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Football as a Growing Business, an in-depth Investigation into Sponsorship and Marketing

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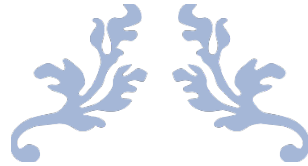
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Football as a Growing Business, an In-depth Investigation into Sponsorship and Marketing

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Award: Master's in Marketing (MSCMRKD1)

College: National College of Ireland

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Declaration Form

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland
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(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: _____ Elliot Hogg _____

Student Number: _____ x17464304 _____

Degree for which thesis is submitted: _____ Master's in Marketing (MSCMRKD1)

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Abbreviations

The League of Ireland- abbreviated to LOI

The Football Association of Ireland- abbreviated to FAI

The Football Association - abbreviated to FA

Abstract

Business in football has now become an important aspect of the game with many well-known clubs being taken over by investors and transformed into complex organisations. Football has become one of the most attractive sports in the world for investors looking to make ever increasing profits. This in turn has increased the level of sponsorship in the game. Sponsorship in football has proved to be extremely beneficial for clubs of all sizes providing much needed investment. It has led to increased revenue for the improvement of facilities, provided clubs with the ability to sign new players and increased publicity for being associated with a big-name brand. Companies can also benefit from sponsoring a team as they can increase their brand awareness on a large scale and form a positive brand identity. The effectiveness of sponsorship was carried out through secondary research and a survey was conducted amongst fans of Bohemians FC to understand the impact it has on them. As well as this an interview was conducted with Dublin Bus who sponsor an Irish team to see how they benefit from this partnership.

Exploiting marketing opportunities in football is also extremely important for clubs of all sizes. The right marketing opportunities can help a smaller team raise awareness and attract new fans which in turn will increase gate receipts and will lead to the purchase of more club merchandise. The right marketing opportunities can be beneficial for world-renowned clubs who are looking to grow their fan base in new regions. This was investigated using secondary research and an interview was held with the marketing department of the FAI to understand their thoughts on the ever-growing importance of marketing in football.

The dissertation extensively analysed the role of sponsorship and marketing in football primarily using the league of Ireland and the premier league while answering two research questions; **“what is the effectiveness of sponsorship in football?”** and **“how important is it to exploit marketing opportunities in modern football?”**. The dissertation concluded that sponsorship and marketing are extremely important in football and that it is vital for clubs of all sizes to exploit marketing opportunities to enable the growth and success of their club.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation aims to analyse the growing business aspect within football and to gain insight into how big of a part sponsorship and marketing plays in football today. The dissertation will delve into football as a business under two research questions. The research questions that will be analysed are:

1. **“What is the effectiveness of sponsorship in football?”.**
2. **“How important is it to exploit marketing opportunities in modern football?”.**

These two research questions will help to explore the increased focus on business in football and will illustrate how clubs and companies can benefit from sponsorship deals. The dissertation will also investigate how important it is to use marketing in football and discusses the opportunities that it can bring.

These research questions will be explored by examining the league of Ireland with a focus on Bohemians FC and the English Premier league. This is to highlight the stark difference in sponsorship and marketing opportunities between the two leagues. Bohemians are a club in the league of Ireland who are owned by their supporters and operate differently to the elite clubs in England. Like any brand their aim is to make as much profit as possible, however they treat their fans as valuable parts of a community unlike the elite premier league teams who treat their fans as consumers. Bohemian’s fans are the subject of an online survey and one of their sponsors was interviewed in this dissertation.

Football as we know it today is a global business with clubs seeing their fans as consumers and an increasing revenue stream. For example, ticket prices have risen exponentially, and fans are still willing to pay these prices. Investors from all over the world are attracted to the high profit industry of football and are turning elite clubs into complex businesses. To some club owners, profit is more important than football and a number of these clubs now trade on the stock exchange.

However, this was not always the case as football was a sport created for the working-class and took a long time for professionalism to be allowed in England. For many years in England there was no distinction between football and rugby and the rules of the game varied. In November 1863, a meeting took place in London with representatives from eleven football clubs to develop a set of definitive rules to separate itself from rugby. This meeting resulted in the establishment of the Football Association (FA) which would oversee regulating and developing the game. (Cárdenas, 2014).

This saw the first set of formal rules introduced but football had been played in England as early as 1581. The rules of the game were constantly changing after 1863 with the number of players varying, kits not being worn to distinguish teams and the header had not yet been introduced. The creation of football proved to be an entertainment factor and distraction for the working-class British people with unprecedented numbers of people attending games. In the late 19th century games would have up to 30,000 people and soon spread around the world to India and South America. (Anon., n.d.).

In the early years of football many English teams liked to play a formation of 2-1-7 which meant only two defenders one midfielder and seven attackers. The English players loved to play all-out attack and run straight for the goal with everyone around the ball. Football quickly began to grow in popularity around Britain and particularly in Scotland where the tactics of the game evolved. The Scottish liked to focus more on defence and keep the ball for longer periods by passing it around. This resulted in players becoming more technical as they were able to pass and control the ball with ease. This resulted in many English teams looking to attract the Scottish star players. Many Scottish players moved to England to escape poverty and to play for the top English sides. It then became normal to financially compensate these Scottish players to move to English clubs. This raised the question of professionalism but was not favoured by the FA. The FA then backed plans to allow the employment of players in 1885. This would see players earn a wage from football and business strategies were put in place to profit from the game. (Cárdenas, 2014). Fast forward to the modern era of football and the game is unrecognisable from the FA's initial plans of keeping football as an amateur sport.

In the years preceding the formation of the football league, there was no structure to games as teams would organise their own games and the rules would tend to vary with many clubs playing professionals against the FA's approval. The establishment of the football league would see formality brought to the games where professionalism was allowed. (Anon., n.d.).

The English Football league was established in 1888 which included the top 12 teams at the time. A second division was formed in 1892 with the first division increased to 16 teams and promotion and relegation between the two leagues was introduced. With more revenue in the game and earnings from television broadcasts rising, the first division clubs broke away from the league and formed a new one in 1992. This was the establishment of English premier league. (Britannica, 2020).

Football has now become a complex global business with billionaire owners investing in clubs leading to increasing revenue in the sport. There are many theories as to when football became a global business.

One of these theories is that football became a business when British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB) expressed an interest in broadcasting live football matches. They merged with Sky Television to form British Sky Broadcasting and were renamed to Sky Sports. This occurred during the period of 1990-1992. Before Sky expressed an interest in broadcasting football, TV organisations such as the BBC and ITV paid a low fee to show topflight football. The money earned from these fees was divided between the 92 football league clubs. The interest from Sky brought increased revenue for the top clubs which was one of the reasons for them breaking away and forming the FA premier league. The teams in the premier league agreed a five-year deal with Sky that would see them earn £304 million between them. The establishment of the premier league also meant that clubs were now able to set up more lucrative sponsorship deals. This saw the clubs having increased funds to spend on players and their wages. (FISHER, 2014).

With these added funds from the Sky deal, English clubs were now able to attract some of the world's best players ahead of top Spanish and Italian leagues. They attracted players like Gianfranco Zola, Ruud Gullit, Roberto Di Matteo, Thierry Henry, Patrick Vieira, Ruud Van Nistelrooy, Eric Cantona, and many more to the English premier league. This also resulted in higher player salaries and transfer fees. The average weekly wage for a professional player in

the premier league in 1993 was £2,246 with that figure rising to £7,136 once the first five-year deal with Sky ended in 1998. This equated to an increase of over 317% during that period. The salaries of football players continued to rise with the average wage for a player in 2009 being £33,868. By 2010 a premier league player would earn more in a week than the average league 2 player would earn in a year. (FISHER, 2014). This clearly illustrates the impact of added TV revenues and foreign investment which is often seen as the beginning of football as business.

One other theory that has been put forward as to the extraordinary amounts of money in football and its evolving into more of a business was when clubs began to treat their fans as consumers and as an increasing revenue stream. It is argued that football took its first steps to becoming a business when clubs began trading on the stock markets. In 1983 Tottenham Hotspur became the first elite club to trade on the stock market under the guidance of former owner and businessman Alan Sugar. For the world's biggest clubs, it was easier for their owners to turn them into complex businesses due to their global fanbases. (Khoshtaria, 2015).

In the modern era of football, the biggest clubs have been turned into highly profitable businesses who look to attract the biggest sponsorship deals and exploit marketing opportunities to grow their revenue. They constantly look to increase their club's brand in multiple regions especially Asia who have an ever-increasing appetite for English football. Sponsorship and marketing are extremely effective for clubs both big and small in increasing revenue and growing their fanbase on a larger scale. Sponsorship and marketing will be discussed further in this dissertation where the League of Ireland and the English Premier league will be discussed and compared.

This research will contain a variety of chapters to further analyse sponsorship and marketing which are of vital importance to growing revenue in football. The chapters that will be included in this dissertation are as follows:

- **Chapter 2 - Literature review:** This chapter will explore two research questions regarding sponsorship and marketing in football. Existing literature will be discussed through the lens of the league of Ireland and English premier league.
- **Chapter 3 - Methodology:** This chapter will discuss the methods used to gain invaluable information for this dissertation. This chapter will discuss two interviews and an online survey.
- **Chapter 4 - Results:** This chapter discusses the results of the methods used. The interviews will be discussed, and the survey answers will be analysed.
- **Chapter 5 - Discussion:** This chapter will discuss the results in more detail and will also back up the literature review with new research to answer the two research questions.
- **Chapter 6 - Conclusion:** This chapter will provide an overall summary of the dissertation and will come to an overall answer regarding the two research questions of focus.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1) Introduction

In this Literature Review, two research questions will be explored through several different chapters. The opening chapter of this literature review sets out to discuss the bigger picture of business in football and how the globalisation of the game has led to increased revenue. This opening chapter takes a broad look at football as a business and narrows down to focus on sponsorship and marketing as the dissertation progresses. This literature review will discuss the origins of sponsorship in football as well as its benefits for clubs and companies. This chapter will also explore the importance of marketing in football by comparing the league of Ireland to the English premier league. This literature review chapter is broken into several sections as detailed below:

1. The History of Bohemians Football Club
2. The globalisation of football and increasing revenue
3. The origins of football sponsorship,
4. The benefits of sponsorship for clubs and brands,
5. The impact of sponsorship,
6. A Contrast between the league of Ireland and the premier league,
7. The importance of marketing in football
8. The importance of marketing for LOI clubs to attract new supporters.
9. Social media as a key marketing tool.
10. Research questions. This section will discuss the two research questions that have been focused on and conclusions will be reached based on the existing literature found to see if sponsorship is effective in football and if it is important to exploit marketing opportunities in football.

2.2) History of Bohemians Football Club

Bohemians are one of the most iconic football clubs in Irish football and were founded in 1890. Bohemians are the oldest football club in Ireland and are the third most successful club in Irish football. The club has existed for over 130 years and has experienced many successful moments. The club has won the league of Ireland 11 times, 7 FAI cups, 6 league of Ireland shields and 3 league of Ireland cups. Unlike the elite clubs in Europe, owned by billionaire investors, Bohemians are a club that is 100% owned by the members. The club has two main nicknames which are Bohs and the Gypsies. The club is known for their red and black colours which were agreed upon in their AGM in 1893. Bohemians had a long search for a stadium moving around multiple different grounds, eventually settling on their current stadium, Dalymount Park in 1901.

The main rivals of Bohemians are Shamrock Rovers, also originating in Dublin. The rivalry is one of the biggest and fiercest in Ireland. Bohemians originate from Phibsborough whereas Shamrock Rovers originate from Ringsend on the south side of Dublin. Bohemians are known for their dedicated fans and the immense atmosphere that they create on matchdays in Dalymount Park. Bohemian's fans in 2006 decided to form an ultra-group known as the Notorious Boo Boys to create an exceptional atmosphere during games. The group are known for using flares, flags and creating organised displays of singing, chanting, and clapping. (Maloba, 2020).

2.3) Globalisation of Football and Increasing Revenue

Professional football has changed dramatically in recent decades with ever increasing amounts of money being invested into the sport. The globalisation of football has contributed to the increase in revenue in the game and has attracted many entrepreneurs, businesses and investors who believe there is a lot of profit to be made from professional football. The globalisation of the game has resulted in the business aspects taking a more central role with foreign investors buying Premier League clubs. Many of England's elite clubs are now owned by businesses that are more focused on making a profit rather than the football itself. A recent event that showed the prominence of business and money in football was the attempted breakaway of several elite clubs from their national leagues to form a European super league. The idea was that the elite clubs would get a place in the new super league every year and would each receive large sums of money annually. This went against the traditions of football where qualification and promotion were achieved on performance and not on how big of a business the club had become. These ideas faced a severe backlash from fans and players who felt the owners of these clubs are becoming too greedy and have no interest in football. (Jordan, 2021).

An example of a club who has benefitted greatly due to the influx of foreign investors is Manchester City. This club was traditionally a lower table team but following a takeover by Sheikh Mansour, they have been able to spend billions to become one of the world's top clubs. The modern era of football is seeing the clubs with the most money claiming all the top prizes with the lesser teams finding it more difficult to compete. Elite clubs are now signing large sponsorship deals to give them even more revenue. (Jordan, 2021).

Declan Jordan is a senior lecturer in economics and is also a researcher with the Centre for Sports Economics and Law in UCC. He argues that Irish fans of English teams do not realise that they are part of the globalisation process that has led to the super league proposals and the increase in foreign investors. He says that Irish fans are fooling themselves thinking they are part of an English club community when their owners only see them as customers to boost merchandising sales and viewing figures. Therefore, he argues that more fans should be supporting the league of Ireland whose investment is in stark comparison to the premier league with many LOI clubs relying on sponsorships to stay afloat. Supporting the league of Ireland will allow the fans to form a connection within the club community and support a league that can often struggle financially. (Jordan, 2021).

Sponsorship is key for Irish clubs to pay salaries and improve facilities whereas sponsorship for English clubs is just another method of making increased revenue for investors. The big clubs in England both make and spend millions allowing them to achieve success. In comparison, smaller clubs in England and the league of Ireland often must sell their best players to remain solvent. This highlights the saying of making the rich richer as the big clubs require sponsorship deals for increased profit and revenue while lower standard teams require sponsors to make ends meet and run the club. (DOWDING, 2008)

2.4) Origins of Football Sponsorship

Sponsorship is now at the forefront of football with brand logos on every jersey and stadium naming rights being sold for large amounts. At the turn of the century the total value of British sponsorship deals was \$1.3 billion with 55% of these deals coming from various sports. In 2001, out of the 589 sponsorship deals agreed in Britain 209 of them came from football. Additionally, seven of the top ten highest valued deals in 2001 came from football sponsorships. (Thwaites, 2006).

Football in England was slow to embrace sponsorship and did not see the benefits that it could bring for clubs. Other top European leagues were embracing sponsorship with the first shirt sponsorship emerging in Germany in the Bundesliga in 1973. This was three years before the initial talks of sponsorship commenced in the English game. One key name responsible for bringing sponsorship to English football was ex player Derek Dougan who made his name with Wolverhampton Wanderers and ended his career with non-league Kettering Town where he also acted as the Chief Executive. While serving as Chief Executive, Dougan began making deals with local companies to have their brand displayed on the club's jersey. A deal was made with a company called Kettering Tyres Ltd and they would pay the club a four-figure sum for having their brand on the jersey. The 21st of January 1976 saw the sponsorship being revealed for the first time and received some backlash from the FA who ordered them to remove it. (BILLINGHAM, 2021).

Derek Dougan approached bigger clubs such as Bolton Wanderers and Derby County to back his sponsorship plans. Derby who was in the top league at the time already had a sponsorship deal with Saab that saw its players drive Saab cars, but they did not yet have a shirt sponsor. The wearing of brand logos on the jersey was limited to pre-season friendlies. Sponsorship was already big in other European leagues and was bringing in much needed funds for clubs at all levels. The Football Association (FA) finally noticed the benefits that sponsorship could have on the growth of the game in England, and they allowed it for the 1977/78 season. (BILLINGHAM, 2021).

This was the beginning of sponsorship becoming such an important aspect in English football.

Clubs in the English Premier League have more opportunity to attract the world's biggest companies to sponsor them and ergo generate more revenue than those in the league of Ireland. Sponsorship deals for clubs in the league of Ireland when compared to the Premier League provide a stark contrast to the level of investment available. For example, Arsenal's partnership with Emirates sees them receive £30 million per season which includes the naming rights to their stadium - Emirates Stadium. Manchester United's sponsorship with Chevrolet that ran until 2021 was superior to Arsenal's deal as United received £53 million each season and were allowed to keep their traditional stadium name of Old Trafford. (BILLINGHAM, 2021).

The foundation of football ground modernisation began with the Taylor report written in 1990 after an inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster where 96 fans lost their lives due to a major crush when too many supporters were allowed entry into a stadium. The Taylor report focused on the cause of the disaster and how to prevent it happening again in the future. The key aspect of the report recommended that all football grounds must be all seater stadiums and standing in stadiums was to be abolished by 1994. The rationale for this was to ensure that stadiums could never oversell tickets again and that each fan would have their own seat with room to move. This edict was the beginning of the modernisation of football facilities leading to the refurbishment of many grounds. Since then, the growth of business in football has seen the introduction of corporate boxes in grounds and major global companies looking to sponsor clubs and buy the naming rights to the stadiums. (Franklin, 2018).

Unlike the top English clubs, those in the League of Ireland such as Bohemians cannot pick and choose what sponsorship deals to accept. These clubs must take any funds that they can get. (BILLINGHAM, 2021). Bohemians in comparison to the top English clubs has shorter sponsorship deals that are usually with local businesses. Even so, sponsorship is an extremely important revenue stream for Irish clubs and will continue to be as they seek to grow into the future.

A survey was conducted to gather information on how important sponsorship deals are for a club like Bohemians which will be discussed in detail later. Sponsorship is an extremely effective revenue stream for clubs in England and Ireland albeit there is a stark comparison in the size of these deals.

The Premier League is the most popular league in the world and the average amount earned by a Premier League club per year in sponsorship shows this to be the case. Leading global companies are attracted to sponsoring the Premier League with the average shirt sponsorship amount of £11 million being paid to premiership clubs per year amounting to £220 million in total. Other top European leagues are falling behind in sponsorship deals e.g., the Bundesliga earned £120 million less than the English premier league. La Liga, the Spanish league, earned a combined total of £82 million, the top league in France earned a combined £75 million while the Serie A league in Italy earned a combined £61 million. (BILLINGHAM, 2021).

2.5) Benefits of Sponsorship for Clubs and Brands

Many clubs have become complex businesses with the financial results becoming as important as the results on the pitch. As stated earlier, the globalisation of football has seen the trend of many English clubs being bought by foreign investors. (Howieson, 2014). With many English clubs now being owned by foreign investors and attracting an ever-growing global fanbase, there is now a greater opportunity for them to attract the world's biggest companies to sponsor them. This is in stark contrast to the League of Ireland where it is difficult for clubs to attract big companies for sponsorship. This is in part due to the lack of investment in the Irish football league and the difficulty of attracting fans because of the popularity of the premier league. As a result, League of Ireland clubs look to local businesses for any funds they can get to help pay player salaries, transfer fees and to update their club facilities.

For smaller clubs such as Bohemians, where there is little investment, any sponsorship that is available is essential to the running of the club. In recent years Bohemians has exploited many business opportunities and agreed sponsorship deals to inject money into the club helping

them to become a force once again in the Irish football league. Sponsorship deals have been a key revenue stream for Bohemians to help them catch up with clubs such as Shamrock Rovers and Dundalk who have dominated the league in recent years. Des Kelly was a key sponsor for Bohemians during their successful years between 2002-2011. Des Kelly has agreed to sponsor them once again for the 2020 season and for the following four years including being their main shirt sponsor. Bohemians has also managed to partner with many other companies to help promote their brand. One of these is betting company Mr Green (formerly their shirt sponsor) who continue to sponsor the club. One other recent sponsorship to help them generate increased revenue is with a local brewing company, Porterhouse. This partnership sees Bohemians receive 50 cents from every pint of Bohemians light lager sold in the bars in Dalymount stadium or the surrounding areas. (Meanwhileinireland, 2020).

For many football fans who follow the English premier league and are familiar with the lucrative sponsorship deals for the top clubs this partnership between Bohemians and Porterhouse may not seem like a large revenue deal. However, any sponsors that clubs like Bohemians can attract no matter how small, is essential for them to ensure that the club remain solvent. In contrast, Manchester United has agreed a new sponsorship deal with German technology company TeamViewer which will be the second biggest deal in world football falling short of Real Madrid and their deal with Fly Emirates. The deal with TeamViewer will see Manchester United receive £47 million a year for five years which is worlds apart from the 50 cents received by Bohemians for every pint sold. (Meade, 2021). The premier league has a global appeal which makes it easier for the English clubs to attract these types of lucrative deals.

Sponsorship is extremely important for smaller clubs to assist with their day to day running costs, but it can also be very beneficial for elite clubs who are already in a strong financial position. The new deal with TeamViewer has enabled Manchester United to attract their top transfer targets such as Jadon Sancho. (Meade, 2021). United had been looking to sign him for over a year from his previous club Dortmund and the funds received from TeamViewer enabled this transfer to go through. TeamViewer will also receive benefits from being associated with Manchester United. One key reason for sponsoring a club is to generate brand awareness. Football draws a large audience through attendance, broadcasts, and the internet for brands to be recognised. (Bridgewater, 2014).

The aim of companies when sponsoring a football club is to increase brand awareness and to increase revenue. One company that benefitted from being associated with an elite club such as Manchester United was Vodafone. This deal with Manchester United ran from 2001-2005 and was valued at over £30 million. Vodafone saw this as being a good investment as they benefitted from United's global appeal and were able to raise awareness for the Vodafone brand in regions where they were not previously known. (Bridgewater, 2014). Sponsorship has benefits for both the football club and the investment company.

Smaller clubs can also raise awareness and attract new fans and revenue when associated with a popular business. However, the sponsorship deals struck with smaller clubs tend to involve much less investment as they operate in a much smaller market.

2.6) The Impact of Sponsorship

2.6.1) Sponsorship Risks

Much of the money that has been invested in football has been from sponsorship deals. Sponsorship deals provide many benefits for both the club and sponsor. There are many reasons for companies to sponsor clubs or football tournaments such as Coca Cola's sponsorship of the European Championship. One of these is to influence consumer behaviour and to raise brand awareness on a global scale. Football has become a very attractive industry for sponsors as the globalisation of the game allows for brands to be recognised by a larger audience. Sponsorship allows for brands to be perceived in more positive way and stand out amongst other brands in the same industry. Sponsoring major football tournaments or elite football clubs may impact the consumers decision to buy. (Vieira, 2009). This aspect of buyer behaviour was explored further in a survey with football fans and will be discussed later in this dissertation.

Sponsorship has many benefits for companies but there are times when sponsoring a club or event can backfire on the brand. A recent example of this came in a press conference for the European 2020 championship. As stated earlier, Coca Cola has been a long-standing partner with this championship and part of the sponsorship deal requires that Coca Cola bottles must be visible to the cameras during players media duties. This has proven to be a great promotional opportunity for brand exposure for Coca Cola. However, this was not the case when Cristiano Ronaldo conducted a post-match interview during this European 2020 championship. Ronaldo is one of the game's greatest ever players and is world renowned with over 550 million social media followers. During this interview Ronaldo removed the Coca Cola bottles from sight and told everyone to drink water instead. This incident attracted global media attention. It is reported that this incident resulted in Coca Cola's share price dropping from \$56.10 to \$55.22 which is a decline of 1.6% of the overall company value. This equated to a drop in their market value from \$242 billion to \$238 billion. (Hughes, 2021).

Many news outlets around the world reported on this decrease in share price for Coca Cola. According to Sports Marketing Consultant, Tim Crow, who advised them on sponsorship for over two decades, Coca Cola pay tens of millions to be a partner of the European Championship. This includes obligations on players and teams conducting interviews to be seen with the Coca Cola brand logo. He also added that there are always risks involved in sponsorship. (Sweeney, 2021).

Ronaldo may or may not have directly or indirectly affected the share price of Coca Cola but there is a good chance that his actions impacted the buying behaviour of his millions of followers around the world.

There is no doubt that sponsorship in football, has improved the quality of the game and that without the cash investment from global companies, the game we see today would be unrecognisable. Before sponsorship and the resultant cash revenue being invested in football, there were run down stadiums, unsafe crowd control and a low standard of football even at the biggest clubs. These investments have allowed for stadiums to be modernised and has led to clubs being able to attract the world's best players leading to a vast improvement in the standard of football. Sponsorship has not only benefitted the top teams; but has allowed for clubs who were considered medium sized to compete at the top level. (Staff, 2020). The

revenue received from sponsorship allowed for clubs such as Leicester City to compete with the top teams and even win the Premier League.

2.6.2) Kit Sponsorship

Sponsorship in football can take many forms. This can include football kit manufacturers who include the likes of Nike, Adidas, Under Armour and Puma who can then display their logo on their teams' apparel. This can include the jersey, shorts, jackets, tracksuits etc. and ensures that their brand is widely seen during both football matches and media interviews. The kit manufacturers pay a large amount of money to secure partnership deals as they benefit from their investment through the lucrative sale of football jerseys around the world. As well as Manchester United's new TeamViewer sponsor, which was mentioned earlier, they also have a large sponsorship deal with kit manufacturer Adidas. The club agreed a ten-year deal with Adidas that sees them earn up to \$110 million a year. (Smith, 2016).

There are many brands competing within the large market of football kit sponsorship, however Nike and Adidas remain the dominant forces within the European market. Nike and Adidas make up 66% of the total revenue spent in sponsorship across the top two leagues in England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Nike and Adidas also have deals with the bigger clubs including Real Madrid, Barcelona and Manchester United. The head of sponsorship in sports marketing intelligence company, Sportcal, Conrad Wiacek believes the ability of Nike and Adidas to leverage deals with the top clubs has many promotional and marketing benefits and will aid them in remaining as the market leaders. (Forsdick, 2019).

Adidas are the largest spenders in terms of sponsorship ahead of any other brand. Adidas began losing market share to main rival Nike so increased their spend on kit deals by 39%. Adidas are leading the way in sponsorship spend, paying \$388.6 million. Nike are the second largest spenders, paying \$355.8 million in sponsorship deals. Kit deals with premier league clubs have become of increased importance to Nike with the league growing in popularity in the hugely profitable market of China. Puma, are the third highest spenders in kit sponsorship, paying \$160.5 million. Puma, Nike, and Adidas combined make up for 80.8% of the total market spend. (Forsdick, 2019).

2.6.3) Corporate Sponsorship

The corporate sector also sponsors clubs to have their logo on the team's jersey. Football fans across the world wear their team's jersey and are like walking billboards for the companies who pay a high sum to have their logo on the kit. (Smith, 2016). The premier league is the biggest and most attractive platform in the world to attract sponsors. As well as the 20 clubs bringing in \$1.3 billion in sponsorship collectively, sports intelligence company, Sportcal state that the premier league itself which is branded as the EPL earns \$80.98 million annually from eight corporate deals. The premier league is now an entertainment industry as well as a sports industry attracting fans and sponsors from all over the globe. As of the 2019/2020 season the premier league has seen its global TV audience increase by 6% to 3.2 billion. This is almost double the viewing figures of La Liga which is Spain's main league. (Robinson, 2019).

The premier league is attracting corporate sponsors from all over the world with luxury brands now getting involved in football.

The eight corporate sponsors of the English premier league are detailed below:

- EA Sports - developers of the most popular football game FIFA,
- Barclays - the official bank,
- Budweiser – the league’s official beer,
- Cadbury - the official snack,
- Coca Cola - the official soft drink,
- Nike – the official ball supplier,
- Tag Heuer - the official timekeeper with its logo appearing on the board to display any added time and substitution numbers,
- Avery Dennison - the official supplier of names, numbers, and sleeve badges
- Panini - the official sticker album.

(Robinson, 2019).

The Premier league is one of the most attractive leagues in football for sponsors to invest in with English clubs making up 5 of the 10 biggest sponsorship deals in 2021. These clubs are:

- Tottenham Hotspur - sponsored by AIA,
- Manchester United - sponsored by TeamViewer,
- Arsenal - sponsored by Emirates,
- Liverpool - sponsored by Standard Chartered
- Chelsea - sponsored by Three.

(Lange, 2021).

2.6.4) Stadium Sponsorship

As well as kit and corporate sponsorships, stadium sponsorship through the sale of naming rights is the third most lucrative revenue stream for clubs. The trend of selling stadium naming rights originated in the United States of America and has grown in popularity in recent decades. However, the trend is not as popular amongst the top European clubs. Two of Europe’s top clubs, Real Madrid, and Tottenham Hotspur are seeking sponsors to sell their stadium naming rights to improve their financial position. Real Madrid have been renovating their iconic Santiago Bernabéu stadium since 2020 and it is set to be completed in 2022. The club are looking to sell the naming rights to the stadium to help recoup some of the €525 million spent on renovations. Similarly, Tottenham Hotspur are also trying to sell the naming rights of their new stadium which was opened in 2019 to recoup some of the £1 billion that it cost to build. (KPMG, 2020).

The German Bundesliga is leading the way in terms of the sale of stadium naming rights ahead of any other European league with 78% of the stadia sponsored. Out of the 98 clubs around Europe’s top 5 leagues, only 30% have stadium sponsorships. Only a fifth of the teams in the English premier league currently have stadium sponsorships, with Tottenham Hotspur seeking one as mentioned previously. (KPMG, 2020).

The sale of stadium naming rights is an underdeveloped market and many top clubs in England could command top revenue for the sale of their stadiums naming rights. Research conducted

by Duff and Phelps highlighted that the potential revenue that could be generated from stadium naming rights has increased significantly in the UK market in recent years. Manchester United could potentially command £29.5 million a season to sell the naming rights to their iconic Old Trafford stadium. (Donnelly, 2018).

The Irish market is also falling behind in terms of the sale of stadium naming rights. The research conducted by Duff and Phelps suggests that there is a lot of potential for increased revenue with Irish stadiums. The league of Ireland has not exploited the full potential of stadium sponsorship. However, the national teams' stadium (formerly known as Lansdowne Road) is now called the Aviva stadium. This deal runs until 2025 with it costing €4 million per annum. This has provided much needed revenue for Irish football and has also given brand recognition to Aviva who have become a household name after agreeing this deal to sponsor the stadium. (Donnelly, 2018). This deal with Aviva and the Lansdowne Road stadium would put them outside the top 6 clubs in the premier league but still in the top half of the table in terms of sponsorship deals. There is huge potential for stadiums in Ireland to enter commercial agreements with brands. These deals would be good for the brands, good for the teams who own them and good for the fans as the stadium experiences will improve due to the added revenue. (Business, 2018)

2.6.5) Uncertainty of Sponsorship in the LOI.

The money brought in from sponsors has allowed the premier league to improve its quality by attracting the world's greatest players and managers. The global appeal that the premier league has makes it easier to attract large sponsorship deals which is completely different to the League of Ireland who struggle to attract big sponsorship deals. Unlike the English premier league which is now a thriving global business where sponsorship is guaranteed year on year, the league of Ireland is growing in stature but still faces uncertainty when attracting new sponsorship deals.

SSE Airtricity have signed on as the leagues title sponsor for a 12th season, however this deal faced major uncertainty due to the ongoing issues in the FAI (Football Association of Ireland). According to the updated recent accounts of the FAI as of 2019, the association had net current liabilities of up to €70 million, net debts of €43.5 million and faced a yearly loss of €5.1 million. The sponsorship of the league faced uncertainty as SSE Airtricity reportedly looked to gain assurances from the FAI that their new six figure sponsorship would go towards the clubs and not towards the financial issues within the association. The new deal with Airtricity sees them sponsor both the men's and women's leagues which is a key tool for the future growth of the game in Ireland and a boost for updated infrastructure according to the new CEO of the FAI, Jonathan Hill. (Sneyd, 2021).

2.7) A Contrast between the League of Ireland and the Premier League

England and Ireland are neighbouring countries, but their respective football leagues are worlds apart in terms of global appeal, attendance, viewing figures and the revenue available to the clubs. As previously mentioned, the premier league can easily attract premium sponsors due to its global appeal whereas the League of Ireland is severely under invested in and relies on any funds they can get. The premier league is one of the biggest leagues in the world, leaving smaller leagues like the LOI in its shadow. The revenue generated in the premier league and LOI is poles apart. In the 2014 league of Ireland season the annual

revenues generated by the 20 teams in the top two leagues combined was around £10 million. In stark comparison to this, the combined premier league teams generated £3.3 billion of revenue in the same season. The second tier of English football is also way ahead of the LOI. In the same 2014 season the turnover in England's second tier was £0.5 billion. (Reilly, 2017).

The league of Ireland operates in the shadow of many European leagues in relation to sponsorship deals and revenues generated. The league is under supported, and many teams struggle to stay in business. From a critical standpoint, how can large companies be expected to support and sponsor the LOI when many Irish fans prefer to follow the English premiership. As mentioned earlier one key reason for Irish fans supporting English clubs is the quality of football in England which is due to their ability to attract the world's leading players and to pay the enormous salaries that are now inherent in English football. The high volume of Irish fans supporting teams abroad was highlighted in 2014 when Shamrock Rovers played Liverpool in a pre-season friendly in Dublin. The attendance of the game was 42,000 which was 27 times the average attendance of the LOI in 2014. Most of the fans at the game were Irish based Liverpool fans who had no interest in Shamrock Rovers. (Reilly, 2017).

Many Irish fans believe that the quality of Irish football is average and prefer to support English teams. The league of Ireland needs to exploit marketing opportunities to get fans to support local football. An increase in fans supporting and attending LOI games would greatly benefit the financial status of Irish clubs.

2.8) The Importance of Marketing in Football

Marketing has become a key tool in football for clubs and leagues to raise awareness on a global scale and to attract new fans. Marketing is as important to football clubs such as Bohemians as it is to one of the world's leading clubs Manchester United. The size difference of these two clubs is stark but marketing remains a key tool for both.

The premier league is growing year on year with weekly games being broadcasted to countries throughout the world. The premier leagues' deal with the American channel, NBC to broadcast weekly games in the US has seen a growth in the popularity of the English premiership amongst American sports fans. The premier league has marketed itself as the greatest league in the world and has begun selling broadcasting rights internationally. The deal with NBC to show games in the US for 6 years has seen the Premier league earn £106 million annually as well as generating increased awareness of the league. British broadcasters including Sky Sports and BT have been attracting viewers for years and taking the attention of Irish fans from the LOI to the premier league. As of this article in 2015 it estimated that Sky and BT would generate £5.1 billion for the premier league over 3 seasons. (Johnston, 2015).

The premier league has marketed itself incredibly well and is a key reason many Irish fans opt to support an English team over an Irish one. The editor of SportsBusiness International Owen Evans states that the premier league has a better unique selling point over the Spanish and Italian leagues. He believes the premier league has a competitive balance and people all over the world are engaged as they may see a small club beat Manchester United. (Johnston, 2015). The premier league is agreeing deals with global broadcasters to show weekly games whereas the LOI is rarely broadcasted on Irelands national channel. This is another key reason why Irish fans follow the premier league rather than the LOI.

2.9) The Importance of Marketing for LOI Clubs to Attract New Supporters

League of Ireland clubs such as Bohemians need to exploit marketing opportunities to encourage fans to support them. Bohemians nearly went out of business not long ago with debts piling up, but they are now performing on and off the pitch with their debts cleared and their attendance numbers rising. One of the key aspects of the Bohemians turnaround is due to their marketing practices. One key individual responsible for this turnaround was Daniel Lambert the club's Marketing / Commercial Director. He set out a long-term plan for Bohemians and highlighted that the key mistake made by LOI clubs, and the FAI was that they marketed the league through its football. (Anon., 2019).

The League of Ireland is never going to be able to compete with the powerhouse of Sky sports and the premier league. One of the reasons for Bohemians off field success was that they marketed the experience of being involved with a football community rather than just the quality of football. They encourage everyone to get involved and their work off the pitch has increased club awareness. They have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme in place to tackle racism, the housing crisis, work with refugees and work with inmates of Mountjoy prison. The purpose of these programmes is to help the local community and gain the trust of the locals, so they know the Bohemians brand is not just about money. (Anon., 2019).

A major marketing initiative by Bohemians to raise awareness for the club and help the community was when they partnered with an Irish band who were nominated for a Grammy award, Fontaine's D.C. This partnership involved Focus Ireland who tackle homelessness and their main sponsor Des Kelly to raise awareness of homelessness. Des Kelly the main shirt sponsors allowed for Fontaine's D.C. to be a sponsor on a new jersey with 15% of all jersey profits going to Focus Ireland. Football and music are great platforms to reach people which was the inspiration for this partnership. The kit had a global impact with the club receiving orders from over 40 countries and was also displayed in the FIFA 21 video game. This partnership summed up Bohemians' policy which is not only to grow marketing opportunities to raise awareness for the club but also to use their platform to highlight community issues. Football in the premier league has become a complex business worth billions of pounds. Elite clubs like Manchester United are using their platform to grow their global fanbase and make as much profit as possible. In contrast to this Bohemians feel obligated to use their platform in football to use marketing to help the local community. (Kidd, 2021).

The approach of Bohemians compared to premier league clubs in dealing with supporters could not be more different. Bohemians have made their fans feel like a valued part of a community rather than customers who are lining the owners' pockets which is the case for many premier league clubs who are now complex businesses. This marketing approach led by Daniel Lambert the club's Marketing / Commercial Director has increased awareness for Bohemians and has seen attendance numbers rise resulting in the ongoing success of the club.

Bohemians could not be further from the world of the premier league clubs who treat their fans as consumers and trade on the stock exchange. Bohemians are a community with 20 schoolboy teams and an amputee team who do excellent work on and off the pitch. According to Lambert more fans know Manchester City player Sergio Aguero than Bohemians Dinny Corcoran which is why marketing the quality of football would not be a viable option for them.

Bohemians are a club who care for the community and have marketed themselves as the people's club who partner with local businesses. (O'Toole, 2018). This marketing venture has grown the stature of the club and has got many more Irish fans involved in the LOI. This shows how important a role that marketing plays in football for small clubs such as Bohemians.

2.10) Social -Media as a Key Marketing Tool

Social media is now a key tool for clubs and sponsors in football to grow their brand on a global scale. The evolvement of media channels and increased engagement on social media has allowed for fans to get 24/7 football coverage irrespective of location. Clubs now have a growing following on social media that has allowed for them to engage fans with the club's brand in multiple regions. It is now common in the era of social media for elite clubs to have more than 80% of their fans in regions abroad. (KPMG, 2020)

Social media should be an integral part of every organisation or clubs marketing strategy to form a more personal connection with fans and is proving to be a much more effective medium than traditional media. In a study by Agbaimoni and Bullock they refer to a survey by the Harvard Business Review analytics team. 2,100 organisations were surveyed and 79% said they saw benefits from running a well-executed social media channel. (Agbaimoni & Bullock, 2013). Football is now a global entertainment business, and a well-executed social media channel is key for clubs to engage with their fans across the globe and provide them with 24/7 content.

In the ever-evolving game of football, players are now influencers who boast millions of followers across several social media platforms. This has led to them attracting individual sponsorship deals to promote varying brands and has allowed for clubs to take advantage and exploit the players marketability to attract new fans. Football is now attracting luxury and lifestyle brands such as PSG having a deal with brand Air Jordan worth €25 million. (KPMG, 2020)

The increasing popularity of social media has brought many new benefits for both club and sponsor. Neymar and Mbappe are two of PSG's star players and have acted as influencers to promote the PSG and Jordan brands. Due to their large social media following Neymar and Mbappe, have been able to drive brand awareness, brand equity and shirt sales on a global scale. This saw PSG sell 1 million jerseys in 2019, resulting in it being the 5th most popular shirt in the world. The deal with PSG and Jordan and the use of Neymar and Mbappe as key influencers has seen awareness for the Air Jordan brand grow exponentially and has resulted in PSG attracting many new fans from the world of fashion and other sports. (KPMG, 2020). Social media is now a key tool for clubs and brands in football to market their brand on a global scale.

Clubs can measure the effectiveness of their social media platforms using the metric of page likes however this does not translate into revenue. Despite this, the number of followers for a club on social media can be a measure for the popularity of the team and could be a key topic for consideration for brands when deciding on which teams to sponsor. Sponsors in football aim to form deals with the most popular clubs and the most marketable players so they can raise their brand awareness and reach a new consumer base. (KPMG, 2020).

Please see the following image for a comparison of social media followers between a league of Ireland club and premier league club.

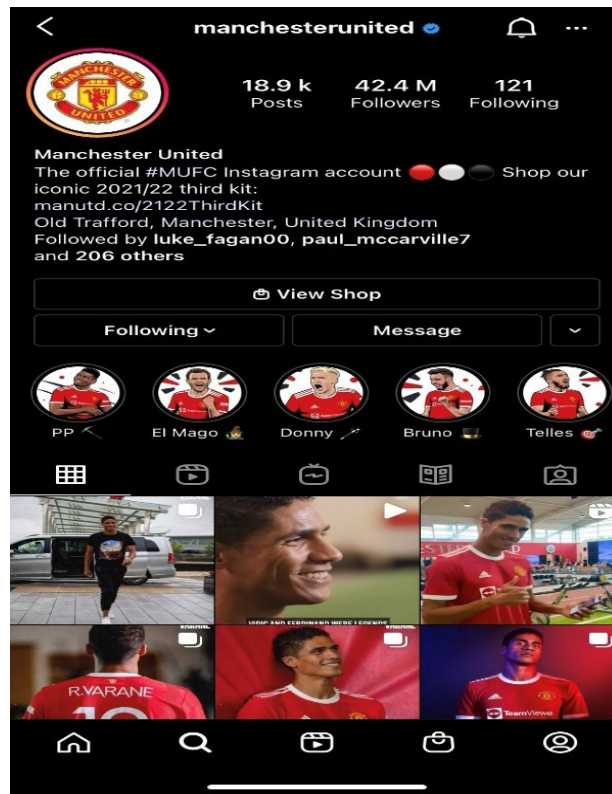


Figure 1: Manchester United Instagram Followers

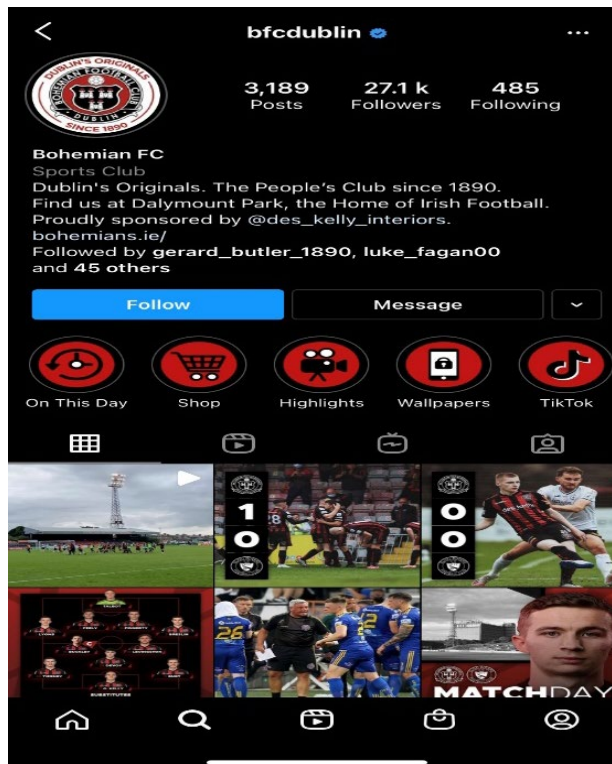


Figure 2: Bohemians Instagram Followers

2.11) Research Questions

In this chapter of the dissertation the focus was on two research questions regarding football as a business. The first research question was, “**what is the effectiveness of sponsorship in modern football?**” This was explored by identifying the benefits that both club and sponsor receive. Sponsorship in football can also backfire on the brand and the club for various reasons that were also explored further.

The second research question that was analysed was “**how important is it to exploit marketing opportunities in modern football?**”. Marketing has become a key tool for many clubs nowadays to connect with their fan base and raise awareness in new regions. Marketing can be key for small clubs within the league of Ireland to connect with fans and create a brand identity whereas larger clubs in the premier league can use players as marketing tools to generate new fans across the world.

From delving further into the two research questions it is clear to see how effective sponsorship is to football. Sponsorship has seen huge sums of cash invested into the sport which has helped to modernise stadiums, improve the quality of football, and generate brand awareness for many businesses. Often sponsorship is effective for a company but there are always risks which was noted when Cristiano Ronaldo removed the Coca Cola bottle from view while he was being interviewed during the recent European Championship. Overall, sponsorship has been extremely effective in the game and has been one of the key reasons for the global expansion of football.

It is also extremely important to exploit marketing opportunities in football, be it a small or large club. Large premier league clubs look to use marketing to expand their fan base on a global scale and to increase profits. The premier league has used marketing extremely efficiently while League of Ireland clubs are struggling to grow their fan base. Bohemians understood that marketing the quality of football compared to the premier league would not be viable, so they took a different approach to market football as a community to attract new fans and to grow their brand identity. This shows the importance of marketing in football as Bohemians who are a small club were able to use their platform to do good in the community while also raising brand awareness and increasing matchday attendance providing them with well needed funds to grow the club.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter of the dissertation, the methods used for research will be discussed. These research methods were chosen to analyse the effectiveness and importance of sponsorship and marketing in football.

One of the research methods used for this dissertation was an online survey to gather information on how fans of a football club recognised the brands that sponsored their club. This survey helped to gather important qualitative data by asking “**what is the effectiveness of sponsorship in modern football?**”. Qualitative research can be defined as the collection and analysing of data that is non numerical. Examples of qualitative data include text, video, or audio. The main tools for conducting qualitative research are observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and secondary research. (Bhandari, 2020).

3.2 Online Survey

Sponsorship has become more prominent in football which has seen major benefits for clubs and the companies who sponsor them. The aim of this qualitative online survey was to ascertain the impact sponsorship deals have on football fans. This survey took inspiration from another research study by Biscaia, Correia Ross and Rosado. This survey followed a similar approach to the forementioned study with extra questions included to gain a more in-depth insight into the effect of sponsorship on fans. The aim of sponsorship is to increase brand awareness and the aim of the survey was to see how aware fans are of the brands associated with their club. Brand awareness can be defined as a consumer’s familiarity with a brand. (Rosado, 2014).

The survey conducted by Biscaia, Correia Ross and Rosado involved an unnamed professional Portuguese team that at the time had 12 official sponsors. The team in question are extremely popular and average 40,000 fans attendance per game. The survey was sent out to supporters of the club and asked them to name as many sponsors of the team as they could without any aid. The purpose of this was to understand the fans recall and recognition of the teams sponsors and how much of an impact they have on the fans attending the games. (Rosado, 2014).

Similarly, to the above survey, the research in this dissertation was conducted to see the effect sponsorship deals have on football fans. The club of focus in this survey was Bohemian’s football club who play in the League of Ireland. The survey was constructed using Google Forms and was sent out to Bohemians fans.

Initially a sample survey was sent out to a small number of Bohemians fans to gather feedback on the questions asked and to confirm that the survey was easy to use so that respondents would be more willing to complete the survey in its entirety. Once this feedback was analysed the survey was then posted on social media (Facebook) through Bohemian’s fan pages to reach a large an audience as possible. The survey was also promoted on Instagram with a link

provided asking for Bohemians fans only to complete the survey. This was to avoid inaccurate results and biases from other teams' fans. The survey received 108 responses.

There are certain limitations when conducting online surveys that researchers must be aware of. Online surveys tend to be distributed to a large audience which lowers the control the researcher has over who responds. Email surveys give the researcher more control of response but reaches a smaller audience. (Ilieva, 2002). The limitations of controlling the respondents were tackled by distributing the surveys on Bohemians only fan pages to avoid bias from other teams' supporters. The posts on Instagram specifically stated Bohemians fans only to deter any respondents who did not fit into the demographic. The survey responses were also examined to ensure there was no invalid responses affecting the results.

Bohemians have many different sponsors that are recognisable to fans, so like the Portuguese study they were asked to name as many sponsors as they could without any aid. The survey also included four other questions to ascertain the fans perception of sponsorship. The questions asked were:

No.	Question
1.	Bohemians has many sponsors. How many of these can you name?
2.	Would you be inclined to buy from a brand due to its association with Bohemians?
3.	Would you be loyal to a brand over others due to its connection with Bohemians?
4.	Do you think sponsorship is important for a club like Bohemians why or why not?
5.	Would you notice a brand for its association with Bohemians without knowing what the brand offers?

Table 1: Survey Questions

This survey was based on the Portuguese study to see how much of an impression the sponsors are having on their fans and then to discover if the fans would be loyal to a brand over others due it being associated with their favourite club.

The literature review discusses the research question of how effective sponsorship is to clubs in football and this study was carried out to gain a fans perspective of this on their club. Sponsorship is also effective for companies as fans may be aware of the brand without even knowing what they offer but gain an interest in it because of its involvement in their team. The Portuguese study determined that the brands recalled by the fans the most were the ones appearing on the team jersey. (Rosado, 2014). It will be interesting to see if this is the case with the Bohemians fans when the results are discussed further in the dissertation.

Once the responses were completed, they were examined to ensure that they were valid and acceptable to include in the final analysis. The first section of the survey was analysed to see what sponsors the fans could recall the most and a bar chart was created to highlight the amount of mentions the main sponsors received. The bar chart highlights the results of large data sets effectively in a visual manner. They have an X and Y axis and will show a certain category compared to another or in this instance a sponsor compared to another. (Mitchell, 2021). The names of the main sponsors were inserted on the bottom of the graph and the response figures were included on the side of the graph to illustrate which sponsors were mentioned the most. Bar charts were also created to illustrate the respondent's views on

brand loyalty. The charts were compared by the percentages of those who would be loyal to a particular brand for its association with Bohemians and would therefore choose that brand over another one.

The fourth question asked fans for their opinions on the importance of sponsorship and was examined to see the consensus of the audience. From this it was determined whether the respondents believe that sponsorship is or is not important for Bohemians and their responses will be explored in further detail. The responses were also examined to determine if there is an overall trend or theme throughout the answers for the main importance of sponsorship.

The fifth and final question asked the respondents if they would recognise a brand for its association with Bohemians without knowing what it is they offer. This question was analysed, and its results displayed in a pie chart. This tool is beneficial for displaying data in a visual manner and gets the name for its resemblance to a pie. The chart is a circular shape that shows data in slices or sections. The chart represents the full data set, and each section represents a piece of the data. Pie charts are effective as they allow audiences to easily see a data comparison. The pie charts are easy to read which makes it an efficient tool for displaying information. (Finch, 2018). The pie chart highlights the comparison of answers from the respondents through yes or no answers. The total of the answers received equal 100% of the chart and their answers are detailed in a yes or no section. The chart then illustrates the percentage of respondents who recognise brands associated with Bohemians without knowing what they offer.

3.3 The Interviews

The second research method used in this dissertation was by means of an interview. The dissertation contains two semi structured interviews to gain a more in-depth understanding of the importance of sponsorship and marketing in football. The first interview was conducted with members of the Marketing Department from Dublin Bus and Do Dublin tours who are a part of Dublin Bus. The second interview was conducted with a member of the Marketing Department from the Football Association of Ireland (FAI).

The semi structured interview is an effective tool for researchers when collecting qualitative data. The semi structured interview is pre-arranged for a specific date and time. The questions asked in a semi structured interview are pre-determined and open ended that lead to in depth discussion. The semi structured interview can lead to additional questions being formed from the dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. (Crabtree, 2006).

These interviews can be conducted in a one-on-one setting or in groups. As previously mentioned, the first interview was held with two interviewees and the second involved just one interviewee. Before conducting an interview there are ethical issues that must be addressed. The interviewee must be fully aware of the context of the dissertation that they are participating in before they provide any information. They must be satisfied that their personal information is secure, and they are not being exploited for the research. In a research study it is likely that the researcher will need to record the interview to analyse and discuss the responses. The interviewee must give permission to be recorded for the interview to avoid any ethical issues. (Crabtree, 2006).

A semi structured interview was conducted with a member of the Marketing Department from the Football Association of Ireland. This interview was held to gain a greater insight into the importance of marketing in football. This helped contribute to the research already conducted on the second research question of; **“how important is it to exploit marketing opportunities in modern football.”** Many Irish fans support an English team rather than an Irish one due to the success of the premier league and their excellent marketing practices. This interview was conducted to see how the FAI can attract new fans to the League of Ireland and to understand their perspective on business in football and the importance of marketing.

The marketing executive was asked several questions to gain an understanding of their plans for the league of Ireland and insight into his thoughts on marketing’s role in football. The questions asked in this interview are detailed below:

No.	Question
1.	Do you find social media to be an effective marketing tool for the FAI to attract fans?
2.	What are the FAI’s plans for investment in the LOI? Do the FAI have any plans that you know of to invest in the league of Ireland?
3.	What do you think the FAI has to do to improve the league of Ireland?
4.	How can the FAI utilise marketing to get Irish fans to support local rather than teams abroad?
5.	Do you think the league of Ireland needs to be marketed better for the league’s future growth?
6.	How important, do you think are marketing practices for clubs big and small such as Bohemians and Manchester United?
7.	Why do you think many Irish fans support teams abroad rather than LOI clubs?
8.	Do you think business in football is becoming a more prominent thought than the football itself and can this be good for the marketing aspects?
9.	How do you think marketing in football will progress in years to come?

Table 2: Questions for FAI

The interview with the FAI provided invaluable information and helped gain an insight into their views on the future of marketing in football.

Both interviews were conducted in a virtual manner using Microsoft Teams due to the current global pandemic. This did not impact the research in a negative way as Microsoft Teams is now used by millions of users for meetings and interviews and has several features including the ability to record meetings. The Covid 19 pandemic has forced many people to work from home and schedule virtual meetings rather than face to face. This has seen the number of Microsoft teams users increase exponentially. Microsoft Team’s daily active users has increased from 75 million users in April 2020 to 145 million April 2021. (Liu, 2021).

The interview was scheduled for a date and time that best suited the FAI Marketing Executive and he was fully briefed on the nature of the dissertation before the interview commenced. The interview was recorded after receiving permission from the interviewee. The interview is discussed in the findings and discussion chapters of the dissertation.

The second and final semi structured interview was conducted with members of the Marketing Department from Dublin Bus and Do Dublin tours which are a part of Dublin Bus. They are a sponsor of Bohemians football club, and this interview was conducted to better understand football sponsorship deals from the sponsor's perspective. The literature review discusses the importance of sponsorship in football by comparing clubs in the league of Ireland to clubs in the premier league. This interview adds to the research and highlights the benefits from associating your brand with a football club.

The survey with Bohemians fans provides valuable insight into how important sponsorship deals are for football clubs while the interview with Dublin Bus and Do Dublin provided information from the sponsors viewpoint. Sponsorship has become increasingly important in football and sees clubs receive large sums of money for displaying brand logos on their jerseys. Companies can also benefit greatly from developing sponsorship deals with a football club.

The questions asked in this interview are detailed below:

No.	Question
1.	Why did you choose to sponsor a club such as Bohemians?
2.	How long has the partnership been agreed for and would you be willing to extend it or partner with other Dublin based clubs?
3.	What benefits have you seen from sponsoring Bohemians e.g., Increased awareness?
4.	If it's not confidential, how much have Bohemians received because of your sponsorship?
5.	Do you believe the sponsorship with Bohemians has been worth it?
6.	What was the goal of this sponsorship and is there plans in place after covid

Table 3: Questions for Dublin Bus

They were fully briefed on the nature of the dissertation and were also asked for permission to discuss the details of their partnership in this dissertation. One limitation of the interview was that they could not discuss some information that they deemed confidential including the amount involved in this sponsorship. Despite this the partnership was explored in detail to see how Dublin Bus has benefitted since being involved with Bohemians.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

This chapter of the dissertation discusses the results and findings from the research that was conducted. The research tools used in this dissertation to gather the information were an online survey with fans of Bohemians football club, a semi structured interview with Regina Greham and Sean McDaid from Dublin Bus and Do Dublin to discuss their partnership with Bohemians and a semi structured interview with a Sales and Marketing Manager from the Football Association of Ireland.

4.1) Survey on the Impact of Bohemians Sponsorship on their Supporters

This survey was conducted to gain insight into the impact sponsorships are having on supporters of Bohemians and to get their thoughts on its importance to the club.

4.1.1) Question 1 of the Survey

The first question asked the respondents to name as many sponsors as they could of Bohemians without any aid. The purpose of this was to see which sponsors are having the biggest impact on the recall and recognition of the respondents. The results are illustrated below:

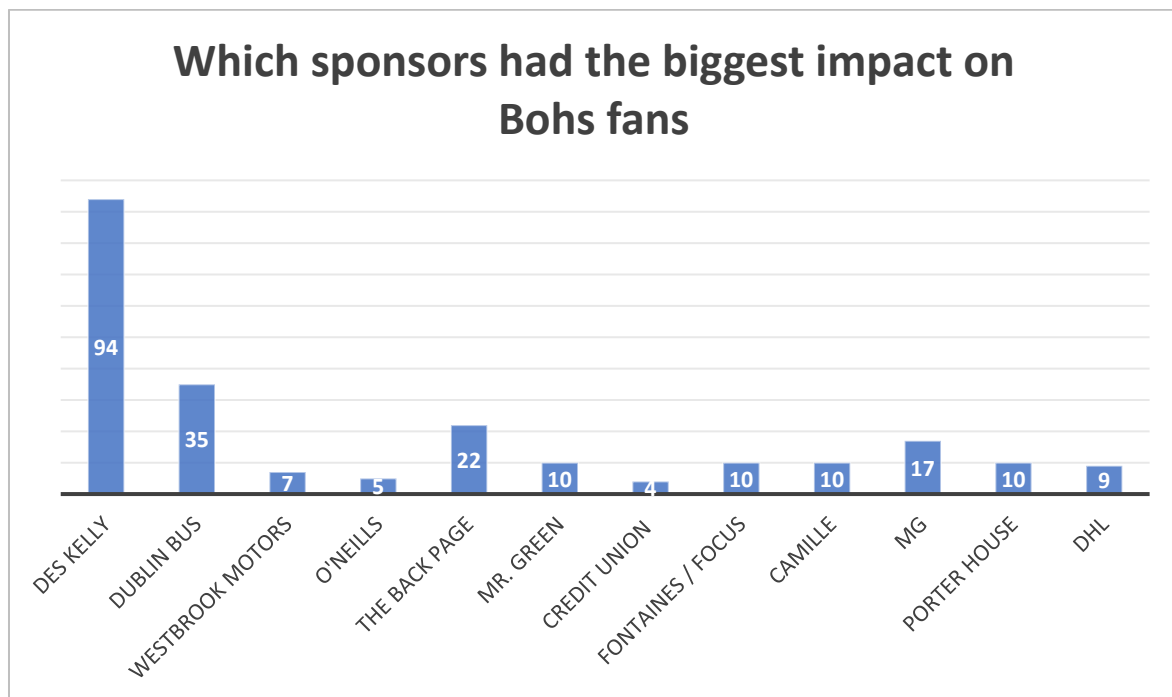


Figure 3: Recall and Recognition of Bohemians Fans

As can be clearly seen from the above chart Des Kelly, is the standout brand amongst the Bohemians fan base with 87% of respondents mentioning them as a main sponsor. The second most mentioned brand was Dublin Bus with 32.4% naming them as a sponsor.

The aim of sponsorship is to increase brand awareness, and this is certainly the case for Des Kelly. They are the jersey sponsor of Bohemians and received 94 mentions out of the 108

respondents. This is similar to the study of Biscaia, Correia Ross and Rosado where the fans of the unnamed Portuguese team recalled the sponsor on the jersey more than any other official partners. (Rosado, 2014).

The high amount of mentions for Des Kelly and other brands in the chart confirms that football fans are aware of companies and sponsors associated with their team. This is beneficial for companies looking to raise brand awareness and form a positive brand identity.

4.1.2) Question 2 of the Survey

The second question in this survey asked the respondents if they would be inclined to buy from a brand due to its association with Bohemians. All 108 respondents answered this question and a high percentage said they would buy from a brand due to them sponsoring Bohemians.

These results are illustrated in the following bar chart:

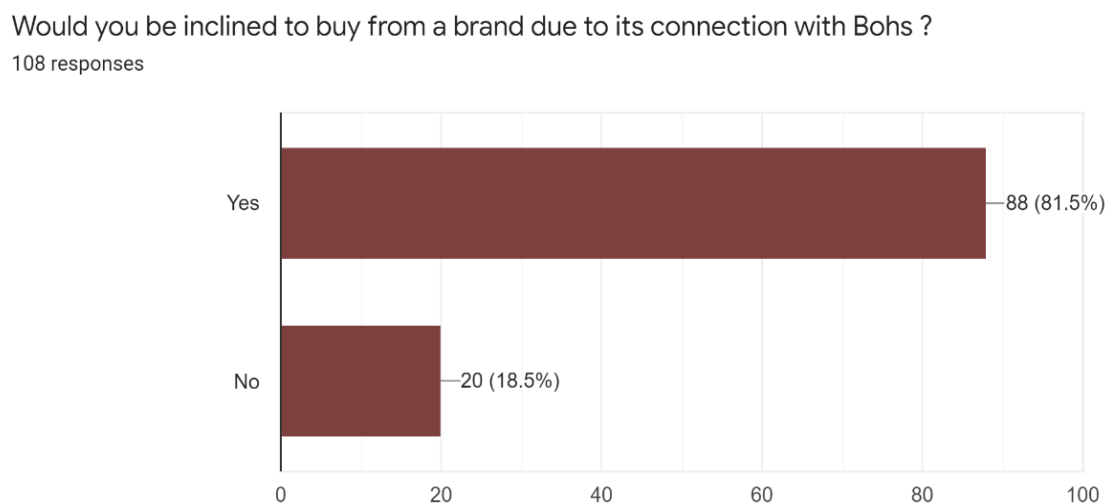


Figure 4: Buyer Behaviour Chart

These answers show that 81.5% of respondents would purchase an item based on the brand's association with Bohemians while 18.5% said that they would not.

Therefore, it is clear from this response that sponsorship has a persuasive impact on their buyer behaviours.

4.1.3) Question 3 of the Survey

The third question asked the respondents if they would be loyal to a brand over others due to its association with Bohemians. This question was also answered by all 108 respondents and these results are illustrated in the diagram below:

Would you be loyal to a brand over others due to its association with Bohs ?
108 responses

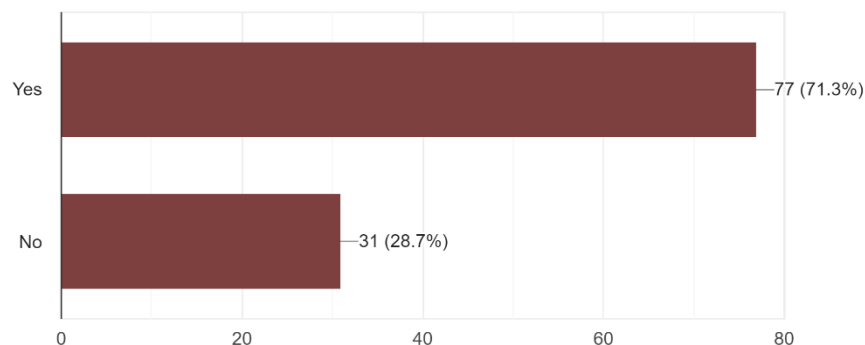


Figure 5: Brand Loyalty Chart

The response to this question saw that 71.3% of respondents said that they would be loyal to a brand over others due to them sponsoring Bohemians while 28.7% said they would not. This question also received a high percentage of yes votes. Again, the result of this question shows that sponsorship has a positive influence on the supporters of a football club.

4.1.4) Question 4 of the Survey

The fourth question of the survey aimed to get the opinions of Bohemians supporters on sponsorship. They were asked if sponsorship is important for a club such as Bohemians and to say why or why not. Out of the 108 respondents, 106 (98%) provided a response to this question. These answers provided invaluable information on the importance of sponsorship for a club in the league of Ireland where funding is low.

The consensus amongst the respondents was that sponsorship is extremely important for Bohemians. After analysing the responses received the following two themes came to light:

- Revenue

According to the fans of Bohemians, sponsorship is extremely important as it brings in vital revenue for the club which is vital to its continuing success

- Awareness

Awareness of the club is vital for it to continue to attract its ever-growing number of new supporters

These responses will be discussed in detail in the discussion chapter of the dissertation.

4.1.5) Question 5 of the Survey

The fifth and final question of the survey asked the respondents if they would recognise a brand for its association with Bohemians without knowing what they offer. The results of this question were examined and are illustrated in the diagram below:

Would you notice a certain brand for its involvement with Bohs without knowing what the brand offers ?

107 responses

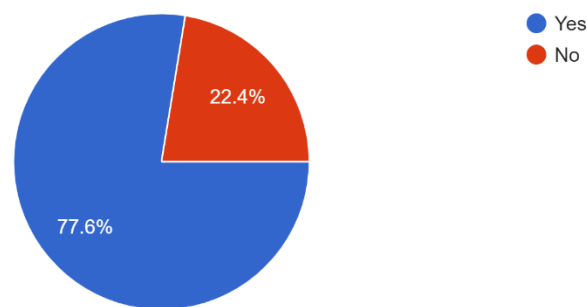


Figure 6: Brand Recognition Chart

The results of this survey question show that 77.6% of respondents said they would notice a brand for its involvement in football without knowing what they offer whereas 22.4% said they would not. The high percentage of yes votes show the effectiveness of sponsorship in football and the impact it can have on supporters as they will notice a brand just for its involvement with their club.

4.2) Dublin Bus Interview

Sponsorship plays an important role in football by financially improving clubs and allowing them to attract the best players. However, there are also many benefits for companies even though it costs them a large sum to have their brand associated with a particular club. Sponsorship provides companies with a better opportunity to sell and allows them to better position their brand and image. Sponsorship deals allow for companies to create a better brand perception amongst the public and raise brand awareness. (Gharbi, 2014).

An interview was conducted with representatives from Dublin Bus and Do Dublin tours to discuss their sponsorship deals with Bohemian's football club. Dublin Bus operate the public bus service in Dublin City and County. Do Dublin are part of Dublin Bus and operate the Hop on / Hop off bus tours service across Dublin.

Regina Greham marketing and information executive and Sean McDaid from the commercial department provided invaluable information regarding the benefits that Dublin Bus receive from being associated with Bohemians.

The sponsorship deal between Dublin Bus and Bohemians began in 2019 and was agreed for a three-year period. Both representatives from Dublin Bus said that they had seen benefits from the sponsorship, but that their investment has not seen its full potential due to the

disruptive past few years from Covid 19. The exact amount invested into Bohemians was not revealed (due to commercial sensitivity) but as with any sponsorship they are not cheap. However even with a disruptive year with no fans in stadiums Dublin Bus has still seen benefits from the sponsorship and would be willing to extend their partnership after Covid so they can realise the full potential of being associated with Bohemians. (McDaid, 2021).

Companies choose to partner with clubs if it will benefit both parties. Dublin Bus and Bohemians are both community driven organisations which is why the partnership is a perfect fit. The aim for Dublin Bus with this sponsorship deal was to raise awareness and drive sales. Dublin Bus has already seen awareness for their brand increase in a disruptive year but has many marketing plans for when fans can return to stadiums. They have plans to transport fans to and from games and to hold internal and external competitions to win matchday tickets and other prizes. When asked if they would sponsor other Dublin clubs, they said it is not part of their imminent plans as they feel Bohemians is a good fit for both parties. They did go on to say that they may explore the possibility of exploring sponsorship in other sports. (McDaid, 2021).

In a world with Covid 19, Dublin Bus has already seen the brand awareness increase and the increase of tourist activities with Do Dublin. Dublin Bus has also created a Bohemians designed bus that operates several routes around Dublin and has helped to raise awareness of its sponsorship of the club. This interview has helped to provide an insight into how effective sponsorship is in football for companies as well as football clubs. Even in a disruptive year with a global pandemic Dublin Bus has managed to experience benefits of the sponsorship and have plans in place to fully exploit the partnership when normality resumes. (McDaid, 2021).



Figure 7: The Bohemians Dublin Bus (Anon., n.d.)

Presented below are images of various Bohemian's jerseys, highlighting their sponsors and community outreach programmes:



Figure 8: Bohemian's Jersey Raising Awareness for Homelessness (Anon., 2021)



Figure 9: Bohemian's Jersey Welcoming Refugees (Malone, 2020)

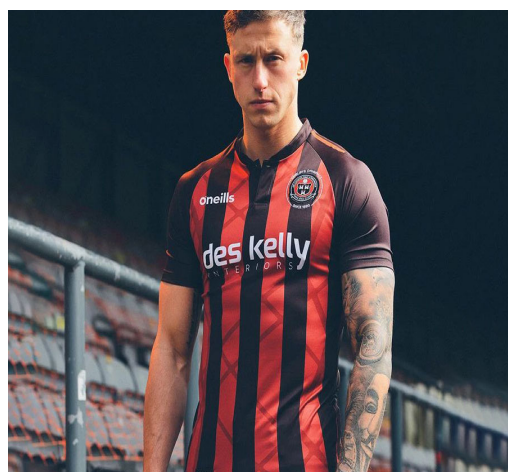


Figure 10 New Bohemians jersey with Des Kelly as the main sponsor (Anon., 2020)

4.3) Interview with the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) Marketing Department

This interview was held with a member of the Football Association of Ireland who are the governing body of football in Ireland. This interview was conducted to gain an insight into the importance of marketing in football. The interview was held with the Sales and Marketing Manager for the FAI. He said that social media is one of the FAI's main tools for promoting the League of Ireland (LOI) and connecting with fans. He also said that the responsibility also belongs with the clubs to do their own marketing on top of this. He stated that marketing is extremely important in football and clubs like Bohemians have taken advantage of this. Social media and traditional marketing are also effective for promoting the LOI to engage more fans. The new product known as LOI TV allows fans to watch games when stadiums are shut due to Covid and has seen the number of fans for the league increase. (Manager, 2021).

The FAI believe that investment is greatly needed to grow the league of Ireland to reach the levels of other European leagues and they have big plans in the works for future investment however, the exact details of these plans must remain confidential for the time being. Despite the need for the investment the marketing manager also agreed that the FAI can do more for the league and believes that it needs to be marketed better to attract fans over the lure of the premier league.

He believes that sponsorship plays an important role in growing the stature of the league. SSE Airtricity are a big brand in Ireland and are willing to associate their name with the league which makes it seem more appealing to fans. (Manager, 2021). Airtricity has extended their partnership with the LOI and added the Women's National league. This double sponsor has grown the stature of domestic football in Ireland and will help the leagues grow and attract more fans. (McDonnell, 2021).

The FAI manager also stated that the sponsorship has been great for the league, but the FAI still need to market it better. He believes the leagues brand must be updated, the fans must understand the clubs' values and understand the USP (unique selling point) of the league. (Manager, 2021). The LOI cannot compete with the Premier league so they must exploit marketing opportunities. The interviewee also shares these beliefs and believes that fans need to understand what the league is about for them to choose it over the premier league. This is where the importance of marketing comes in.

He also provided insight into the challenges they face in marketing the league and attracting new fans. The LOI has a small group of core fans for each club, but the struggle is reaching those Irish fans who support teams such as Manchester United. The FAI are looking to convert those supporters to LOI fans and need to implement an effective marketing strategy to lure them away from the premier league to support Irish clubs. The difficulty in attracting new fans also stems from the fact that many stadiums are not fit for purpose. Therefore, investment and sponsorship are also key to growing the league. The marketing manager also stated that improvements must be made to the stadia to make it appealing for fans to attend games. The sponsorship from SSE Airtricity can go a long way to making this happen which may convert some premier league fans to the league of Ireland. (Manager, 2021).

The interviewee also said that there are many reasons for Irish fans supporting the premier league rather than local clubs. There is a lot of live premier league games on TV weekly

whereas the national broadcaster in Ireland RTE only show less than half of an overall LOI season. This is a big challenge for the FAI to overcome. If the league was marketed better and there was live Irish football available on a more consistent basis the fans may decide to support local teams. However, he also said that the global reach of premier league clubs who are now businesses have the capability to attract fans from all around the world. (Manager, 2021). The prospect of going to a world class stadium to see global stars will attract fans from Ireland and this is something the LOI must overcome. These premier league clubs have a greater budget for marketing compared to the FAI and Irish clubs which makes it difficult to convince the Irish fans to support local teams.

The manager said that he does not think that business is becoming a more prominent thought than the football but that they must commercialise their products to support the domestic leagues and attract new sponsors. The FAI are competing with the likes of the IRFU and GAA to commercialise their product, but the focus is also on improving the domestic leagues.

He said that this is in stark contrast to the premier league clubs such as Manchester United who are now a global business and listed on the stock exchange. He believes football is an important factor but for these clubs the time is coming where off the field results are taking centre stage. (Manager, 2021). This comes back to the previous point and the research which was conducted. The LOI need to market their USP to fans which is being part of a footballing community. These bigger clubs now see their fans as customers and try to make as much profit as they can from them. This contrasts with LOI clubs who while they understand that they need to generate revenue, also see Irish clubs as being part of a community.

The interviewee also believes that exploiting marketing opportunities is essential for clubs of all sizes. He stated that it is important for clubs to market themselves in a positive manner and maintain a positive brand image amongst the fans. He believes that marketing is essential to raise brand awareness and the marketing side of the game is only going to grow in years to come. He believes the football can take note from the American football with halftime shows and improving event experiences to better market the product. He believes the FAI should look to put on light displays and music before the national team take to the field to improve the overall fan experience. (Manager, 2021).

This interview helped to back up the research that was already conducted and support the research question of how important a role marketing plays in football. This interview showcased how marketing can have many benefits for clubs of all sizes and that marketing will only increase in football in years to come.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1) Introduction

The two research questions in this dissertation of **“what is the effectiveness of sponsorship in football?”** and **“how important is it to exploit marketing opportunities in modern football?”** have been extensively researched through secondary research and primary research using surveys and interviews.

The secondary research helped to formulate the argument that sponsorship is extremely effective in football and can present benefits for both club and sponsor. This argument was then backed up with a survey from football fans who gave their thoughts on the importance of sponsorship and through an interview with a sponsor of Bohemians football club to see how they benefit as well.

The secondary research also helped to form the argument that it is vitally important for clubs to exploit marketing opportunities in football. This argument was then supported with an interview with the Sales and Marketing Manager with the FAI.

Sponsorship is an exchange between the sponsor such as a brand and the sponsored such as the football club where both parties gain mutual benefits. These exchanges then result in the sponsor and the sponsored parties becoming associated in the minds of the consumers. (Bridgewater, 2014). These deals result in the clubs receiving vital financial support and the companies receiving brand awareness and a positive brand image. Sponsorship is extremely effective in football, and this was confirmed by the fans of Bohemians football club in question 4 of the survey.

5.2) Survey and Supporter Relationships

The main themes uncovered from the survey answers regarding sponsorship in football were the importance of revenue and awareness. Sponsorship in football is extremely effective for clubs big and small. However smaller clubs like Bohemians rely more on sponsors than clubs like Manchester United. The fans of Bohemians agreed that sponsorship is extremely important and said that the club makes use of any investment they can get. This is backed up by the Porterhouse sponsorship; it may seem like a small deal, but it is hugely significant for a club of Bohemians stature.

For small clubs, being associated with a big-name brand can help to raise awareness for the club as well as receiving additional revenue. Club supporters tend to notice the sponsors associated with their teams and form positive perceptions which the Bohemians survey backs up. Sponsoring clubs gives brands a higher sense of awareness as fans tend to easily recognise club sponsors. This results in the fans forming positive attitudes towards the sponsor and are more likely to purchase the products. (Dalakas, 2015).

One of the main reasons for fans forming positive relationships with their favourite teams' sponsors is due to a theory known as the balance theory. This theory suggests that fans have a desire to create balanced relationships which means they will transfer their strong attachment and liking of their team to anything associated with it. These may include players, other fans, and advertising messages such as sponsorships. (Dalakas, 2015). The survey with Bohemians fans confirms this balance theory with 81.5% of respondents saying they would be inclined to buy from a brand due to its association with the team and 71.3% saying they

would be loyal to a brand over others for its association with Bohemians. This once again illustrates the effectiveness of sponsorship in football. As well as the clubs benefitting from sponsorship, the sponsorship companies also see benefits as fans positive perceptions of their teams can transfer onto the associated brand.

On the flipside of this the balance theory works with fans opinions of rival teams. Their negative feelings or dislike of a rival team may transfer to their sponsors and partners. The fans form a strong dislike for the rival teams which leads to them forming negative perceptions of anything they can associate with that team. This is discussed in further detail below.

Sponsorship deals can create significantly more revenue for Bohemians and partnering with the right companies can certainly raise awareness for the club. According to Bohemians supporters, the partnership with Dublin Bus is a great fit for the club as Bohemians are receiving increased revenue but also getting their brand image out there. The Bohemians bus travels around Dublin and helps to raise awareness for the club. The supporters in the survey believe that the exposure Bohemians can receive from sponsors is very important and that the revenue received goes a long way in helping with the day to day running of the club and paying player wages. The themes of revenue and awareness uncovered in these survey responses helped to back up the research from earlier in the dissertation and illustrate exactly how effective sponsorship in football can be for many clubs. (Fans, 2021).

5.3) Sponsorship Risks

The interview with Dublin Bus helped to reiterate that sponsorship is extremely effective in football and can provide many benefits for the sponsors themselves. However, despite these benefits the research also showed that companies can take a risk when sponsoring a club or event. This was discussed earlier when Cristiano Ronaldo removed the Coca Cola branded bottle from a press conference leading to a decrease in their share price. Companies can receive a negative impact from sponsorship if fans of rival teams take a dislike to their brand.

It might not occur regularly but there are times in football when two rival teams have such a fierce dislike for one another that the rivalry may impact the teams' sponsors. Sponsorship in football is extremely effective and beneficial but it can also be a negative for the sponsors when fans begin only associating their brand with rival teams hence them forming negative perceptions. It may be the case that a group of fans are loyal to a brand in a specific industry for their association with their club and hostile to a brand in the same industry for its association with a rival team. (Bergkvist, 2012).

This was seen in a study by Bergkvist where two Swedish teams formed a dislike for the rival teams sponsor due to the sporting rivalry. (Dalakas, 2015).

The two teams were AIK and Hammarby from Stockholm who have an ongoing bitter rivalry. These two teams were both sponsored by two different beer brands. AIK were sponsored by Åbro and Hammarby sponsored by Falcon. Both brands are well known for their association with the respective teams and each set of fans have formed a dislike for the rival beer. It is common that pubs who attract more fans supporting AIK do not sell the Falcon branded beer and vice versa. (Bergkvist, 2012). These negative perceptions that may be formed are a disadvantage for sponsors but there are certainly more benefits to outweigh them.

Following extensive research into the effectiveness of sponsorship in football it is evident that it brings many benefits for both club and brand. The research results provide insight into the effectiveness of sponsorship and its ability to bring added revenue for clubs. As well as this it can also bring increased brand awareness and a positive image for the brand who are sponsoring the club. This literature was backed up with an interview from a sponsor's perspective and a survey from the fans perspective and it emphasised the statement that sponsorship is extremely effective in football.

5.4) Marketing as a Tool for Both Small and Large Clubs

Marketing practices are also important for football clubs of all sizes. After extensive research and interviews it can be said that it is vitally important to exploit marketing opportunities in football. Marketing allows for clubs to expand their fan base on a larger scale and create much needed awareness for the club's brand.

The right marketing strategies can hugely improve the clubs brand identity and improve awareness which in turn can lead to better sponsorship deals. The literature that was found in this dissertation shows that marketing can benefit clubs of all sizes. Larger clubs in the premier league can market themselves to increase fans in lesser-known regions and raise their stature on a global scale. The smaller clubs such as Bohemians can market their brand identity and use marketing practices to attract new fans and increase revenue. Bohemians have marketed themselves incredibly well to bring in new fans and have taken part in campaigns to help the homeless, refugees and prisoners all the while increasing awareness for the club. (Anon., 2019).

The dissertation explored the importance of marketing practices in football for clubs of all sizes and delved deeper into the strategies of Bohemians. They managed to explore new marketing opportunities to revolutionise the club and increase their fan base and pay their debts without trying to compete with the larger clubs in the premier league. This is a practice that many smaller clubs could follow.

However, marketing practices are also extremely important for clubs on a larger scale looking to grow their brand globally which was touched on earlier in the dissertation. Clubs like Bohemians in the league of Ireland and Manchester United in the premier league are worlds apart in terms of global appeal and revenue generation however they both recognise the importance of marketing. Manchester United like many other top teams are now owned by companies whose prime aim is to increase profit. Clubs of all sizes rely on marketing but for very different reasons. Bohemians used marketing to grow their brand and improve the club all the while looking to help a community. In contrast, clubs, or businesses such as Manchester United use marketing to increase revenue and profit.

Manchester United is one of the world's biggest football brands and they have been exploring marketing opportunities for many years to cement their brand on a global stage. Following the formation of the premier league Manchester United took advantage from their success and used marketing opportunities through non-football related products and services. United aimed to market their brand and raise awareness for the club by associating their name with varying products including wines, lagers, and champagnes. They also had a finance brand and due to their sponsor at the time they also had MU mobile with Vodafone. In 2003 Manchester United also opened a cinema complex known as the red cinema in Salford in Manchester. (Vincent, 2006).

Unlike Bohemians and teams in the LOI who target marketing opportunities to attract Irish fans, Manchester United and other top teams have been marketing their clubs to attract a global fanbase especially in regions such as Asia and America. For bigger clubs in world football the players they sign are intended to strengthen the team and to put them ahead of their rivals. However, these big money signings can also be seen as marketing tools for the clubs. Over the years Manchester United has signed many Asian players such as Park Ji Sung and Dong Fangzhou and clubs including Everton, Manchester City and Tottenham have also followed a similar strategy by signing Asian players.

Football in Asia has grown in popularity substantially and as of the article by Hill and Vincent in 2006 it was estimated that United had over 40 million fans in Asia. (Vincent, 2006). These signings by the top teams may have been for footballing purposes but it can also be argued that they were a part of the clubs marketing strategies to grow their fan base in Asia.

One club who also utilised the signing of a player as a marketing tool was Juventus when they signed Cristiano Ronaldo one of the world's best and most marketable players in 2018. The transfer saw Juventus pay €105 million for Ronaldo who was aged 33 at the time. The amount of money paid for a player nearing the end of his career would usually be considered unwise but with Cristiano Ronaldo it was considered smart. Before even signing for the club the rumours of the transfer alone saw the stock price of Juventus increase and once the signing was confirmed the stock prices soared. Other clubs in the Italian league also saw their stock prices increase because of the Ronaldo transfer.

Ronaldo is one of the biggest names in football, so it is evident that he was not just signed for his footballing ability. The signing of Ronaldo could help Juventus to attract new sponsors, increase ticket sales and sell jerseys and other merchandise related to Ronaldo. (Putranto, 2019). The signing of Ronaldo was due to his outstanding football ability, but the marketing side also played an important role as Juventus knew it would be good for their brand.

5.5) Discussion Conclusion

The research throughout the dissertation and the interview with the marketing department of the FAI show that exploiting marketing opportunities in football is of utmost importance in the modern game. As mentioned previously marketing is effective for clubs of all sizes. Looking through the lens of Bohemians in the league of Ireland, marketing has helped them to revolutionise the club by raising awareness for their brand through positive community outreach which in turn has led to a growing fanbase, an increase in ticket and merchandise sales and an increase in sponsorship deals.

The Sales and Marketing Manager in the FAI agreed that Bohemians has marketed itself incredibly well and believes that marketing is just as important for the bigger clubs. After conducting extensive research and an in-depth interview it is evident that it is extremely important to develop new marketing opportunities in football. The dissertation focused on the league of Ireland and the premier league where there is a stark divide between the size of the teams however, the importance of sponsorship and marketing opportunities remains the same for clubs of all sizes.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, football is a sport that is constantly evolving and presenting more opportunities for businesses, investors, and football clubs to increase their profits. Sponsorship and marketing are extremely important factors for football clubs and the importance of marketing and sponsorship is relevant for clubs of all sizes. Leading clubs such as Manchester United who are already in a strong financial position rely on sponsorship to continue to improve their revenue and to make as much profit as possible for their owners. Bohemians are a club who receive much less in sponsorship, but it is still as important to them as they require increased revenue to continue to both run and grow the club.

A survey was conducted with fans of Bohemians to gain an understanding of how sponsorship has an impact on them and to further understand their opinions on its importance to the club. This survey helped to reiterate the literature found and confirmed that sponsorship is key for Bohemians in securing more revenue and growing the club. This survey also highlighted how sponsors can also benefit from their investment. The supporters were asked to name as many sponsors as they could associated with Bohemians, and the main partners received the higher percentage of mentions. This shows companies that provide sponsorship to a club can raise awareness of their brand amongst this targeted audience.

Companies can invest a lot of money into sponsorship and although this can carry risk, it can also return major benefits. The survey amongst Bohemians fans showed that supporters of a club will tend to form positive perceptions of a brand associated with their favourite team and this can impact their buying behaviours. In the survey, 81.5% of respondents said they would buy from a brand due to its association with Bohemians and 71.3% said they would be loyal to a brand over others due to its connection with the club. As well as this 77.6% of respondents said they would recognise a brand for its association with Bohemians without knowing what it offers. This clearly illustrates the effectiveness of sponsorship in football as fans will be loyal to a brand due to its associations with their club.

Sponsorship is a two-sided coin as it can provide many benefits for both club and sponsor. An interview was conducted with Dublin Bus who sponsor Bohemians to gain an insight into the perspective of a sponsor. They stated that even with the past disruptive year due to Covid they were very happy with their investment and have seen major advantages of associating themselves with Bohemians. The research discovered along with the survey and interview helped to formulate a definitive answer for the first research question; **“what is the effectiveness of sponsorship in football?”**. Sponsorship in football is extremely effective for clubs both large and small as it provides important revenue, assists in increasing profit, helps raise awareness of clubs and strengthens the brand image of sponsors.

The globalisation of football has been a steppingstone for companies and investors to enter the sport and has made it more business focused. Many elite football clubs are now complex businesses, owned by rich investors, who want to make as much profit as possible. This has seen marketing become a prominent aspect of the game and is a key tool for clubs to grow their brand on a global scale. They want to attract a new legion of fans around the world so that they can continue to increase their revenue streams and profit. This growing base of

new supporters are seen as consumers to the club owners and marketing is a key tool to growing their online presence and increase club merchandise sales in these new regions.

League of Ireland clubs find it more difficult to attract new supporters due to the ever-growing popularity of the English Premier league. Bohemians are a club who identified marketing as a key tool in attracting new fans and in getting them to support local rather than a team abroad. Instead of competing with the world's biggest clubs, Bohemians decided not to market just the football but to promote the club as a community.

Bohemians launched marketing campaigns to attract new supporters, raise awareness for the club and to show fans that they are a club who can be trusted and are not just operating to make a quick profit. They have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme in place to tackle racism, the housing crisis, work with refugees and work with inmates of Mountjoy prison. Bohemians knew they could never compete with the marketing budgets of the premier league so they marketed themselves as a community where anyone can be involved and where they like to help those in need. This is one of the reasons they are known by their supporters as the People's Club.



Figure 11: Bohemians "The peoples club" (Anon., 2019)

The rationale for developing marketing opportunities for the League of Ireland and the premier league couldn't be more different. Elite clubs such as Manchester United are looking to grow their fanbase on a global scale whereas smaller clubs such as Bohemians are looking to increase their fanbase on a local level. Despite the contrasting reasons for seeking new marketing opportunities, its importance is relevant for clubs of all sizes.

The interview with the Sales and Marketing Manager in the FAI helped to support the literature discussed regarding the importance of marketing in football. The manager agreed that marketing is now a key aspect of football and that it will only grow in the coming years. He also stated that marketing is needed for all clubs to build their brand identity as it helps the public to form positive perceptions. He believes that investment is needed in the league of Ireland but also stated that the league must be marketed better if it wants to stop the influx of Irish football fans supporting a club abroad rather than a local one. The lure of a big stadium and world class players sees many Irish fans travel abroad for a game. However, if the league and Irish clubs marketed themselves better more and more fans may choose to support local clubs. The research into marketing in football and the subsequent interview with the FAI, helped to formulate an answer to the second research question; **how important is it to exploit marketing opportunities in modern football?**. The writing of this dissertation helped confirm the hypothesis that exploiting marketing opportunities in football is vitally important and is something that should be integral to the business strategy of all clubs.

After extensive research it can be concluded that football is a global sport with business now at the forefront and this is only going to evolve and expand in the coming years. Marketing

has become a significant tool for clubs and businesses in football and has helped strengthen its global brand. Sponsorship has led to the large financial investment into the game which has seen it transform into a large business.

The dissertation compares and contrasts the League of Ireland with the English premier league where there is a vast difference between sponsorship deals available. However, continuing to exploit marketing opportunities is vital to the development and growth of both leagues.

To conclude sponsorship and marketing are extremely effective and important in the continuing success and growth of football as it evolves into a billion-dollar industry.

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