda le telecamere indossate, sta tutto al broadcasting?

Se parliamo di partita, sta al broadcaster, ma allo stesso tempo, se chiedi ad un giocatore di indossare una telecamera, poi c'è anche il club coinvolto. In questo momento la vedo una cosa impossibile. Se tu chiedi ad un giocatore di indossare una telecamera, per

quanto leggera e piccola possa essere, il giocatore risponde che vuole giocare e non vuole essere disturbato. È davvero difficile che un giocatore accetti questo, perché la partita è il momento più importante di tutti e quindi non vedo questo tipo di soluzione. Conosco come ragionano i giocatori ed è difficile che durante una partita si arrivi a questo. Poi magari in futuro per esempio la Adidas farà una maglia con uno spillino, che è la telecamera, e allora il giocatore dice "vabbè, tanto non mi pesa, non mi da fastidio, ok", magari succederà, non è da escludere, però in questo momento mi sembra molto molto difficile coinvolgere il giocatore in maniera attiva. Dovrebbe essere un qualcosa che un giocatore nemmeno percepisce, qualcosa di leggerissimo che non gli dia fastidio. I giocatori vogliono la perfezione anche nella divisa: le maglie che indossano non sono quelle che tu compri tendenzialmente, sono le authentic, che sono più leggere, che hanno dei dettagli che la rendono più leggera, di un materiale diverso. Dunque, andare ad intervenire nel loro mondo, nella loro sfera, nella loro armatura è molto complesso. Quando si tratta di campagne, i giocatori tendenzialmente si prestano, però quando si parla proprio di partita la vedo molto difficile.

Riguardo a cose all'interno dello stadio cosa pensa? L'arrivo del 5g aiuterà a far diventare le cose più real time?

Sarà sicuramente interessante. Al momento siamo un po' in stand by su queste attività siccome lo stadio è chiuso, però l'arrivo di queste cose è imminente. Sicuramente qualcosa ne verrà fuori, ne sono certo. Saranno fondamentali i cellulari, i tifosi saranno coinvolti ognuno col proprio cellulare, quindi tutti i cellulari connessi al 5g, e ogni tifoso si scaricherà un'applicazione o si connetterà ad una pagina web comandata da noi, e si creano degli effetti coordinati, delle coreografie, delle scritte. In questo caso ci sarebbe il coinvolgimento del tifoso per creare qualcosa di unico, secondo me questo è molto probabile. Anche perché ci sono già un po' di aziende/agenzie che fanno questo genere di cose ed è qualcosa che in questo momento ha qualche limite ma poi con il 5g può avere meno limiti e può essere più fattibile. Ovviamente non sarà facile fare in modo che tutti i tifosi debbano scaricarsi l'app o fare qualche determinata azione, ma ci si può arrivare, ne sono molto fiducioso. Al momento, col 4g allo stadio il cellulare non prende, il wifi non riesce a coprire tutte le migliaia di persone presenti allo stadio, ed il 5g aiuterà a sorpassare questo problema. Una volta che tutti possono essere connessi, creare qualcosa insieme può essere molto fattibile.

È realistico invece pensare a cose che vogliono migliorare l'esperienza del tifoso allo stadio? Ad esempio il fatto che dall'applicazione si posso ordinare una bevanda e farla arrivare al posto, o ricevere informazioni sulla fila più breve?

Questa cosa che mi dici l'ho letta da qualche parte. Noi ci arriveremo a breve, noi lanceremo l'app dello stadio, che sarà dedicata proprio all'esperienza stadio. Non so dirti

ancora quando, come e perché, però sicuramente quello che hai detto sarà quasi scontato. Per esempio l'ordinazione del cibo dal seggiolino sarà la prima cosa, il percorso per raggiungere il posto anche, e tutto quello che potrebbe essere legato a questo sicuramente sarà fatto.

Quindi è già stata discussa un app per lo stadio?

Sì, ci stanno lavorando. In teoria dovrebbero avercela per quando riapriamo. Secondo me queste saranno le funzionalità base. Se l'app è stata fatta è perché tra le tante cose ci saranno anche queste cose qua, e poi sarà un po' legata immagino al tema biglietto piuttosto che abbonamento, cambio nome, e tutte queste cose qua magari anche più operative. Sicuramente sarà molto molto utile.

L'app potrebbe contenere indicazioni sulle file più corte?

Quello secondo me è difficile, un po' più complesso. Vorrebbe dire fare qualcosa di siile a Google Maps, che identifica il percorso più breve perché sa quanti cellulari ci sono su quella strada, o identifica le file perché vede un alta concentrazione di cellulari. Dovrebbe essere dunque qualcosa di questo tipo, che è un po' più difficile, ma sono certo che si arriverà anche a quello. Il tema della fila sarà poi man mano sdoganato in qualche modo anche perchè interessa a tutti, nessuno vuole fare le file.

Per quanto riguarda l'entrata allo stadio, cosa pensa di cose come il riconoscimento facciale, piuttosto che un biglietto?

In generale, la maggior parte degli ingressi per eventi è diventato digitale, nel senso che arrivi con il QR code ed entri, come all'aeroporto. Da noi, ancora non siamo a quei livelli lì, perché fino a quando avevamo lo stadio ancora aperto, tendenzialmente dovevi ancora arrivare col cartaceo che stampavi a casa. Ovviamente arriveremo anche lì presto, in cui mostrerai un codice a barre o un QR code e entrerai. L'obiettivo e arrivare al digitale e sicuramente l'app avrà questa funzione, in cui tu compri il biglietto e poi puoi mostrare il QR code allo stadio e entrare.

Per quanto riguarda il riconoscimento facciale, invece, credo che sia un qualcosa di ancora lontano, perché implicherebbe il fatto che ci sono tecnologie installate sul tornello, che non abbiamo ancora. Sarebbe un investimento non da poco siccome sono tecnologie molto costose, e in più, come in aeroporto, rischiano di essere lente da un certo punto di vista siccome ogni persona dovrebbe fermarsi dentro per qualche secondo. Questo creerebbe una coda immensa a tornelli. Il QR code/codice a barre, invece, sarà la cosa più implementabile anche perché velocizzeranno l'ingresso e creerà meno code.

State facendo qualche collaborazione con aziende che lavorano nell'ambito delle tecnologie emergenti?

In realtà no, perché più che altro i trend sono quelli che ti ho detto. A livello tecnologico, per esempio, abbiamo collaborato con Bose per avere delle casse performanti, molto più potenti, per migliorare l'esperienza stadio. Oppure con Philips abbiamo implementato tutto un effetto di luci e laser sul campo per le partite serali. Negli Stati Uniti, fanno cose pazzesche a livello di intrattenimento, che sicuramente arriveranno anche in Europa.

<u>Qual è la tecnologia che più probabilmente potrà essere implementata a breve, allo stadio?</u>

La cosa che penso sia più probabile che arrivi allo stadio, è la proiezione in campo di animazioni in 3D, si parla dunque di ologrammi. Questa è una cosa applicabile e implementabile perché non dovrebbe avere nemmeno costi elevati, e in più potremmo anche creare contenuti per i partner e dunque essere utili anche per gli sponsor. Per funzionare, dev'essere un investimento non troppo esagerato, oppure se esagerato, deve avere un ROI abbastanza calcolabile, che non sia troppo lungo, che non arrivi troppo tardi.

<u>E invece fuori dallo stadio quale sarebbe l'opzione più probabile?</u>

In questo caso bisogna capire un po' col cellulare cosa si potrebbe fare, nel senso che quello che esta venendo fuori, sono pere esempio dirette Instagram tra magari personaggi famosi. Secondo me potrebbe esserci qualche coinvolgimento tra tifosi e VIP, piuttosto che ex giocatori, qualcosa che vada a coinvolgere diversi tifosi in giro per il mondo. Per esempio, far interagire un tifoso con un altro tifoso che sta guardando la partita dall'altra parte del mondo. L'indirizzo è quello di, attraverso il cellulare, fare in modo che ci si possa sentire vicino ad altri tifosi e dunque creare questa unione di tifo e dunque creare community di tifo. Oppure creare interazione con il club, che potrebbe essere rappresentato da qualche personaggio come un ex giocatore.

<u>Quindi fuori dallo stadio non crede realistiche tecnologie emergenti come VR o questo genere di cose?</u>

In questo momento, da casa, la vedo più a livello social.

<u>Per quanto riguarda la domanda di calcio tra i giovani, state osservando un trend in diminuzione? State facendo qualcosa a proposito?</u>

Sì, determinati dati dimostrano questo, sicuramente è così. Le nuove generazioni non riescono a seguire 90 minuti di partita, per loro è troppo, sono generazioni abituate ad avere tutto veloce, immediato, e stare lì 90 minuti è un qualcosa che non crea appeal per questo tipo di contenuto. Quello che stiamo facendo è di cercare di avvicinarci a questo target attraverso magari prodotti o attività mirate, anche se a livello pratico non stiamo facendo niente in questo momento. Però secondo me bisognerà fare qualcosa sicuramente. La Liga, per esempio, sta facendo più cose, sono molto più improntati in questa rivoluzione che sta arrivando, sono innovativi, guardano tanto alle tendenze, e

molte attività che stanno facendo sono proprio per avvicinarsi a questo target in tutti i modi possibili. Per esempio hanno lanciato il progetto La Liga Casters, che è un progetto che prevede tre streamers spagnoli molto famosi in Spagna, che commentano le partite della Liga su Twitch. Hanno dunque questa collaborazione con Twitch e questi streamers, e c'è un'attività parallela: uno sponsor della Liga è Bud e hanno creato un'attività in cui dei freestylers molto famosi fanno una battaglia di Freestyle in cui raccontano le migliori giocate della partita attraverso il freestyle.

Si può dunque notare come si stia cercando di fare arrivare il calcio in settori o attività che fino ad ora erano impensabili, ma che hanno avuto risultati interessanti. Sicuramente la strada sarà quella, per esempio la collaborazione con Twitch che stanno facendo è una mossa azzeccatissima perché vanno ad intercettare questo tipo di target. Bisogna sicuramente avvicinarsi a loro in modo da creare qualcosa per loro che abbia valore. Quando io da giovane guardavo le partite non c'era nulla di tutto quello che hanno loro, mentre adesso bisogna vederla dai loro occhi e capire quello che per loro adesso è di tendenza. È per questo che tutto quello legato agli streamers e contenuti legati a questo mondo sono fondamentali. Secondo me dovremmo arrivarci anche noi come club, ma anche come sistema del paese: sarà necessario per forza rivedere un po' le cose.

Si possono avere dei fan che non guardano la partita ma che sono fan per altri contenuti?

Probabilmente la generazione Z di adesso, o i giovanissimi, magari non guarderanno nemmeno la partita, però loro magari guardano lo streamer che la racconta. A loro interesserebbe più lo streamer che la racconta piuttosto che la partita stessa, che è una cosa surreale, però probabilmente questo è il futuro. Quindi guardare qualcun altro che la racconta, o il rapper/freestyler che fa la sfida con l'altro raccontandogli la partita. È quello il passo successivo perché probabilmente le nuove generazioni non saranno così interessate al calcio come potevamo esserlo noi. Probabilmente non saranno tutti così, magari ci saranno sempre i tifosi, però molti saranno molto più legati ad un mondo di questo tipo, come Twitch, Youtube, TikTok. Sicuramente in Europa la Liga è la più avanti su questo tema.
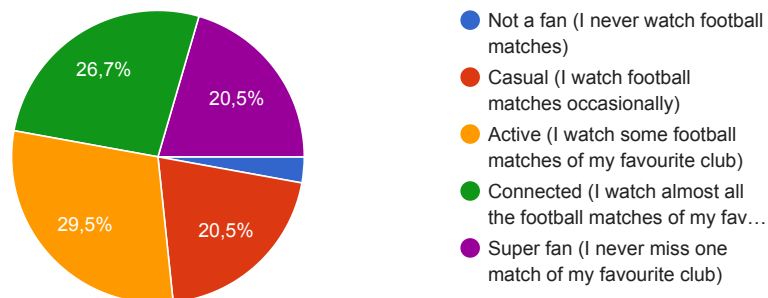
Appendix 3: Survey questions and results

Bachelor Thesis - The impact of digital transformation on the football fan experience
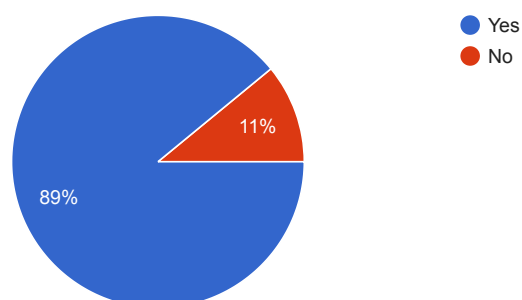
210 risposte

Pubblica i dati di analisi

## How would you consider yourself as a football fan?

210 risposte

- Not a fan (I never watch football matches)
- Casual (I watch football matches occasionally)
- Active (I watch some football matches of my favourite club)
- Connected (I watch almost all the football matches of my fav…
- Super fan (I never miss one match of my favourite club)

26,7%
20,5%
29,5%
20,5%

Do you support a particular club?

210 risposte

- Yes
- No

89%
11%

Do you follow a football club on at least one social media?

210 risposte

- Yes
- No

25,7%

74,3%
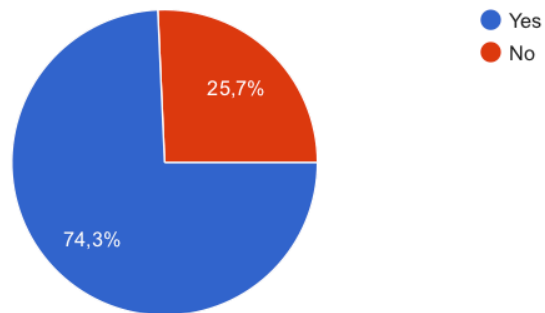
Do you pay a television subscription which allows you to see football?

210 risposte

- Yes
- No

51%

49%
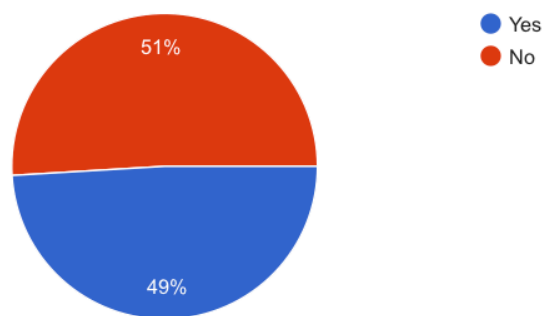
Have you ever been at the stadium to see a match of a football club?

210 risposte

- Yes
- No

11,4%

88,6%
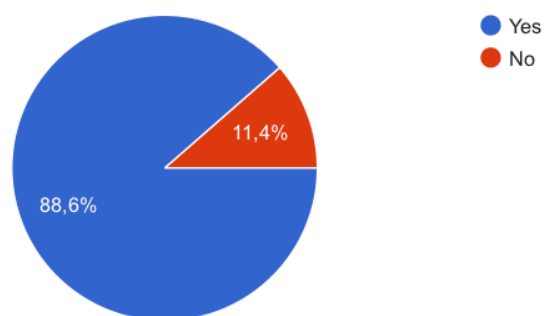
Have you ever had a seasonal ticket for a football club?

210 risposte

- Yes
- No

68,6%

31,4%
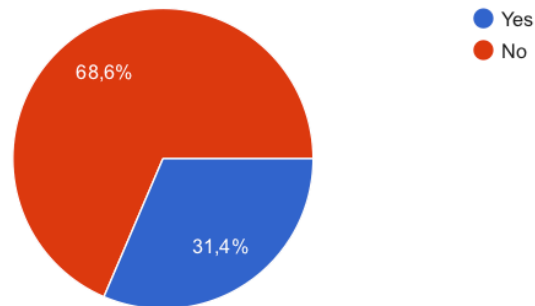
Have you ever bought an official shirt of a football club?

210 risposte

- Yes
- No

18,1%

81,9%
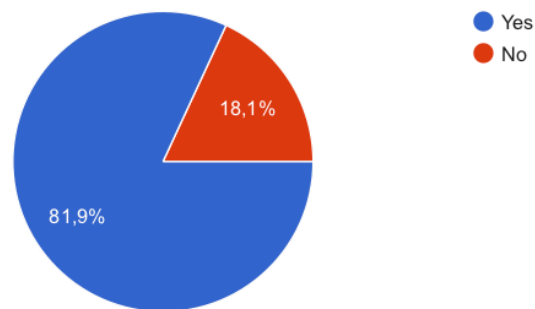
Have you ever bought other merchandise from the official store of a football club? (e.g. a bag, a piece of clothing, a mug, etc.)

210 risposte

- Yes
- No

27,6%

72,4%
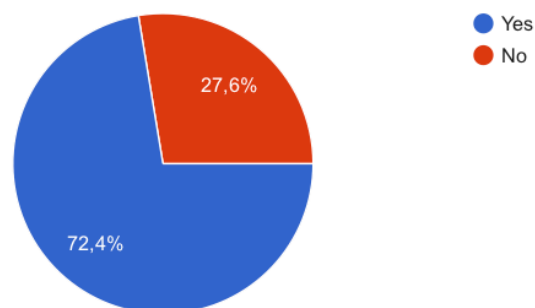
Do you have an account on the website of a football club?

210 risposte

- Yes
- No

66,2%

33,8%
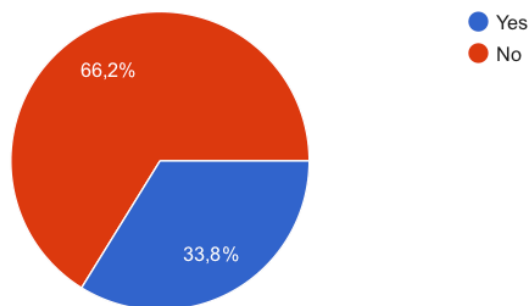
AT HOME: Would you enjoy watching a football match through virtual reality?

210 risposte

- Not at all
- Not so much
- Yes, somewhat
- Yes, a lot

43,3%

17,6%

11,9%

27,1%
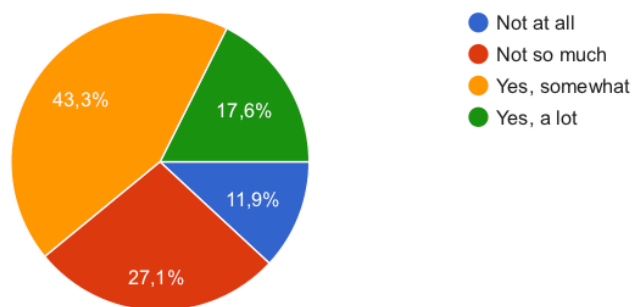
AT HOME: Would you enjoy watching a football match in 3D?

210 risposte

- Not at all
- Not so much
- Yes, somewhat
- Yes, a lot

36,7%

21%

13,3%

29%
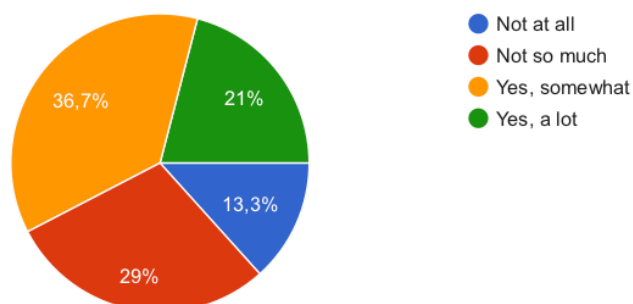
AT HOME: Would you like to have the chance to select a specific player perspective while watching a match?
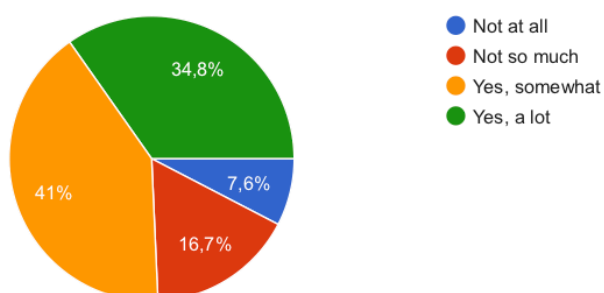
210 risposte

- Not at all
- Not so much
- Yes, somewhat
- Yes, a lot

28,6%
36,7%
14,3%
20,5%
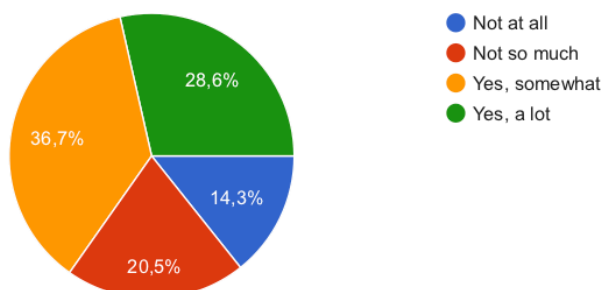
How would you prefer to see a match from home?

210 risposte

- I like it how it is today (with a normal television)
- Through Virtual Reality
- In 3D

28,1%
14,8%
57,1%
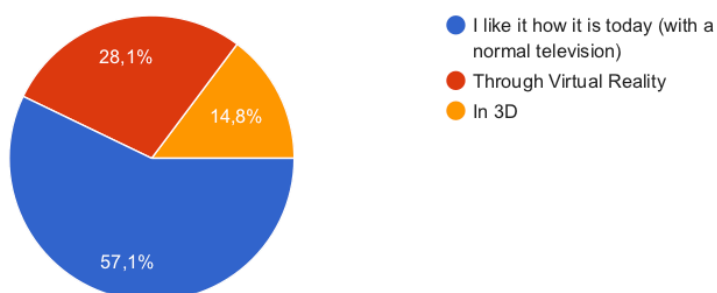
AT THE STADIUM: Would you like to order food and beverages online and receive them at your seat?

210 risposte

- Not at all
- Not so much
- Yes, somewhat
- Yes, a lot

34,8%
7,6%
41%
16,7%

AT THE STADIUM: Would you like to have real-time information on the shortest queue of services offered by the stadium (e.g. washrooms, food counters, shops, ...)?

210 risposte

- Not at all
- Not so much
- Yes, somewhat
- Yes, a lot

33,3%
48,6%
13,8%
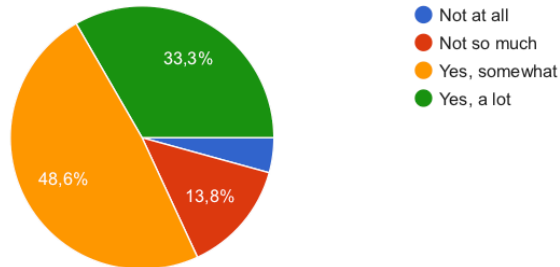
AT THE STADIUM: Would you like to participate in a light show which uses your phone screen and the ones of all the other people at the stadium? (e.g. each person at the stadium connects to a link/an app and then on the phone of each person there are going to be images, which synchronised with the images on all the other people's phone will create graphical choreographies)

210 risposte

- Not at all
- Not so much
- Yes, somewhat
- Yes, a lot

24,8%
36,2%
13,8%
25,2%
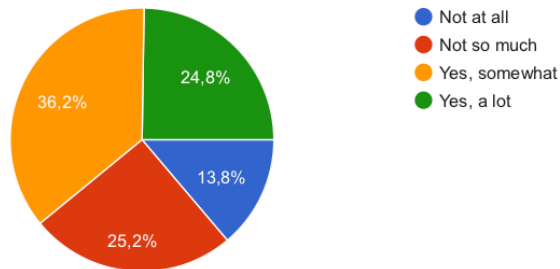
AT THE STADIUM: Would you like to see a holograms' show before the match? (projection of enormous 3D figures made of lights)

210 risposte

- Not at all
- Not so much
- Yes, somewhat
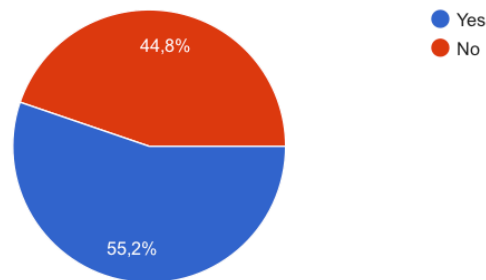- Yes, a lot

25,2%
44,8%
11%
19%
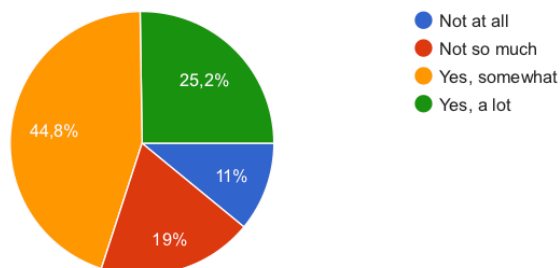
Rank the following in-stadium experiences, from the one that you would like the most (1), to the one that you would like the least (4).
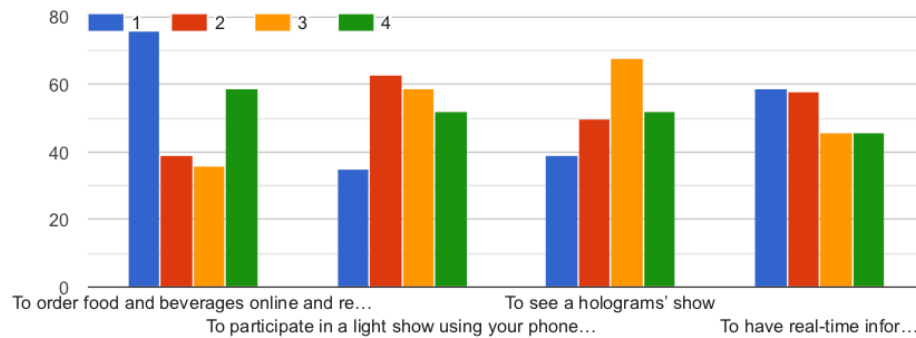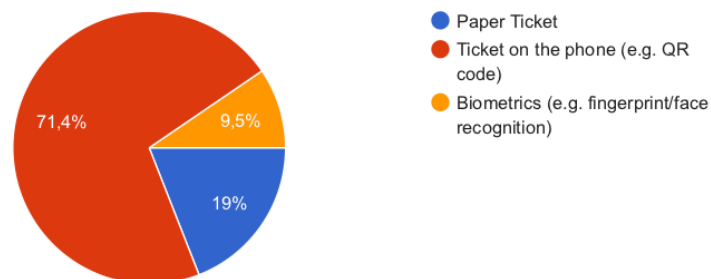

Would you be willing to give your data directly to your favourite football club in order to receive more personalised digital contents? (e.g. they send you a questionnaire in which they ask you some information about yourself in order to provide you with content which would suit you best)

210 risposte

- Yes
- No

44,8%

55,2%

In which way would you prefer to have access to the stadium?

210 risposte

- Paper Ticket
- Ticket on the phone (e.g. QR code)
- Biometrics (e.g. fingerprint/face recognition)

71,4%

9,5%

19%

Is there anything else that you think might improve your football experience?

205 risposte

No

no

Nope

nothing

NO

.

N/A

NA

No.

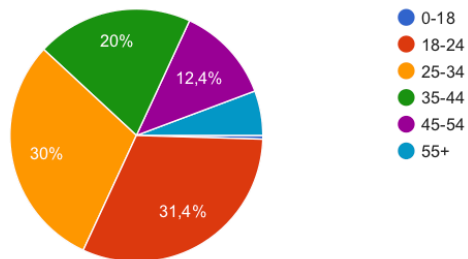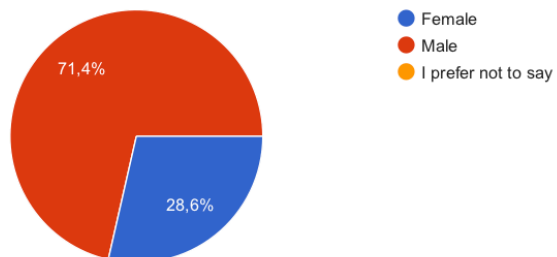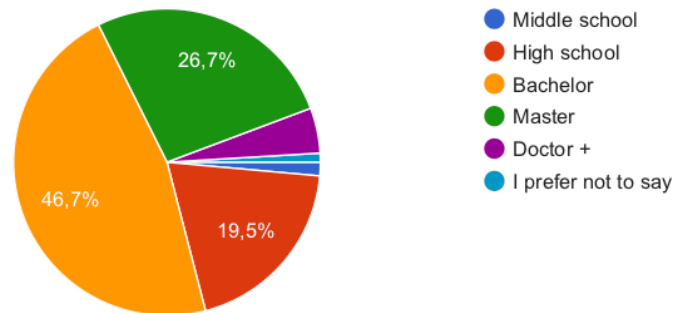## Which age group describes you?

210 risposte

- 0-18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

20%

12,4%

30%

31,4%

What is your gender?

210 risposte

- Female
- Male
- I prefer not to say

71,4%

28,6%

What is your education level?

210 risposte

- Middle school
- High school
- Bachelor
- Master
- Doctor +
- I prefer not to say

26,7%
46,7%
19,5%

In which country do you live?

210 risposte

- Italy
- Spain
- France
- Germany
- UK
- Switzerland
- Ukraine
- Bulgaria

△ 1/2 ▼

14,8%
19,5%
9%
41%