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SPM 18
Sport Policy & Management

WHAT BRINGS PEOPLE INTO THE SOCCER STADIUM? (PART 1)

The case of Belgium from a marketing perspective

Mariana de Carvalho
Jeroen Scheerder
Filip Boen
José Pedro Sarmiento

2013

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PREFACE

Try to imagine a Real Madrid vs. Barcelona with empty stands. Not easy? Of course not. The soccer industry is almost inseparable from the spectators that fill the stadium with colourful shirts, chants, and Mexican waves. Still, while some countries across Europe, such as Germany, Spain, or England, have full stadiums during the soccer games, others have to deal with empty seats.

The aim of this report is to analyse the factors influencing live attendance at soccer games. We want to understand the motives of people to attend or not to attend soccer games in Belgium. In this manner, we can help the soccer agents to define their marketing strategies to attract more people to the soccer stadiums, or even to attract other segments than the ones already attending. By referring to the soccer agents, we mean the clubs from top level and lower level, the Belgian Pro League, the Royal Belgian Football Association, and even the cities that own or co-own the stadiums.

From our perspective, there is still a lot of work that can be done by these agents, from the marketing perspective, to improve the number of attendees. Soccer has been resistant to change, when it comes to several issues, namely, in changing the rules to make it more attractive to the audience. Nevertheless, the agents should listen to the consumers and adapt their strategies according to their target audiences.

This SPM report is the first of a series of two reports about soccer attendance. Both reports are based on data collected in the scope of the PhD research project entitled *What brings people into the soccer stadium? A marketing approach*. This PhD research is being conducted by dra. Mariana de Carvalho at the KU Leuven, Belgium, and at the Sports Faculty of University of Porto (FADEUP), Portugal. Professor Jeroen Scheerder, from the Policy in Sports & Physical Activity Research Group, KU Leuven, is the supervisor. Professor José Pedro Sarmiento, from the Sport Management Department, FADEUP, and Professor Filip Boen, from the Physical Activity, Sports & Health Research Group, KU Leuven, are the co-supervisors. This PhD research is financed by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT), Portugal. Data were collected in Belgium and in Portugal. This report focuses on the Belgian data only. The second report will focus on Portuguese data only.

We would like to thank the many people who contributed to this report, particularly, Jos Feys, for proficiently placing the survey online. We want to thank the students of the research internship and of the master theses from the KU Leuven who helped with the data collection. Finally, to all the respondents that answered the survey, a huge word of appreciation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In order to assist the reader on the journey through this document, we would like to start by clarifying the use of the word *soccer*, instead of *football*, in this report. Despite the fact that the word football is used all over Europe, and also by the two most powerful official institutions running the sport (FIFA – *Fédération Internationale de Football Association*, and UEFA - *Union des Associations Européennes de Football*), we prefer to use the word soccer. The main reason for this choice is that we would like this document, and also the forthcoming doctoral thesis, to be accessible and clear to people all over the world, including the American, the Australian and the Asian continents, where the word soccer is mostly used. Moreover, when using searching engines, the word football can be confused with American football, or Australian football. There is no possible confusion related to the word soccer. Therefore, our choice was for the unambiguous word.

Following, we give an overview of the outline of this report. It is constituted by seven chapters.

Chapter 2 Sport consumption and sport attendance: theoretical framework includes a literature review about sport consumption. It is not our aim to focus on active sport consumption, i.e., on sport participation. Instead, we centre our analysis on the passive sport consumption, e.g., being a sport fan or a sport spectator, and particularly, a live spectator.

This part also contains an overview of the sociological and psychological concepts included in this research. These concepts were previously found to be related to live attendance in sports, and are incorporated in our survey and study. Finally, a marketing perspective is presented, with an analysis to the concepts of relationship marketing and value co-creation.

Chapter 3 European soccer: facts and figures analyses some European soccer statistics. This part is not meant to be an exhaustive research. Instead, it intends to contextualise our own research, in a European soccer culture. Attendance numbers, as well as some financial details, are analysed.

Chapter 4 Research framework focuses on the methodology of this research. More precisely, we explain in detail the kind of instrument that was used, i.e., an online survey, and how it was elaborated, validated and refined. Furthermore, the process of data collection is explained as well as the data analysis. Lastly, the characteristics of the sample are reported. A survey was answered by

5,015 Dutch-speaking Belgian people, including fans of professional teams playing on the 1st league, fans of clubs playing in lower leagues, and non-fans.

In **Chapter 5 Results and discussion** we want to investigate and interpret who the fans are, what they do when it comes to soccer attendance, with whom they do it, where, how and why.

We decided to divide this chapter in four groups of analyse to facilitate the establishment of a marketing perspective. The non-fans are analysed as one group, because they have particular characteristics as a target consumption that have to be taken into account. Afterwards, a comparison by level of play is performed, by establishing two groups, i.e., a group with fans of the 1st league, and a group with fans of lower leagues. A distinction between men and women is presented. Finally, a comparison between groups of fans based on the number of games they attended during the previous season is executed. At the end of each one of these parts, we present a summary, that we call *Who and how?* with the main features of the different groups of fans, and also some of their soccer consumption habits and opinions.

Chapter 6 How to bring people into the stadium is practically oriented, to assist marketeers or sport managers of several entities, such as clubs, federations, or cities, on their quest for higher occupation rates. We present specific suggestions for each segment, based on what we found in this research. We also give an overview of some broad marketing implications, specified in the literature.

Chapter 7 Conclusion focuses on summarising the most important data showed before, the limitations of the research, and future research implications.

CHAPTER 2

SPORT CONSUMPTION AND SPORT ATTENDANCE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sport consumption behaviour, sport events attendance choices, and motives that take people into the sports venue or that make them stay out of the stadium, are issues that arouse the interest of people from the academic and practical field. A better comprehension about the sport fans, the motives that get supporters into the stadium and the reasons that can make them buy some official merchandising can help to build a whole picture about the followers of a specific club, athlete or sport. This picture will be useful from the academic point of view, and can also provide evidence for the sport marketeers and managers in the design of a team or club marketing plan. Therefore, the wide-ranging idea of this literature review is to systematise the knowledge about sport consumption and particularly about live attendance.

1. Sport consumption

There are many different sport consumptions, e.g., attending a game or a sport event, listening to the radio or seeing sports on TV, playing a sport or a game (as a professional, amateur and recreationist), or buying sports equipment and merchandising. Nowadays, with the new technologies and social media growth, also playing in a fantasy game or league or engaging in an on-line sport chat room can be included in the definition of sport consumption.

Viseu, Santos, Fernandes, and Ribeiro (2002) refer to the sport consumption as active or passive. Active consumption is related with actually performing sports activities. Passive consumption is associated with live attendance at the stadiums or sport facilities, with media attendance (via radio, TV or newspaper), and with a sports life style (a sport self-image). Scheerder et al. (2011) differentiate between media sport and mass sport, with media sport referring to watching sport, physically passive sport activities and a sport public, whereas mass sport refers to doing sport, physically active sport activities and sport participants. Sometimes, it is not possible to totally draw the lines between the several types of consumption, e.g., using some kind of sport shoes can be related with an active consumption, such as practicing some sport, or with a sportive life style.

Another distinction can be made between the direct and indirect consumption. Direct sport consumption involves attendance or participation at a sporting event. Indirect sport consumption involves contact with sport through some form of mass media (TV, radio, or internet). This distinction is important because the situational context in which a spectator witnesses an event may impact the response to the event. It is totally different if the person becomes a part of the event environment or not, and if an individual has the opportunity to impact the environment or not (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001).

Although there are innumerable studies, theories and models that attempt to get into the mind of the consumer, the factors that influence this behaviour may be considered either environmental or individual (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 1993). Environmental factors may include social and cultural norms, climatic and physical conditions, social class structure, race and gender relations, sport opportunity structure, significant others, such as family, peers and coaches, and market behaviour of firms in the sport industry. Individual factors include one's attitudes, perceptions, learning, motivations, and stage in the family cycle, as well as the process of consumer decision making itself.

The individual sport consumption, in general, is affected by the following classic determinants (Viseu et al., 2002):

- ⚽ income, economic well-being, personal wealth and credit possibilities;
- ⚽ the price of the sports products;
- ⚽ the price of other consumer goods that can substitute or are complementary to sports goods;
- ⚽ the period of life in which the person is living;
- ⚽ the sports offer.

From another more sports oriented perspective, Smith and Stewart elaborated a list of factors moderating sport consumption behaviour (2007):

- ⚽ sport context (type of sport, sport location and reciprocity);
- ⚽ competition (balance, uncertainty, quality of visiting teams, likelihood of winning);
- ⚽ physical environment (venue, facilities);
- ⚽ economic (prices of tickets, income of fan);
- ⚽ promotional (special experiences, product attachments);
- ⚽ social context (alternative activities, social change and fashion, fractured traditions).

Several studies talk about sport consumption but they do not distinguish the different types of consumption such as attendance, media consumption, or merchandising consumption. For instance, Trail and colleagues (2000; 2003) talk about *Sport Spectator Consumption Behaviour* mixing the concepts of spectator and consumer. Motives for watching sports are related, but are different from team identification and sporting event consumption in general (Madrigal, 2006).

Studying sport consumption from a general perspective may be useful if the main objective is focused on the definition of fans and their consumption behaviour. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish the different kinds of consumption. Namely, the attendance behaviour is an important issue of the consumption that should be studied separately, due to its dimension, influences and consequences. Not only the revenues related to tickets, merchandising, food and drinks are related with the number of spectators at the stadium, but also the sponsorship and advertising partners take into account this number, to choose for a team to sponsor (Czarnitzki & Satdtmann, 2002).

2. Sport consumers, sport fans, or sport spectators?

When it comes to the use of the terms *sport consumer*, *sport spectator*, or *sport fan* (or *supporter*, used mainly in the context of the team sports) there is a lot to discuss. Although some authors use the words in an indifferent way, others, correctly we would say, distinguish them.

Sport consumer is the broadest definition. A sport consumer is someone that consumes sport in some way, and therefore, everyone that can actively or passively be associated to a sport, a team, an athlete, a sport product, in any way, is a consumer. Sport consumers profiles differ a lot, e.g., their needs, wishes, values, attitudes, and behaviours are quite varied (Meir, 2000; C. Sá & Sá, 1999). Some are passionate and fanatical, but not all of them are fanatical in the same way; some use their team to confirm their personal identity; some are totally loyal; some are aware of the club history or are resistant to changes that may threaten team values and practices (Stewart, Smith, & Nicholson, 2003); some attend games on a regular basis, while others attend only on special occasions (Meir, 2000; Stewart et al., 2003); some consumers spend most of their time engaging in sport chatter and surfing on the internet, while others display their fandom by watching pay-per-view sports in different ways, and use team affiliations to meet a diverse range of needs (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001); finally, some of them like to consume sports live, while others prefer to follow it on TV or through other media; and some buy sports products regularly or occasionally, while others do not (Stewart et al., 2003). Sport consumption is complex and fan typologies cannot be defined based on a single factor (Crawford, 2004). It is critical to highlight that there are cultural differences between

supporters at the local, regional, national and continental levels. Also in history, each nation shows itself to have certain unique characteristics in the development of militant forms of fandom (Giulianotti, 1999). However, within a progressively more global cultural framework, it is possible to recognise some continuity.

Distinguishing spectators from fans is imperative. This separation between the definitions is useful from a theoretical, as well as from a practical point of view. It elucidates the concepts and makes them clearer, also to the professionals on the field, such as marketers and managers. A sport spectator can watch and observe, from a less emotional point of view (Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003), while a sport fan is an enthusiastic follower of a team, athlete, sport or sport product (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001).

The definition of sport spectator is objective. Sport spectators are those individuals who witness a sporting event in person or through some form of media, while some sport fans rarely witness sporting events in person (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). Some spectators have little interest in identifying with a favourite sport team or player, while sport fans can be described as those with a permanent interest in sport (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001).

On the other hand, a fan is an enthusiastic devotee (this is, with some level of attachment) of some particular sports consumptive object – a team, a league, a sport, an athlete or coach (Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999). Being a fan is a self-defining concept, i.e., a fan is someone that considers him or herself a fan (Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, & Jacquemotte, 2000). Table 1 distinguishes spectators and fans.

The distinction between spectators and fans is important mainly for sport marketers. Marketers can focus on making people feel themselves more of a fan, so they consume more sports (attending games or buying merchandising) or on objectively attracting them to the stadium through several commercial or emotional strategies. The spectators want to see a quality show, appreciate the skills, the game aesthetics and to increase their knowledge about the sport. These individuals are much more influenced in their consumption decisions by things like the price of a certain product, accessibility or commodity of a game, and they will decide to stay at home if the last experience between the crowds has not been pleasant or if the traffic to the game was infernal (Trail, Fink, et al., 2003). The fans are different. Some fans want their team to win above all, and they want to share this triumph with the club itself, get to know the coach and the athletes – the marketer should organise, for instance, autograph sessions. For the fans that like to be informed, the club should communicate through the webpage, internet chats or blogs. Finally, fans like to dress as their

idols or, at least, they like to be visually identified with the team. The club must be aware and insightful to give the fans what they want (Trail, Fink, et al., 2003).

Table 1 *Sport consumers' characteristics: spectators versus fans*

Spectators	versus	Fans
⚽ Watch and observe, but from a less emotional point of view	⚽	Enthusiastic follower of a team, athlete, sport or sport product
⚽ Witness a sport event in person or through some form of media	⚽	They use it as a confirmation of their identity
⚽ Some of them have little interest in identifying with a favourite team or player	⚽	Some of them rarely witness sporting events in person
⚽ Want to see a quality show, appreciate the skills and the game aesthetics, and want to increase their knowledge about the sport	⚽	Want their team to win above all
⚽ Objective concept	⚽	Want to share the triumphs with the club itself, get to know the coach and the athletes, ask for autographs and take pictures
	⚽	Want to know everything about their club and keep informed
	⚽	Like to dress as their idols or, at least, like to be visually identified with the team
	⚽	Self-defining concept

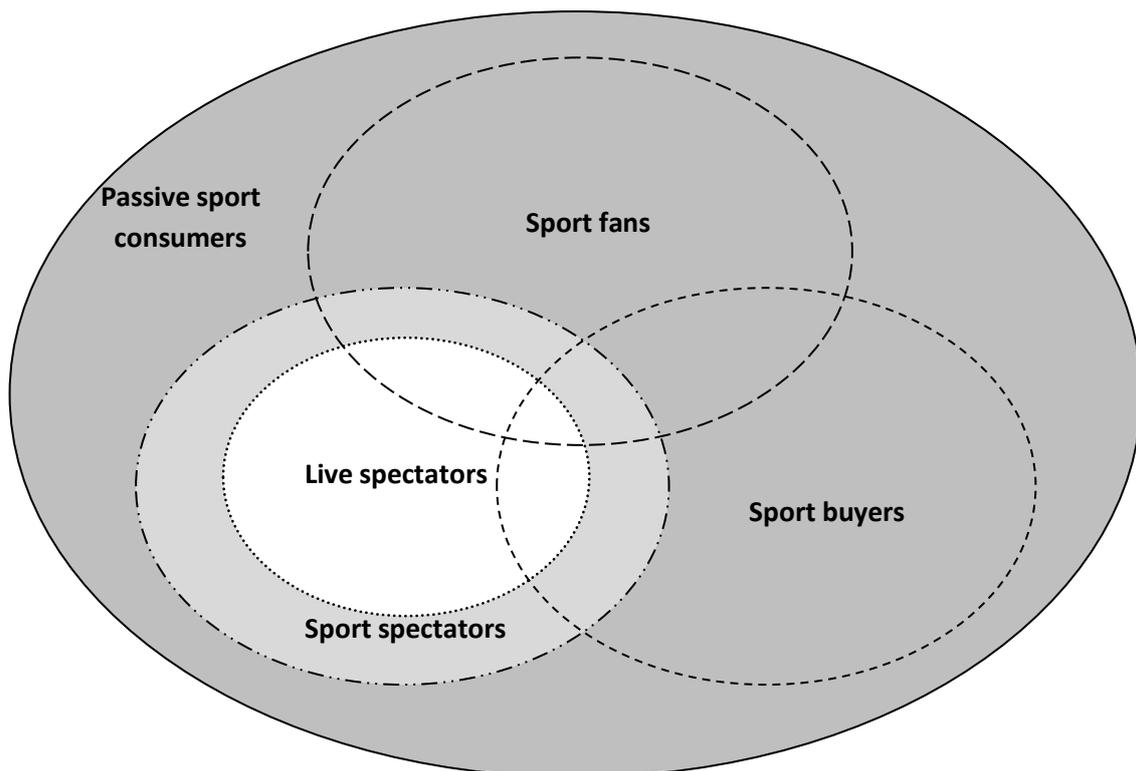
Sources: Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Trail, Robinson, et al., 2003; Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001; Wann & Waddill, 2003

The concepts of spectator and of fan are not mutually exclusive, of course. A person can be both a spectator and a fan, i.e., someone that follows a team, sport, or athlete and also follows the competition live, or in any kind of media. But sport spectators are not necessarily sport fans (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001), and being a fan of a certain team does not mean being a spectator. An extreme example of a fan who is not a spectator is someone that affirms being a fan of a team, just because of the colour they play (he / she even bought the playing shirt and uses it to play soccer with friends), but does not follow any kind of competition or information about the team. On the other hand, an extreme example of a spectator that is not a fan is someone that attends soccer

games with friends or family just to be with them, and is actually seeing the game, but not really interested in it. In this manner, a passive sport consumer can be only a spectator, only a fan, or both of them.

We excluded the active participation in sports, because the analysis would become too complex, and the active sport participation is not the focus of this report or of our work. Figure 1 presents a scheme of the passive sport consumers' classification, including the sport fans, the buyers of sport material or merchandise, and the sport spectators. The proportions of the spaces do not have the intention to be adjusted to the reality, as we do not have statistical information about it. By presenting this scheme, we merely want to call the attention to the intersection between the groups. The focus of our research is the group in white, the live spectators, i.e., the ones that witness live sport events, in this case, soccer games.

Figure 1 *Classification of the passive sport consumers*



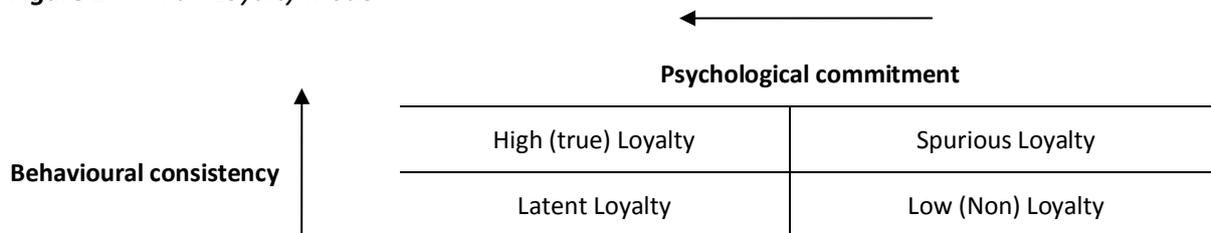
2.1. Fan loyalty

Loyalty is a highly developed attitude that is persistent, resistant to change, creates biases in cognitive processing and provides a guide to behaviour (Funk & James, 2001). It was studied as a one-dimensional construct, but also as a multidimensional construct: attitudinal loyalty and

behavioural loyalty (Neale & Funk, 2006). Fan loyalty researchers have used these criteria to operationalise loyalty to a sport team, and often require that people both express a strong positive attitude toward the team (truly caring about the team's success), and direct their behaviour toward the team, in order to be considered a loyal team fan (Funk & James, 2001; Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000). People who could be classified as a buyer, such as a person who buys a hat because of the colours but does not cheer for the team, or solely spectators (such as a person who attends games as a designated driver but does not cheer for the team) were excluded from the definition of fan loyalty. This attitudinal loyalty is a parallel concept to the one of team identification, which will be more deeply analysed later in this text. Some activities showing behavioural loyalty in sports are, e.g., attending the favourite club's games live at the stadium, watching the favourite club's games on TV, consuming other club-related media, purchasing club merchandise, wearing the colours and / or logo of the favourite club, and participating in discussions about the favourite club (Bauer, Sauer, & Exler, 2005).

Backman and Crompton (1991, cit. Mahony et al., 2000, p. 17) used attitudinal and behavioural scores to segment sport fans. They used a two-dimensional matrix to distinguish four discrete levels of loyalty (Figure 2). The resulting four-quadrant matrix was useful to classify participants into specific groups by weak or strong attitudes and high or low behavioural consistency. Following Day's (1969) earlier characterisation (cit. Mahony et al., 2000, p.16), those demonstrating strong psychological attachment, i.e., high attitudinal loyalty, as well as active participation, i.e., high behavioural loyalty, were placed in the upper left quadrant, labelled *high (true) loyalty*, as can be seen in the Figure 2. *Latently loyal* fans often express a strong desire to participate, but may lack the means, e.g., money, time, equipment. With this categorisation, Backman and Crompton demonstrated that the traditional all-or-none portrayal of loyalty as a simple dichotomy between loyal and non-loyal consumers was far too slender.

Figure 2 Fan Loyalty Model



Source: Backman & Crompton, 1991, cit. Mahony et al., 2000, p. 17

Following this line of thoughts, Mahony and colleagues (2000) proposed, based on the use of their psychological commitment to team scale, four attitudinal loyalty segments, i.e., high loyalty, spurious loyalty, latent loyalty and low loyalty.

We can distinguish lowly and highly identified sport fans (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001), or as Wann and Branscombe (1990) called them, the fair-weather and the die-hard fans. The fair-weather fans may appear rather disinterested, they do not wear apparel that signifies their allegiance to a particular team or athlete, they rarely clap or yell and they seem more interested in talking to their friends than watching the game (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). On the other hand, the die-hard fans appear to be immersed in the contest, they are dressed and / or painted in their team's colours, they clap and yell for their team and they see nothing else besides of the game or the contest. Quick (2000) names them as tribal fans also. They are passionate about the sport, the game, its culture and they are intensely committed to a particular team, athlete or coach, as in the case of a tribe.

3. Theoretical model of live attendance

Leisure activities consumption, like sport attendance, is experiential in nature, with a lot of associated subjective and symbolic meanings (Madrigal, 2006). Literature about sport consumption, and sport attendance in particular, has covered different areas of knowledge, such as marketing, anthropology, sociology, economy, and psychology. In this section we present a model proposed by ourselves, to relate the different factors associated with soccer attendance. The several motives that are studied to be related to sport attendance, especially in professional sports, are developed.

The first researches conducted about this issue were stating that, in general, attendance was influenced by economic, demographic and game attractiveness variables (Schofield, 1983). On a revision paper with data collected from the 70's and the 80's studies in professional North American leagues, the sub-categories of each one of these categories were defined (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989). While economic factors corresponded to ticket price, per capita income, substitute forms of entertainment, television effects and the effect of other sports attractions in the area, sociodemographic factors studied by that time were the population size of the area, ethnic population and geography (including distance between franchises and easy access to facility for fans). The category nominated as game attractiveness included factors as promotions and special events, star players, the team as a contender or team placement in the standings and the closeness of the pennant race. Finally, the residual variables corresponded to scheduling of games, fan accommodation and weather conditions.

As research in this area of knowledge became stronger, several models and explanations about sport attendance with numerous variables emerged (Mullin et al., 1993; Stewart et al., 2003; Trail et al., 2000; Trail & James, 2001; Viseu et al., 2002; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999). While some studies give an overemphasis to social and psychological traits, identifying important motivational and behavioural differences, other studies (also) focus on the cultural and economic context in which behaviours take place. Most of them rarely explain how fans might move between different segments, or how relationships with sport teams are formed in the first place. Also surveys about the motives that make people consume, and, in particular, attend a game or sports event were elaborated, in several languages (Trail & James, 2001; Wann et al., 1999). However, the differences between the scales are often semantic (Wann, 1995).

A wide-ranging literature review was undertaken to emphasise the diverse approaches, models and dimensions explored by researchers studying sport attendance. We elaborated this model (Figure 3) based on sociological, psychological, anthropological and marketing concepts. The factors included are related to the fans, their fandom, and the object of their fandom, in this case, the sport and the club.

We propose that these four groups represent a different role on the attendance decision. **Demographics** are background variables, and therefore they are control variables. These variables cannot be changed by the provider, and therefore, it should be taken into account in order to segment the spectators.

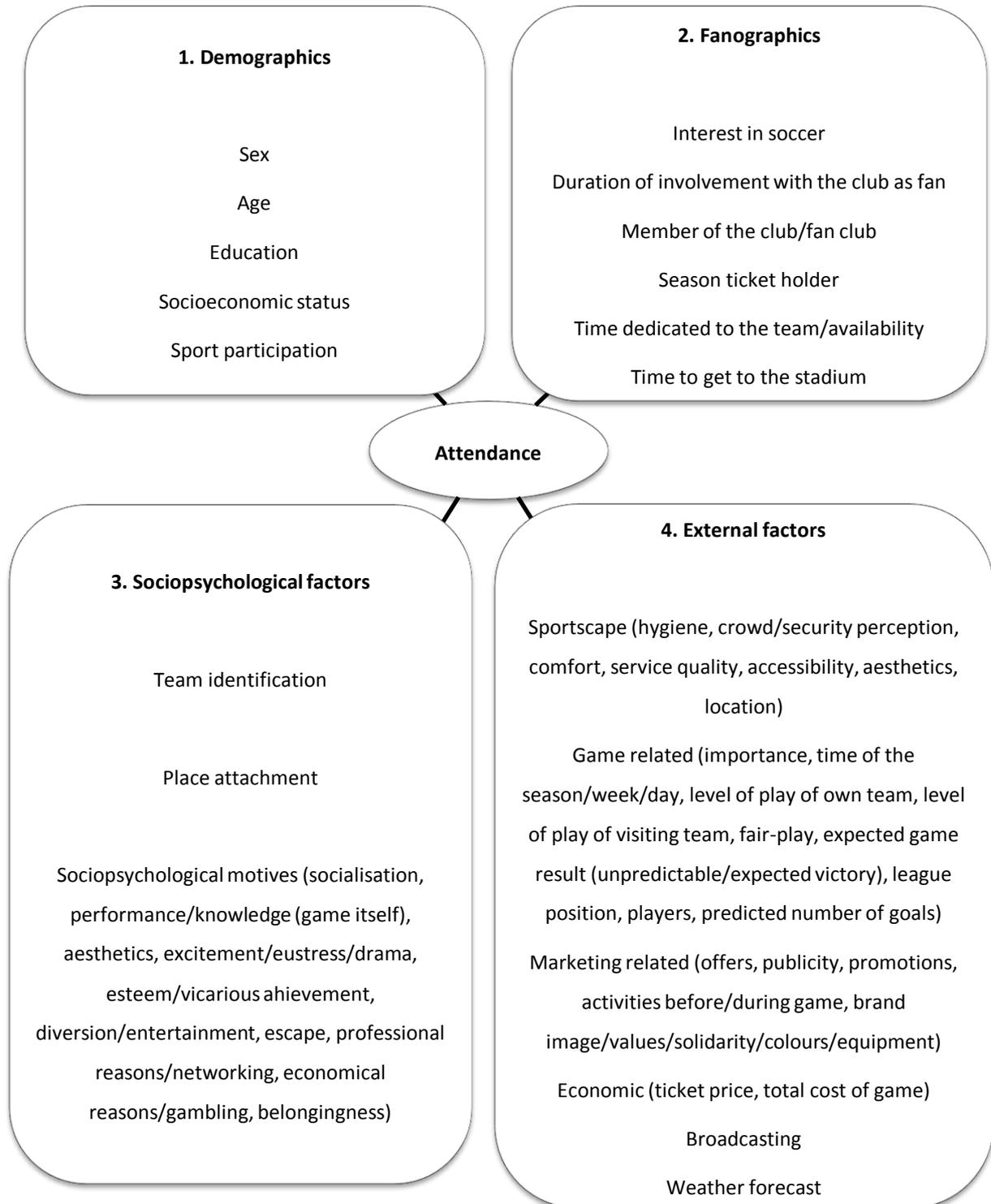
Fanographics are vital but not enough to assure that people go to the stadium.

The third group represented, **sociopsychological factors**, is, from our perspective, and according to many authors, the most important, and the one affecting live attendance in a larger way.

Finally, the fourth group, representing **external factors** is also really important, but as an extra added value to the third group. Providers have a greater possibility of introducing changes on the third and the fourth groups.

Following, we present an explanation about each group, and the factors included in each of them.

Figure 3 Model of attendance in professional team sports



3.1. Demographics

A number of researchers have attempted to establish a demographic and personality profile of sport fans (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). However, factors such as age, sex, socioeconomic status, education and sport participation are demographic variables used to study sport attendance mainly as a background control. For instance, it is usual that more men attend soccer games and also more men participate in surveys related to sports attendance (Charleston, 2009; Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999). Moreover, research has shown that men and women have different attendance motives, with men giving more importance to the excitement related with the game, and women giving more importance to sportscape factors and social contact (Hall & O'Mahony, 2006).

The sex differences have been studied more deeply than the other demographic data. However, some research has been done with other factors. The level of education can relate with attendance because it correlates with the type of media people use (more intellectual newspapers or general ones, for instance) and the targeting of the clubs can be performed through one or other kind of media. There are some contradictions also about how other demographic characteristics relate with attendance. Variables such as socioeconomic status or age have already shown positive but also negative relationships with attendance (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). This incongruence might be mainly due to different methodologies employed in the different researches.

3.2. Fanographics

Fanographics refer to the items about people that are related to their relationship with the sport or club. We introduce the concept of fanographics because it consists of characteristics of the person as a fan. Included in this group of variables we can find items such as interest for a specific sport, duration of involvement with the club as a fan, member of the club/fan club, season ticket holder, time dedicated to the club, and time to get to the stadium.

The interest for sports in general and for a sport in particular, in our case, soccer, is important but not enough to take people into the stadium. The fact that someone enjoys soccer does not mean that the person also takes pleasure in attending live games. Likewise, understanding about the game, its rules, and knowing the teams and the players, does not mean that the person is a fan of a special club. Therefore, from a marketing perspective, it is important to increase people's interest for soccer, but mainly from the ones that are totally disconnected from it.

The duration of involvement with the club, and the number of years as a fan, are related with the team identification, but the research did not focus on the relationship of these items with attendance.

The options of the people of what to do with their free time can influence the attendance numbers as well. It is important to know how much time per week, for instance, people dedicate to the club. Some people may think they do not have time to attend games, because they are occupied with other activities or they prefer other hobbies.

Finally, the time people take to reach their home stadium is a vital factor influencing attendance. Naturally, the further people live from the stadium, the more difficult and expensive it is to get to the game.

3.3. Sociopsychological factors

Sociopsychological factors include, from our perspective, the team identification, the place attachment, and the sociopsychological motives.

3.3.1. Team identification

Team identification refers to the extent to which a fan feels psychologically connected to a team, he or she is involved with the team, has invested in the team, and sees the team as an extension of the self. It is a particular instance of social identification (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008; Wann, 1996; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann, Ensor, & Bilyeu, 2001; Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). This team identification can be different, according to social background, including age, gender, and ethnic, regional, national, and continental affiliations (Bouchet, Bodet, Bernache-Assollant, & Kada, 2011). It constitutes a strong driver for numerous affective, cognitive, and behavioural reactions (Wann, 1996).

The social identity theory is divided into the concepts of in-group identification and self-representation. The concept of team identification corresponds to the concept of in-group identification (Tropp & Wright, 2001). In-group identification is the part of social identity related to the degree to which the in-group is included in the self as a relative constant individual difference. Research indicates that team identification is not a function of the location or outcome of a team's most recent game (Wann, 1996). Instead, fans tend to report highly consistent levels of identification from game to game and from season to season. Therefore, it appears to be a stable measure. For fans with a low level of team identification, the role of team follower is merely a secondary factor of their self-concept (Wann & Dolan, 2001). However, for fans with a high level of team identification, the role of team follower is a central component of their identity. Because of their close association with a team, highly identified fans often view it as an expression of themselves. The team's successes become the fan's successes and the team's failures become the

fan's failures (Wann & Dolan, 2001). Madrigal (2001) also mentioned that high identification can be dangerous, because a fan can relate the team failure as being his or her failure.

The self-representation as a group member can vary substantially across social situations. It corresponds to how people show themselves as part of the group. And this is related to the behavioural variations that can be found in fandom, this is, to how people express their identification.

Because of the amplified meaning highly identified fans place on their team's performance, their affective, cognitive and behavioural reactions tend to be quite extreme (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). Research shows that compared to lowly identified fans, those high in team identification:

- ⚽ tend to report more involvement with the team (Wann & Branscombe, 1993);
- ⚽ are more likely to experience greater levels of anxiety and arousal watching their team competing (Branscombe & Wann, 1992);
- ⚽ are particularly likely to shout encouragement to their team and to direct harassment toward opponents (Wann & Dolan, 2001);
- ⚽ display a more ego-enhancing pattern of attribution for the team's successes (Wann & Branscombe, 1993);
- ⚽ feel that sport attendance is a more enjoyable activity (Madrigal, 1995; Wann & Schrader, 1997);
- ⚽ possess a greater level of knowledge about their team and about sport in general (Wann & Branscombe, 1995);
- ⚽ have more positive expectations concerning future team performances (Murrell & Dietz, 1992; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann & Dolan, 1994);
- ⚽ are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to originally follow a team (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001);
- ⚽ are more likely to believe that fans of the team they are identified with possess special qualities (Wann & Branscombe, 1993);
- ⚽ report higher level of vigour and self-esteem and lower level of tension, depression, anger, fatigue and confusion (Wann et al., 1999);
- ⚽ exhibit greater willingness to invest larger amounts of time and money watching the team play (Wann, Bayens, & Driver, 2004; Wann & Branscombe, 1993);

- ⚽ are more willing to consider illegally assisting their team (Wann, Hunter, Ryan, & Wright, 2001);
- ⚽ show higher levels of motivation, perceive higher service quality, and have higher levels of satisfaction (Gau, James, & Kim, 2009; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995);
- ⚽ attend more games (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995; Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Team identification has been used in several studies as a determinant of sport consumers' behaviours such as game attending or game watching (Trail et al., 2000) and licensed apparel buying and wearing behaviour (Kwon & Armstrong, 2002). Some authors (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Wann & Branscombe, 1993) point team identification as one of the most important motives to attend sport events. Accordingly, theorists interested in explaining the factors involved in attendance decisions have incorporated team identification into their models (Trail et al., 2000).

Wann and Branscombe (1993) developed the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS), differentiating people on the basis of the intensity of their relationship with a club and measuring this intensity with this scale. Several behavioural, affective and cognitive reactions among sport spectators were used for this construction. With the SSIS team, identity is evaluated as a one-dimensional construct.

Team identification is not the only factor determining sports fans' sense of self (Chun, Gentry, & McGinnis, 2004). They dynamically create and build their identities as sports fans by attaching symbolic meanings to objects and activities, securing their valuable traditions, and anchoring their behaviour in cultural and social orders through the fan ritualisation process. As a result, sports fans, in their roles as ritual participants, may celebrate not only successful team performance, but also symbolised cultural meanings through engaging in a variety of fan rituals.

The origin of the team identification has also been studied. A study by Wann, Tucker, and Schrader (1996) indicates that, although there are a lot of reasons to first identify with a particular team, some of them are outstanding. According to these authors, the most common reason listed is that one's parents were supporters of the team at that time (parental and family influence). The second most important influence is the talent and characteristics of the players. The success of the team is only the fifth most commonly mentioned reason. But they found that the prevailing reason for continued identification with a team is success quantified by the win/loss record. On the contrary, Jones (1997) argued that geographical reasons is the most dominant reason for continuing to support a team. Fink, Trail, and Anderson (2002) found vicarious team achievement to be the greatest motivator for team identification. However, Greenwood, Kanters, and Casper (2006) found

that the strongest predictor of sport fan team identification is the variable players' and coaches' talent and the second strongest predictor is being a native or a resident in the area. Dimmock and Grove (2006) found that preferences for sport teams are significantly related to the preferences of family and friends. For what can be seen, the results vary with the situations where the studies are conducted. Therefore, this issue still needs to be further elaborated.

3.3.2. *Place attachment*

Studies in the leisure and tourism literature have shown that the place meanings can improve our understanding about aspects of an individual's leisure and tourism behaviour (Alexandris, Kouthouris, & Meligdis, 2006). Place attachment (PA) refers to the extent to which a person has an emotional, functional, cognitive, symbolic, spiritual and/or affective connection to a particular physical place, environment, or setting in a particular condition and at a particular time. It is a fluctuating process, also, through time (Moore & Graefe, 1994; Moore & Scott, 2003; Smaldone, Harris, Sanyal, & Lind, 2005). Other authors gave the concept a different name, such as *special places* (Smaldone et al., 2005), *place bonding* (Hammit, Backlund, & Bixler, 2006; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004a), *sense of place* (Hammit et al., 2006; Nanzer, 2004), *rootedness*, *insidedness* or *environmental embeddedness* (Hammit et al., 2006), but they always focus on the value people attribute to the place. The degree and strength of this connection depends on a multitude of factors, including the physical characteristics of the place, the social relationships and experiences of the subjects involved, the activities or rituals done at the place, the individual's length of association with the place, as well as the individual's personal set of beliefs, values and preferences (Moore & Graefe, 1994; Smaldone et al., 2005). All these words or expressions emphasise the meaning not only of the actual place itself, but also the individual's feelings, relationships and interactions with the place.

The concept of PA has been used most of the time in a recreational and natural setting (Kyle, Absher, & Graefe, 2003; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2003, 2004b). However, in our perspective the concept can also fit when it comes to professional team sports and their stadium. Charleston (2009) investigated, in England, the extent in which PA with the stadium may lead the fans to feel their home stadium as their real home. Also de Carvalho, Theodorakis, and Sarmiento (2011) used the concept of PA in professional team sports in Portugal, to study the relationship of the fans with the stadium.

In soccer, the stadium is often called *cathedral*, or the place where the stadium is located is sometimes nominated as *holy ground* (Costa, 1997). The stadium is frequently a special place to the fans, e.g., they associate the stadium with their youth, or they have pleasant memories of past

experiences at the stadium. To some extent, their preferred soccer team's home stadium represents home as well (Charleston, 2009). Thus, the ground where the game takes place, the home floor of a team, and the meaning of the neighbourhood where the stadium is located, can play a crucial role in the decision of the fan to attend a game.

In a natural setting, as for instance a national nature park, the more meaningful a destination is to the visitors, the less likely it is to be substituted by another place (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992). In the sports attendance context, a stronger attachment with the stadium may lead to a stronger desire to attend games.

3.3.3. Sociopsychological motives

Theoretical foundations of social psychology are imperative, when it comes to understand attitude related research in sport and leisure (Funk & James, 2004). Some scales with sociopsychological motives were elaborated by different authors. In general, they all focus on similar motives, and some of them are presented with different names, but the concepts are correspondent, such as social facilitation or social interaction.

Following, a list of some elaborated scales, or of the concepts mentioned as motives for attendance, is presented.

- 
The Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS): this scale involves the concepts enumerated as follows; eustress, i.e., many fans feel they do not get enough stimulation or excitement from their own life, but find it through watching games; it is a positive form of stress that inspires and strengthens a person; self-esteem, i.e., fans often relate themselves to their teams; when the team does well, some fans experience elevated self-esteem; being a fan provides an opportunity for these fans to feel better about themselves; escape, i.e., fans who are dissatisfied or bored may temporarily forget about setbacks and distress through sports by using it as a diversion from work and the normal, unexciting activity of everyday life (Fink et al., 2002); entertainment, i.e., some fans just find watching sports to be an enjoyable pastime; economic, i.e., the greatest motivation attracting some fans is the potential economic return from gambling on sports; aesthetic, i.e., some fans are attracted to the beauty and grace found in an athletic performance; affiliation, i.e., a fan's desire to be with other people and a fan's need for belongingness; in this study, group refers to friends, colleagues, or any other group of people excluding family members; and family, i.e., a similar motivation to group affiliation, it involves one's desire to spend time with his/her family, and the purpose of watching games may be to spend time with his/her

family members, especially for those families that have children (Wann, 1995; Wann, Ensor, et al., 2001; Wann et al., 1999; Wann & Waddill, 2003).

- ⚽ The **Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC)**: this scale involves the concepts enumerated as follows; achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, drama or eustress, escape, family, physical attractiveness of participants, the quality of physical skill of the participants and social interaction (Trail & James, 2001).
- ⚽ The **Sport Interest Inventory (SII)**: this scale examines how individual different factors can be used to explain various levels of consumer support for a specific sport property; these factors are role model, excitement, drama, wholesome environment, aesthetics, entertainment value, interest in soccer, interest in the team, bonding with family, national pride, vicarious achievement, support women's opportunity in sports, vicarious achievement, socialisation, and interest in player(s) (Funk & James, 2001; Funk, Mahony, & Ridinger, 2002; Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2003).
- ⚽ The **Motivations of the Sport Consumer (MSC)**: based on Maslow's needs hierarchy, suggests twelve motivation constructs (37 items) for sport participants and spectators; these motives are risk-taking, stress reduction, aggression, affiliation, social facilitation, self-esteem, competition, achievement, skill mastery, aesthetics, value development, and self-actualization (McDonald, Milne, & Hong, 2002); this scale was not specific for spectators.
- ⚽ The **SPEED**: this scale includes socialization, performance, excitement, esteem, and diversion (Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009). Called by the authors the *Big 5* is a parsimonious way of showing the motives found among prior scales in this area of study; socialisation was defined as a desire for social interaction with other spectators, participants, friends, and family; performance was defined as the desire for aesthetic and physical pleasure; excitement was defined by the desire for intellectual stimulation and mental action; esteem was defined as the desire for competency, a sense or personal and collective self-esteem; and diversion was defined as a desire for mental well-being, going apart from the daily work and life routines that create stress.
- ⚽ The **FANDIM**: this scale is a measurement of sporting event consumption elaborated by Madrigal (2006) with two higher order factors (autotelism and appreciation) that each consist of three one-dimensional factors (fantasy, flow, evaluation; personalities, physical attractiveness, aesthetics, respectively); these factors are not motives to attend to sport events, they are consequences from it.

-  The **Sporting Event Experience Search Scale (SEES)**: a scale aiming the identification of different segments of sport spectators. This scale was based on four types of sporting-event consumers, i.e., aesthete, interactive, supporter, and opportunist, defined with a theoretical framework, by Bourgeon and Bouchet (Bourgeon & Bouchet, 2001); they tested the validity of this scale to a live spectatorship within stadiums or arenas and a mediated spectatorship on public or private screens, and it appeared to be relevant, in a live-attendance context, but they state that the scale should be retested and needs improvement (Bouchet et al., 2011).
-  Stewart and colleagues referred to tribal connections to the team, social interaction and entertainment (Stewart et al., 2003).

3.4. External factors

3.4.1. Sportscape factors

Westerbeek and Shilbury (1999) argued that in the marketing mix, the 'P' associated with place (e.g., the sport facility) has to be considered as the most important element, considering that the core service sport and its associated services are dependent on the facility for its production. The perception of service quality is known to increase the likelihood that customers will repeat purchases. Consumer satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with core service elements has been shown to influence future buying behaviours across wide-ranging business contexts (Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000).

These findings are also extendable to sport contexts. By the late '80s stadiums across countries like France, Germany, Italy, and Spain upgraded their largest grounds to host major international tournaments (Giulianotti, 1999). Functional exigencies such as spectator safety, comfort and control, access to parking spaces, toilets and food kiosks, came to dominate the architectural philosophy. Later, other countries in Europe (e.g., Belgium, Portugal, or the United Kingdom) followed in this modernisation of the facilities. In this way, sportscape elements became more important and central to the clubs.

The sportscape is defined as the physical environment of the stadium, and includes the interior and the exterior fixed elements such as stadium access, facility aesthetics, scoreboard quality, and perceived crowding, comprising seating comfort and layout accessibility, i.e., space allocation and signage (Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1996). Even though Wakefield et al. (1996) did not include non-fixed elements in their model of sportscape, we propose that service quality (e.g., food service, stadium security, cleanliness, ticketing services) should be included in this concept, because they belong to the stadium factors and can be controlled by the facility management. The inclusion of the

non-fixed elements in the sportscape model is in line with the work of Wakefield and Sloan (1995), and the work of Hill and Green (2000).

A stronger sportscape perception (SP) has been found to predict the intention to attend sport events (Wakefield et al., 1996; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Findings from Hill and Green (2000) also show that stadium factors, i.e., the sportscape, can enhance the likelihood that supporters of the home team will attend future games. In three rugby games, of teams of different levels, these authors found that SP improved prediction of future attendance intentions for spectators supporting the home team in each of the three venues. The specific sportscape elements that best represented that effect were different in each case, i.e., parking, for one of the venues, perceptions of cleanliness and the willingness to spend time inside the stadium, for the second venue, and the sportscape as a whole, for the third venue. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that the SP can enhance the likelihood that supporters of the home team will attend future games.

3.4.2. Game related factors

Naturally, the game itself represents a role on the attendance decisions. Usually, the winning teams of each country are the ones having more spectators at the stands, but this relationship is not direct, because there is only one team winning the championship every season.

Game related factors, such as importance of the game, level of play of own team, level of play of visiting team, the fact that the game is a derby between two teams of the same town or rival teams, fair-play, expected game result (unpredictable/expected victory), league position, players, predicted number of goals, are preponderant and affect the number of spectators that are present at the stands. Also time of the season, week or day, i.e., the schedule convenience are important (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001).

3.4.3. Marketing factors

The club brand, including the colours, the equipments, the logo, the communication strategy, the positioning of the club (as for instance a more aggressive club or as a special or different club) are important to be recognised on the minds of the consumers.

To attract fans, team marketers sometimes launch extrinsic rewards associated with the games, such as giveaways (e.g., autographed balls, pictures, memorabilia), entertainment (e.g., opening of the games, during the break, after the games), or opportunities to interact with the players (e.g., special moments during the break or during other days). Offers of tickets or ticket promotions, such as group or family prices, are used by the clubs to try to attract more audience to the stadium.

The association of the provider with solidarity events or solidarity institutions, it is a way to make people be sensitive to the actions but also to get them closer to the club. This so-called corporate social responsibility (CSR) has grown in importance to sport organisations (Babiak & Wolfe, 2006).

3.4.4. Economic factors

Financial cost of the event can affect the decision to attend or not to attend a soccer game. People can pay each game individually or they can be season-ticket holders (Villar & Guerrero, 2009). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the price of the ticket does not represent the actual price of the game, because this last one includes travelling, eating, parking, memorabilia, etc. (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). Besides, the socio-economic status of the person can affect attendance as well. A weekly trip to the stadium of the favourite team may no longer be a viable option for many fans, especially if they want to bring their family to the game.

3.4.5. Broadcasting and weather forecast

Broadcasting is usually blamed of taking away the spectators from the stadium. Between 1992 and 2001, for instance, the clubs of the English Premier League decided to sell only around 60 out of 380 matches, in each season, afraid that the broadcast would decrease attendance and the income of the cartel would be reduced (Forrest, Simmons, & Szymanski, 2004). However, there was econometric evidence illustrating that broadcasting had a minor effect on attendance and that extra broadcast fees would be likely to exceed any possible opportunity cost (Forrest et al., 2004).

On the other hand, Garcia and Rodriguez (2002) found that, in the first division of Spanish soccer between 1992 and 1996, broadcasting had a huge and statistically significant negative effect on attendance among non-season ticket holders. Another research showed that televised Monday night games had 15% less spectators at the stadium than Sunday games (Baimbridge, Cameron, & Dawson, 1996). However, this study did not estimate a separate coefficient for weekday matches not broadcasted. Therefore, these results can be related to the broadcasting or to the game being played during the week.

The weather conditions might also influence the attendance numbers. The service provider cannot do something about it, directly. However, they can create the conditions on the sportscape to make people believe that they will not suffer from the cold or the rain. Otherwise, even people that want to see the game, will prefer to stay home or at the bar, and watch comfortably without a big winter jacket.

4. Factors related to non-attendance

Some of the factors enumerated above, can be both positive and negative factors when it comes to live attendance. Besides being motivators, they can be constraints, meaning, factors that impede or inhibit an individual from attending a sporting event. In this manner, they can also be the motives why people do not go to the stadium (Kim & Trail, 2010). What encourages fans to attend may not be reflected in what discourages fans from attending (Tomlinson, Buttle, & Moores, 1995). This means that attendance and non-attendance in sports are two different things and that is how they should be viewed and studied. Not a lot of studies have been performed about non-attendance. In a research from Douvis (2007), ticket pricing was by far the most important element followed by the game being shown on TV, absence of children's facilities, accessibility to stadium and parking availability. Further research on this topic should be performed.

5. Relationship marketing and value co-creation

Consumers, in general, engage in the process of both defining and creating value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a) through the co-creation of personal experiences (Rowley, Kupiec-Teahan, & Leeming, 2007), and high-quality interactions (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b), at a specific place and time, and within the context of a specific act (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Their role has evolved from unaware to informed, from isolated to connected, from passive to active (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). Customers are increasingly gaining power and taking control over and within organisations (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). An illustrating example of extreme power given to sport fans is the world's first web-community owned club (www.myfootballclub.co.uk). The club Ebbsfleet United, from the United Kingdom, is run from its electronic platform, available to everyone as long as they pay the fees. The members vote on club management issues, e.g., player transfers, kit manufacturer, kit designs, budgets, advertising campaigns, ticket pricing and how the society is run and organised.

Likewise, the value co-creation of fans at the stadium is undeniable, either for the show they help to perform, or for the influence they have in the decisions of the stakeholders. Not only the revenues from tickets, merchandising, food, and drinks are dependent on the number of spectators during the games, but also the sponsorships, advertising partners, and media rights are related to it (Czarnitzki & Satdtmann, 2002; Neale & Funk, 2006). The whole sports business depends on fans, which can be seen as the lifeblood of the sports organisations (Buhler & Nufer, 2010). Sport entities need the fans

in order to generate money and keep their business running, even next to the sponsors and the media. In this manner the professional sporting organisations should maintain the old fans as well as win new ones in order to increase their fan base.

More and more soccer clubs are organised like companies, for instance, in England (Czarnitzki & Satdtmann, 2002). Like any other company, a club or team has to make sure that they have not only momentary buyers, but also long lasting clients, supporters and even advocates, which consume their product regularly, and encourage others to do it (Buhler & Nufer, 2010). Relationship marketing provides a variety of techniques and instruments to successfully achieve this goal.

Relationship marketing in sports refers to the establishment and maintenance of positive, enduring, and mutually beneficial relations between professional sporting organisations and their stakeholders (Buhler & Nufer, 2010). It is not our aim in this report to go deeper on the definition or theory of (relationship) marketing. In this sub-chapter, we just wanted to mention the value of the relationship with the clients, in this case, the fans or the spectators, depending on the segment that the club is aiming for.

CHAPTER 3

EUROPEAN SOCCER: FACTS AND FIGURES

In this section we present an analysis of some European soccer facts and figures. First, we take a look to some financial data in Europe. Sport economics and financial issues arouse the interest of academics and managers all over the sports world. Second, we present the Belgium soccer history, and some facts about competitive rankings. Finally, we analyse a range of attendance statistics. In general, when we examine absolute numbers, the countries of the big five leagues, i.e., England, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain, are dominant. However, if we take a look to the relative numbers, the ranking significantly changes. Therefore, we also include numbers regarding other countries, including Belgium.

1. The European soccer market

The soccer market has enjoyed a phenomenal growth in the last decade (Bosshardt et al., 2013). The soccer industry involves much more than only soccer itself. A huge amount of stakeholders, such as spectators, sponsors, media, and other, are involved. Even civil society is affected by it, e.g., English soccer contributes with €1.3 billion of taxes to the Government.

Dan Jones, partner in the Sports Business Group at Deloitte, commented that the growth in revenues in all of Europe's big five leagues in 2009-10, and the two following seasons, during the economic downturn is an impressive achievement (Battle et al., 2011; Bosshardt et al., 2013). He states that the loyalty of fans through thick and thin, and the continued partnerships with broadcasters and sponsors, illustrate that the world's most popular sport remains as attractive as ever. He reinforces that top flight European soccer is one of television's most desirable products and, in revenue terms, soccer continues to be a stellar economic success story in almost all European countries.

Deloitte presented some interesting data about the finances of soccer in Europe, relative to the season 2011-12 (Bosshardt et al., 2013). In the season 2011-12, the European soccer market grew by 11% in revenue, to €19.4 billion. Despite the substantial economic downturn, all of Europe's big five leagues reported revenue growth, to a collective total of €9.3 billion, with a market share of 48%.

The Premier League kept its place as the soccer world's leader revenue generating club, with €2.9 billion, and a growth of 16%. This league is followed by the German Bundesliga, with revenue of €1.9 billion, and a growth of 7%. The Spanish La Liga, with revenue of €1.8 billion, and a growth of 7%, and the Italian Serie A, with revenue of €1.6 billion, and a growth of 1%, showed a smaller growth than the Premier League and the Bundesliga. This may have happened due to the difficult economic conditions that these countries are going through. The French Ligue 1 had revenue of €1.1 billion, and a growth of 9%. This growth also had place during the previous seasons (Battle et al., 2011).

Broadcasting revenue increasing 7% was the main accountable of growth and during the season 2009-10, it was over €4 billion across the big five leagues (Battle et al., 2011). Three of the big five leagues, i.e., England, Italy, and France, generated more than half their revenue from broadcasting. The season of 2011-12 exemplified also a strong year of revenue growth for the elite clubs, with the top 20 Money League clubs generating more than €4.8 billion, a 10% increase compared with the season 2010-11 (Bosshardt et al., 2013).

Match day revenue reached €1.8 billion in 2009-10 and comprised 22 percent of big five league revenues (Battle et al., 2011). In the same season, outside of the big five countries, The Netherlands (€420m), Turkey (€378m), and Russia (€368m) had the largest revenue generating leagues (Battle et al., 2011).

2. Belgium soccer: facts and figures

2.1. Time travel back to 1895

This part describes in short the history of Belgium soccer in Europe. It also shows some data related to the competitive ranking of Belgium, and its clubs, according to UEFA. This information was collected from the official UEFA website (www.uefa.com/memberassociations/association=bel/profile/index.html).

The *Union Royale Belge des Sociétés de Football-Association – Koninklijke Belgische Voetbalbond* (URBSFA-KBVB) was formed in 1895 prior to Belgium's first soccer championship in 1895-96. Nine years later, the URBSFA-KBVB became one of the seven original members of FIFA.

The first big conquer of Belgium in Europe came when the Red Devils won gold at the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp. That victory set the tone for a string of honours as football rapidly gained popularity around the globe.

The introduction of European club competitions, after the foundation of UEFA in 1954, led to successful Belgian outfits becoming more familiar across the continent. RSC Anderlecht hold the proudest record, having reached a total of seven European finals, with European Cup Winners' Cup victories in 1975-76 and 1977-78, as well as triumphs in the 1982-83 UEFA Cup and the 1976 and 1978 UEFA Super Cups. Also Mechelen won the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup in 1988 and the UEFA Super Cup in 1989.

The URBSFA-KBVB also successfully co-hosted the UEFA EURO 2000 together with the Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbalbond (KNVB) from the Netherlands. Four Belgian venues – Brussels, Bruges, Liège and Charleroi – were selected to host matches in what was a 16-team UEFA European Championship.

Since 2002, however, Belgium's senior squad has failed to qualify for a major final tournament. The aim, therefore, is to get the national team back to the highest level, beginning with the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. The Belgium national team seeks a place in this cup with a talented draft of players, a lot of them playing outside Belgium.

At the end of the season 2012-13, Belgium was at the 11th place in the European ranking elaborated by UEFA. Standard de Liège was the club with a better position, i.e., the 48th place, when it comes to the UEFA clubs coefficients. Barcelona (Spain), Bayern (Germany) and Chelsea (England) occupied the podium.

2.2. The competition formula

Following, we present the explanation of the competition formula adopted by Belgium professional soccer. First, a description of the competition formula of the 1st league, the *Jupiler Pro League*, during the most recent seasons, inclusively season 2013-14 is given:

The 16 teams of the Jupiler Pro League play against each other twice, one home game and one away game. The best six teams play Playoff I to find the champion. These teams start this mini-league with half of the points. Teams ranked between the seventh and the 14th places, inclusively, are divided into two groups of four teams. They start with zero points and play twice against each other. The winners of the groups will play the final of Playoff II. The winner of Playoff II plays against number four of Playoff I for the last place in the Europa League.

The teams ranked 15 and 16 play five matches against each other. The fifteenth starts with an advantage of three points and plays three of the five games in their home field. The winner of these two teams plays against three teams from the second league to win one single place for the Jupiler Pro League, for the following season. The loser drops straight to second league.

Source: <http://sport.be.msn.com/nl/jupilerproleague/competitieformule/>

The second league, i.e., the *Belgacom League*, plays with 18 teams, according to a simpler scheme, namely, teams play all-against-all, with a total number of 34 games per team, being one half home games, and one half away games. The champion is promoted to the *Jupiler Pro League*.

3. European soccer attendance: contextualising Belgium

3.1. Occupation rate and country

The Annual Review of Football Finance 2013 reveals that the previously mentioned big five had the highest attendance numbers during season 2011-12 (Bosshardt et al., 2013). Table 2 presents the average number of spectators per game are, as well as the difference relatively to the previous season.

In a report elaborated by *The Portuguese Institute of Administration and Marketing* during the seasons 2006-11 (D. Sá & Malveiro, 2011), Belgium was in the 11th place in Europe when it comes to the total number of spectators, with an average attendance of 9,000 spectators per game. However, there are five stadiums in Belgium with a capacity above 25,000 places.

The authors analysed the attendance of the main 20 national championships in Europe, with 322 clubs involved, and almost all the rounds (excluding play-offs). An analysis of the soccer attendances from the main European countries during those seasons shows that there are huge differences between different leagues (Table 3). Germany was the leader with an average of more than 40,000 spectators/game. The other big five, i.e., England, Spain, Italy and France followed.

When it comes to occupation rate, Germany, England, and The Netherlands take the top three, with more than 85% of seats occupied during the five seasons considered. Belgium has an occupation rate of only 52% (9th place on the ranking).

Table 2 Occupation rate according to country (season 2011-12)

Ranking	Country	Attendances 2011-12 (average/game)	Difference with 2010-11 (%)
1	Germany	44,293	+5
2	England	34,646	-2
3	Spain	26,050	+1
4	Italy	22,005	-7
5	France	18,869	-4

Source: Bosshardt et al., 2013

Table 3 Occupation rate according to country (seasons 2006-11)

Ranking	Country	Attendances 2006-11 (average/game)	Occupation rates 2006-11 (%)
1	Germany	40,641	88
2	England	34,301	90
3	Spain	27,317	70
4	Italy	22,317	48
5	France	20,108	72
6	The Netherlands	18,859	85
7	Scotland	14,665	69
8	Russia	12,168	42
9	Portugal	10,926	46
10	Switzerland	10,710	54
11	Belgium	8,953	52

Source: D. Sá & Malveiro, 2011

3.2. Occupation rate and size of population

However, if we take into account the number of inhabitants of the country, the attendance perspective changes significantly (Table 4). In this case, Germany comes only on the 7th place of the ranking, and Scotland, The Netherlands, and Belgium occupy the podium. We have to analyse this ratio carefully. From this perspective, smaller countries should understand that the number of places of their stadiums should not be, in general, as high as in bigger countries. In other words, when the clubs or federations want to build new stadiums, they should take into account, that even if a high percentage of population attends to soccer games, they will never have as many people in the stadiums as for instance Germany. It looks as if it is a matter of population size, and not a smaller interest in attending soccer games.

Table 4 *Number of inhabitants and spectators (season 2011-12)*

Ranking	Country	Inhabitants	Spectators	Ratio	%
1	Scotland	5.254,800	2.737,633	1.9	52
2	The Netherlands	16.751,323	5.978,689	2.8	36
3	Belgium	11.041,266	2.815,321	3.9	26
4	England	53.013,000	13.148,465	4.0	25
5	Portugal	10.581,949	2.626,950	4.0	25
6	Spain	47.190,493	10.793,170	4.3	23
7	Germany	81.799,600	13.804,761	5.9	17
8	Italy	60.813,326	8.547,309	7.1	14
9	France	65.350,000	7.172,105	9.1	11

Source: Unknown, 2013b

3.3. Occupation rate and club

Relatively to clubs, and to the average attendance during the seasons 2006-11 (D. Sá & Malveiro, 2011), the top 20 includes eight German clubs, four English clubs, two Spanish clubs, two Italian clubs, two Scottish clubs, one Dutch club and one French club. Manchester United FC was on the top of the ranking with 75,356 spectators/game, with the following places belonging to Borussia Dortmund (75,309 spectators/game), FC Barcelona (74,298 spectators/game), Real Madrid CF

(72,599 spectators/game) and FC Bayern München (68,929 spectators/game). Again, when it comes to occupation rates, the English, Dutch and German clubs occupy the top places (six clubs, six clubs and five clubs, respectively). Schalke04 had an occupation rate of 99.5%, with a stadium capacity of 61,673 places.

During season 2012-13 these numbers slightly changed, being Borussia Dortmund on the top of the attendance ranking, with an average of 80,558 spectators / game and 99.8% of occupation rate. In this ranking, half of the teams until the 16th place were from Germany. Interestingly, Borussia Dortmund was only in the 11th place of the ranking of revenues of the European clubs, in the season 2011-12 (Bosshardt et al., 2013). Real Madrid, Barcelona and Manchester United were on the podium of the revenue numbers. These numbers show that revenues are of course affected but not totally controlled by attendance numbers. Anyway, in general, the big five are dominant when it comes to average numbers of spectators or revenues.

When it comes to Belgium, Club Brugge was the club with the highest occupation rate during season 2012-13, with 87% of the places being occupied, in average (Table 5). However, this club is only on the 82nd place of the European ranking of number of spectators, showing the big gap between the biggest European leagues and the Belgian league. The attendance numbers of the remaining 1st league Belgian clubs are also included in this table for comparison. However, their European ranking is not included, because they were not included in this European ranking.

Table 5 *Clubs and spectators (season 2012-13)*

European ranking	Club	Stadium capacity	Total	Average	Capacity filled (%)
1	Borussia Dortmund	80,700	1.369,485	80,558	99.8
82	Club Brugge KV	29,024	377,069	25,138	86.6
115	Standard de Liège	29,173	320,428	21,362	73.2
121	RSC Anderlecht	26,361	314,479	20,965	79.5
134	KRC Genk	24,604	303,007	20,200	82.1
-	KAA Gent	19,999	161,609	10,774	53.9
-	KV Mechelen	13,123	154,417	10,294	78.5
-	Cercle Brugge KSV	29,024	122,305	8,154	28.1
-	Beerschot AC	12,769	120,949	8,063	63.2
-	Oud-Heverlee Leuven	9,319	120,280	8,019	86.1
-	KV Kortrijk	9,399	114,893	7,660	81.5
-	SV Zulte-Waregem	9,746	113,300	7,553	77.5
-	K Lierse SK	14,538	108,728	7,249	49.9
-	RSC Charleroi	24,891	96,707	6,447	25.9
-	Waasland-Beveren	13,290	96,179	6,412	48.3
-	KSC Lokeren	9,560	91,421	6,095	63.8
-	RAEC Mons	12,662	69,769	4,651	36.7

Source: Unknown, 2013b

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

1. Instrument: development and content of the survey

As shown before, a large spectrum of theories related to sport events attendance exists. In the literature there are a large number of variables that influence attendance or non-attendance at sporting events. The instrument used in our research is a survey. To elaborate our survey, we gathered motives that were related to live attendance in prior research, as well as existing scales on sport spectator attendance, and some items related to our own experience and context. Hence, a variety of sub-scales and previously validated questions are utilised to represent the various dimensions identified in the literature review.

A first version of the survey was elaborated in Dutch, and a pilot study was conducted. A convenience sample of 70 respondents was obtained in Belgium. After filling out the survey, respondents were asked about the length and clarity of each question. The open-ended questions were also analysed and used to improve the survey. Important information was collected with this pilot study. The survey had several flaws, namely, the exaggerated extension, and organisational issues. It was too time-consuming, leading to a lack of interest and attentiveness from a certain point on. A first set of changes was performed and the survey was applied to a higher number of people, for confirmation. This time, we used a sample constituted by 461 high school students from Leuven. Minor changes were executed and a last version was accomplished.

The final survey is an online survey and consists of three parts. The first part examines the person as a soccer fan. The second part investigates the reasons of the respondents to attend to soccer games and their soccer consumption habits. The third part consists of sociodemographic questions. A last small extra part includes questions about the competition formula of the 1st league. With this we want to give the perspective of the consumers about this controversial issue within the Belgian soccer.

Table 6 describes the survey more into detail. More information about the instrument, namely, about the scales that are used and the principal component analysis performed, is presented in Appendix A.

Table 6 Questions included in the survey

	Question	Explanation / scale
Part (i) – the respondent as a soccer fan	1) Interest for soccer	1 Item, 5-point scale (1 – <i>not interested at all</i> to 5 – <i>very much interested</i>)
	2) Fan	Yes/no answer – If respondents would answer <i>No</i> , the person was considered a non-fan, and the survey skipped all fandom related Questions 3 to 17
	3) Favourite professional soccer team	One answer only; respondents could choose one of the 1 st league teams or choose <i>Other</i> and write other team; extra clubs mentioned were categorised afterwards
	4) Fan since which age	Respondents could choose one number above three
	5) Reasons to become a fan	Nine Items, 5-point scales (1 – <i>not at all</i> to 5 – <i>very much</i>); example – <i>Family tradition, Ranking of club at the time, or Club of my region</i>
	6) Socialisation agents/influencing others in order to become a fan	One or more answers; respondents could select one or more categories (example – <i>Father, Friends, A certain player, or Nobody</i>), and they could add one category on the item <i>Other</i> ; extra categories mentioned were categorised afterwards
	7) Member of the (fan) club	Yes/no answer
	8) Sport Spectator Identification Scale to assess levels of team identification	Seven Items, 7-point scales (1 – <i>low identification</i> to 7 – <i>high identification</i>); example – <i>How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of your team?</i> (Appendix A1)
	9) Place Attachment Scale (PAS)	Six Items, 5-point scales (1 – <i>totally disagree</i> to 5 – <i>totally agree</i>); example – <i>I have a strong emotional bond with the stadium X, or I associate special people in my life with the stadium X</i> (Appendix A2)
Part (ii) – Reasons for attendance/non-attendance	10) Sociopsychological Motives Scale (SMS)	18 Items, 5-point scales (1 – <i>totally disagree</i> to 5 – <i>totally agree</i>); example – <i>I get a success feeling when the team I'm supporting wins, or I feel relaxed when I attend to a soccer game</i>
	11) Season ticket	Yes/no answer
	12) Number of home games attended during previous season	Respondents could write any number until a maximum number of 30
	13) Number of away games attended during previous season	Respondents could write any number
	14) Time they take to the stadium	Respondents could write any number, in number of minutes
	15) Time dedicated to club	Respondents could choose one of four categories (0-1h; >1-3h; >3-6h; >6h)

	16) Motives for attendance scale (MAS)	23 Items, 5-point scales (1 – <i>nothing</i> to 5 - <i>totally</i>); example – <i>Good atmosphere, Free entrance, or Level of play</i> ; respondents could add one category, on the Item <i>Other</i> ; extra categories mentioned were categorised afterwards (Appendix A3)
	17) Motives for non-attendance scale (MNAS)	21 Items, 5-point scales (1 – <i>nothing</i> to 5 - <i>totally</i>); example – <i>Lack of interest, Game being played on TV, or Lack of time</i> ; respondents could add one category, on the Item <i>Other</i> ; extra categories mentioned were categorised afterwards (Appendix A4)
	18) Measures of the clubs to make them attend to games	Respondents had to choose, among 14 Items, the three main measures the clubs could take to make them attend more to games at the stadium
Part (iii) – Sociodemographic items	19) Age	Respondents could choose one number
	20) Sex	Male/Female
	21) Origin	Respondents could write the name of the city where they were born
	22) Education	Respondents could choose their highest level of education, from <i>No education</i> until <i>Master or PhD</i> (categories shown in Appendix B)
	23) Marital status	Respondents could choose their correspondent status, from <i>Single</i> to <i>Widowed</i> (categories shown in Appendix B)
	24) and 25) Professional status	Respondents could choose their kind of professional status and kind of profession (categories shown in Appendix B)
	26) Financial situation	Respondents should answer to the question <i>How easy it is to live at your home?</i> choosing from 1 – <i>Really difficult</i> to 5 – <i>Really easy</i>
	27) Favourite sport to attend	Respondents could write the name of their favourite sport to attend (Appendix C)
	28) Frequency of sports participation	Respondents could choose one of four categories (Less than 1 time/week; 1 Time/week; 2-4 times/week; More than 4 times/week)
	29) Favourite sport to practice	Respondents could write the name of their favourite sport to practice (Appendix C)
	30) E-mail	If people were interested in receiving this report, they could leave their contact
Extra questions about the 1 st league competition formula	31) Satisfaction	One Item, 5-point scale (1 – <i>not satisfied at all</i> to 5 – <i>very much satisfied</i>)
	32) Attendance in function of the competition formula	One Item, 5-point scale (1 – <i>I go to much less games because of this competition formula</i> to 5 – <i>I go to much more games because of this competition formula</i>)
	33) Changes that the person would introduce to it	People could choose different options, such as <i>I would not change a thing, I would change the number of teams, or I would change it partially</i> , and what partial changes those would be

2. Context and data collection

Our survey was elaborated in Dutch and this research was conducted in Belgium. Therefore, the present study was conducted in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. People were invited to answer to the online survey through several social media: e-mail, Facebook pages (from the team of researchers but also the official pages of clubs or fan clubs), and blogs of the clubs. *Het Nieuwsblad*, a popular Belgian newspaper written in Dutch, also spread the information by publishing the link to the survey on the paper version and on the online version. Participants were addressed with a brief explanation about the content of the study and a request to fill out the twenty minutes survey. As an extra motivation, a lottery of a prize was announced. Surveys were completed from half November 2012 to the end of January 2013.

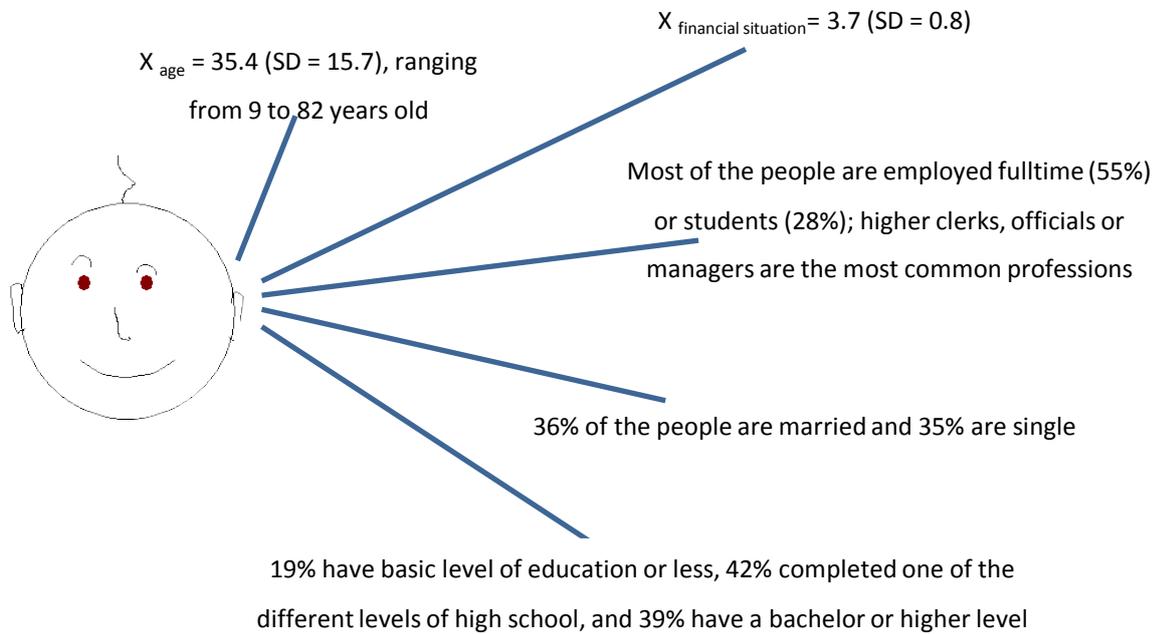
3. Data analysis

Descriptive and multivariate analyses are carried out using SPSS 20.0. Principal component analysis, T-tests, Chi-square, and ANOVAs are employed. In general, we did not have to deal with missing values, as every variable presented a low rate of missing values.

4. Sample

In total, 5,015 respondents participated in the survey. Due to the fact that the present research focuses on live attendance during the season, we excluded 53 fans of foreigner clubs and the five fans of the National Belgian team, known by the *Rode Duivels* (Red Devils). As a consequence, 4,957 respondents constitute the study sample. In some of the analysed groups the number of respondents does not coincide with this one, because we had a small number of missing values (questions that were not answered), but always bellow 3%, which is a negligible number. Following, Figure 4 presents demographic features of the sample. For more information about these issues, see Appendix B.

Figure 4 Demographic characteristics of total sample



CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The fifth chapter includes the results and the discussion. We want to find the answer to questions such as who are the fans and the non-fans, what do they do when it comes to soccer attendance, with whom do they do it, where, how and why.

It is important to notice that the respondents are mostly Dutch-speaking, because the survey was spread in Dutch only, and not in French or German, the other official languages from Belgium. In addition, the respondents of the survey are, in general, highly interested in soccer (in a 5-point scale $X = 4.6$, $SD = 0.8$). Therefore, it should be noted that the context of this research is specific. In this manner, in this work conclusions are drawn for this group of highly interested Dutch-speaking respondents.

We collected a large amount of data and, therefore, some information is exceeding or less important for this specific research. More detailed information about some issues is occasionally shown in the Section **Appendices** (the respective number is always referred to along the text).

This chapter is divided into different parts to facilitate the establishment of a marketing perspective.

About the **overall sample**, we perform an analysis to the sport consumption habits. The relationship of the respondents with sports in general is shown. We also show the position of the respondents about the competition formula in the 1st league championship.

Second, the **non-fans** are analysed as one separate group, because they have particular features as a target that have to be taken into account. The non-fans responded to a much shorter survey than the fans. Reasons for this are explained in the section. Based on this information, we present a profile of the non-fans.

Next, we present an analysis of the **fans**, followed by an analysis of each sub-group.

A comparison by **league** is carried out, by establishing two groups, i.e., a group with fans of the 1st league, and a group with fans of lower leagues. One of the doubts about these two groups is if they are actually different due to the fact that the level of soccer they follow is different. Other perspective might support that 'fans will be fans', and no matter the league they follow, they will have similar attachment to the club, and analogous consumption behaviours. Naturally, we had a

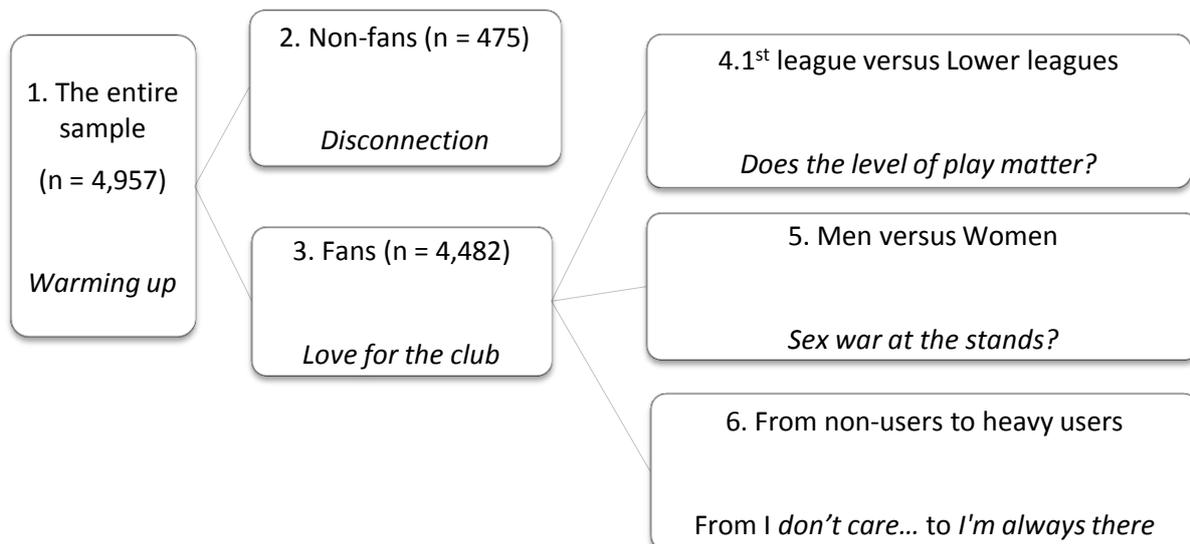
much higher number of respondents being fans of the 1st league than of the lower leagues, with a ratio of twenty to one. However, it is possible to compare the two groups and try to find similarities and differences.

A distinction between **men and women** is presented. It is not our aim to support a differentiation between men and women. However, research shows that their consumption habits are different. Therefore, in this research we just want to recognise them.

Finally, we perform a contrast between groups of fans, based on the **number of games** they attended the previous season. This distinction is hugely important, because attendance is the main focus of our research. The objective of the clubs is to move the consumers up in the consumption ladder, as Mullin et al. (1993) named it, i.e., from non-users to occasional users, from light users to moderate users, and so on. This division of the attendants in five groups (non-users, occasional users, light users, moderate users, and heavy users) can be of help to understand what has to be done to shift the attendance patterns of the fans.

Figure 5 shows how the chapter is divided.

Figure 5 Structure of Chapter 5



The *Who and how*



At the end of each section, we present a summary called *Who and how*, including the key findings with regard to each specific group. The *Who and how* intends to show the main features of the different groups of fans, regarding live soccer attendance. It also includes a summary of the main consumption habits of the group. The *Who and how* will always be presented in association with the icon shown here at the left (the marketing coach). When it appears in the document, it means that information about the studied groups is presented, in order to characterise each segment.

1. The entire sample: *warming up*

About the soccer consumption of the respondents, and before starting the analysis of the groups separately, we present some general information that was answered by all respondents, including fans and non-fans.

Profile

These respondents are highly connected with soccer, in several ways. Their favourite sports to watch and attend are soccer (85%), cycling, i.e., road cycling and cyclo-cross (6%), and basketball (2%). Their favourite sports to practice are again soccer (43%), recreational cycling (10%), and running (7%). However, they perform it infrequently, as half of the respondents only practice sports once a week or less. For more information on sport preferences, see Appendix C1 and Appendix C2.

The respondents of this survey are, in general, highly interested in soccer ($X = 4.6$, $SD = 0.8$). The average number of live soccer games attended among the total sample was 8.1 games ($SD = 7.8$).

To attend or not to attend, that is the question

We presented the question *What can the club improve to make you attend more? Choose the three most important measures that the club can take* to all respondents. Results are shown in Table 7. The most important factor referred to, is the price of the tickets, as more than 50% of the respondents would rather have cheaper tickets, most of all. The sportscape factors (conditions inside and around the stadium) are also prominently mentioned (by 31% and 28% respectively), as well as the level of play (29%) and the offers or promotions (20%).

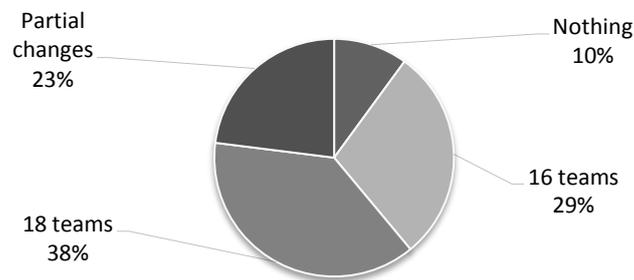
Table 7 Results of the entire sample for the question ‘What can the club improve to make you attend more? Choose the three most important measures that the club can take’ (n = 4,957)

Measures the clubs could take to make you attend more soccer games (the 3 most important)	n	%
Cheaper tickets	2,639	53
Better stadium conditions (facilities and service quality)	1,526	31
Play better soccer (attractive/better quality)	1,426	29
Better conditions around the stadium (parking and accessibility)	1,372	28
Offers/promotions (free consumptions/gifts)	976	20
Hire good/famous players	691	14
Better ranking	577	12
Improve safety around and inside stadium (less violence)	474	10
Special prices for groups (friends and family)	461	9
More side entertainment	307	6
Better management	259	5
Media exposure and information	162	3
Nothing. I won’t go anyway	280	6
Nothing, I’m already going often	1,113	23

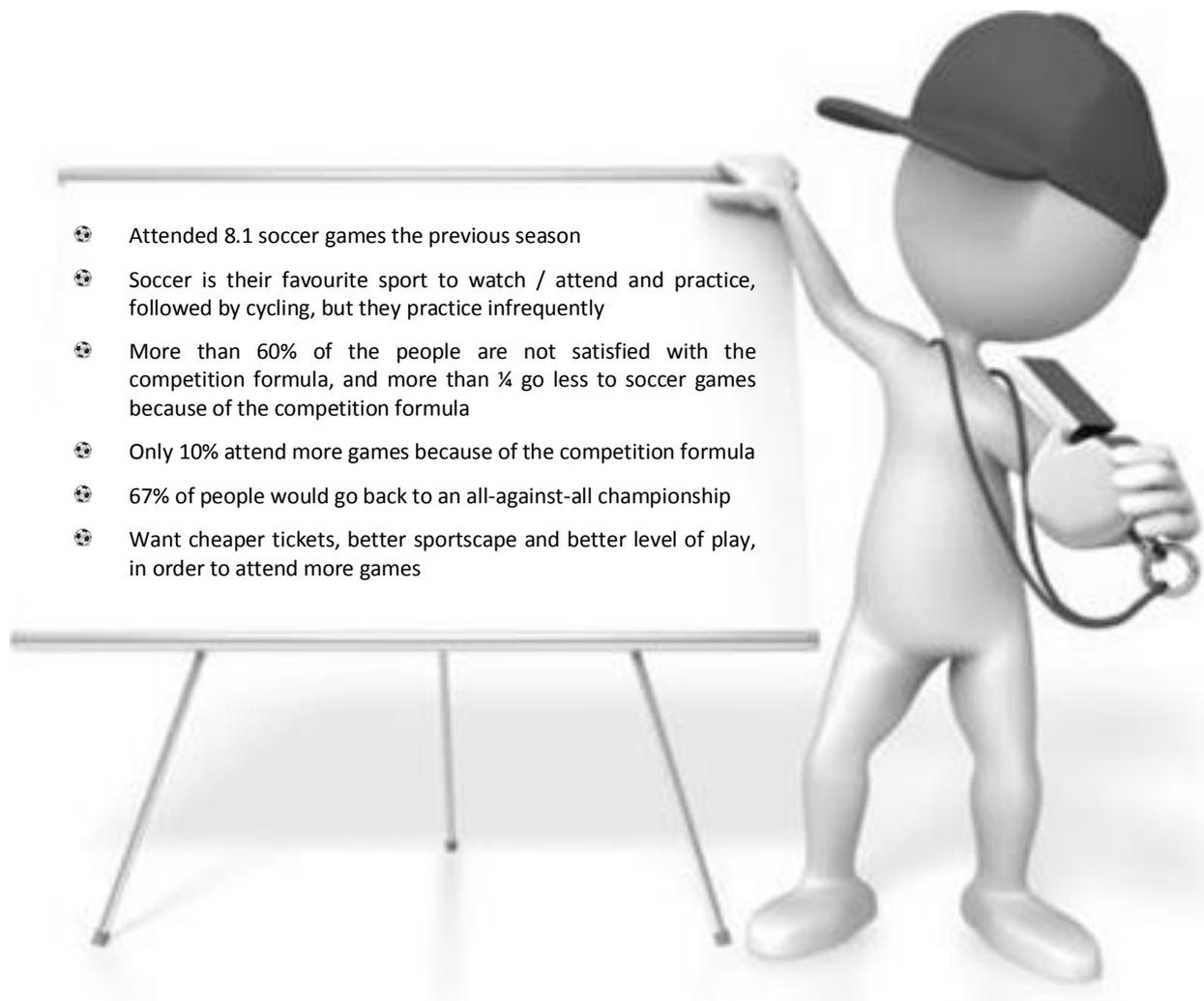
The competition formula discussion

When asked about the competition formula (explained in Chapter 3, Section 2.2.), people are, in general, pretty much against the one used nowadays in the 1st league of the Belgian competition. In total, 61% of the respondents are *totally not satisfied* or *not satisfied* with it, and only 18% are *satisfied* or *totally satisfied* with it. However, this fact does not affect their attendance in a major way, as 63% of the respondents state that they do not go more or less to the games because of the competition formula. Still, 28% affirm that they go less to games because of it. When asked whether they would change something in the competition formula, 90% agreed (Figure 6). While 67% would go back to a normal championship all-against-all with 16 or 18 teams, 23% would introduce only partial changes, such as *abolish the reduction by half of the points of phase 1* (21%), *abolish play-off 2* (13%), *abolish play-off 3* (12%) or *increase the number of teams in play-off 1* (8%).

Figure 6 Results of the entire sample for the question 'What should change in the competition formula of the 1st league?' (n = 4,957)



Who and how: key findings about the entire sample



2. Non-fans: *disconnection*

Immediately at the beginning of the survey, people were able to identify or not with a soccer team. The question *Are you a fan of a soccer team?* could be answered with a *No*, and the survey would automatically skip several questions related to the person as a fan of a certain team. We chose to skip those questions because, in one hand, they would not have been logic to someone that does not have a favourite team, and, on the other hand, non-fans would have a lower interest in answering to a survey about soccer. However, we wanted to understand the perspective of all the consumers, even the ones that do not have a favourite team.

Profile

A total of 475 people, i.e., 10% of the participants, are not a fan of a specific team (non-fans). This does not mean that these people are not interested in soccer. In a scale from 1 to 5, non-fans have an interest of 3.8 for soccer (SD = 0.8). Accordingly, even though they are not a fan of a team, 36% of them still have soccer as their favourite sport to watch or attend (n = 171). Cycling is the favourite sport with 14% of the non-fans (road cycling with 47 fans and cyclo-cross with 20 non-fans), tennis with 7% of the non-fans (33 non-fans), and basketball with 6% of the non-fans (27 non-fans).

Among the non-fans, around two third are men and one third are women (men = 303; women = 145). Women are overrepresented among the non-fans, since in the total sample they only represent 13% against 87% of men.

The average age of the non-fans is 37.9 (SD = 17.2), ranging from 13 to 82 years old. This average is 2.5 years higher than the average of the total sample. Therefore, in this sample, non-fans are older than fans. They have a better financial situation (X = 3.8, SD = 0.78) than the entire sample.

Non-fans attended an average of 2.5 soccer games during the previous season (SD = 5.8), a number that is way below the average of the total sample of 8.1 games. Among the non-fans, 60% of people (n = 284) did not attend a single soccer game during the previous season, and 20% attended only one or two games (n = 91).

To attend or not to attend, that is the question

When answering to the question *What can the clubs improve to make you attend more to soccer games? Choose the three most important measures that the club can take*, some reasons were highlighted (Table 8). Almost half of the non-fans referred to the prices, asking for cheaper tickets (43%) and one fifth also referred to offers or promotions (22%). They would also prefer that the soccer level was higher (29%), which is consistent with the opinion of all the participants: Belgium

soccer still has to improve a lot to reach the basic needed quality to attract fans. In the same way, non-fans think that the conditions inside and around the stadium should be improved (25% and 22% respectively).

Table 8 Results of the non-fans for the question ‘What can the club improve to make you attend more? Choose the three most important measures that the club can take’ (n = 475)

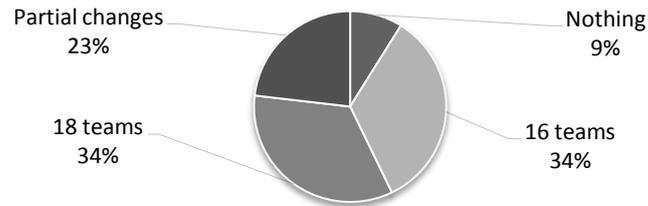
	n	%
Cheaper tickets	215	43
Play better soccer (attractive / better quality)	146	29
Better stadium conditions (facilities and service quality)	123	25
Offers/promotions (free consumptions/gifts)	114	23
Better conditions around the stadium (parking and accessibility)	111	22
Improve safety around and inside stadium (less violence)	71	14
Special prices for groups (friends and family)	47	9
More side entertainment	38	8
Hire good/famous players	28	6
Better management	23	5
Better ranking	20	4
Media exposure and information	13	3
Nothing, I won’t go anyway	136	27
Nothing, I’m already going often	8	2

The competition formula discussion

Non-fans are not satisfied with the current competition formula in the 1st league of the Belgium championship (explained in Chapter 3, Section 2.2.). In fact, 62% of the non-fans are not satisfied, or totally not satisfied, with this competition formula. Only 13% of these respondents are satisfied or totally satisfied with this system. Overall, they are attending less soccer games than with other competition formula. Of the non-fans, a total of 35% goes less or much less to the games because of

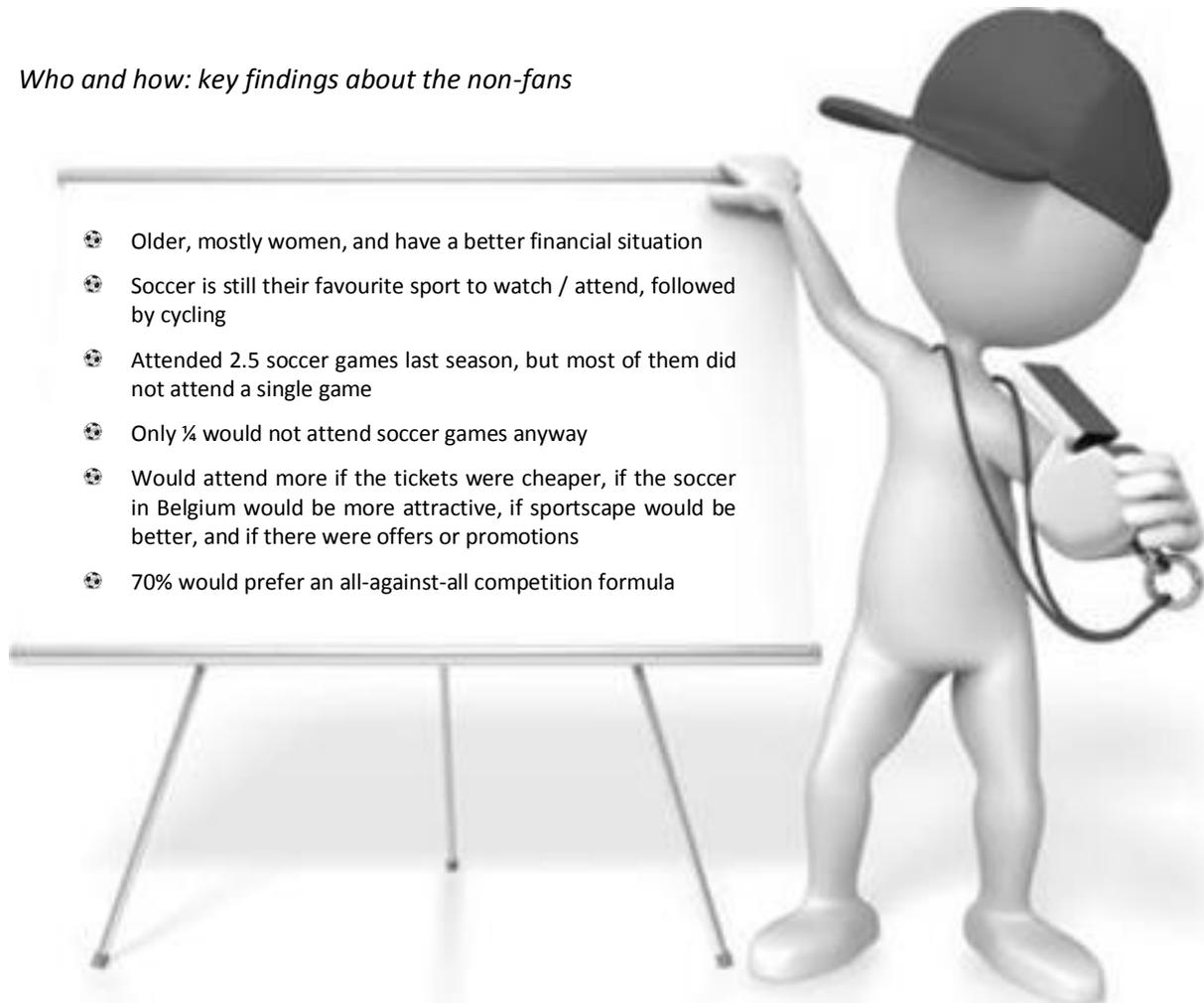
this competition system. When asked what they would change in the current competition formula of the 1st league, 90% of the non-fans would change something (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Results of the non-fans for the question 'What should change in the competition formula of the 1st league?' (n = 475)



Almost 70% would prefer a normal championship with the system all against all with 16 or 18 teams. Among the 23% that would only change it partially, people stated that they would keep all the points of phase 1, by *abolish the reduction by half of the points of phase 1* (20%); they would also *abolish play-off 2* (12%), *abolish play-off 3* (9%), or *increase the number of teams in play-off 1* (8%).

Who and how: key findings about the non-fans



3. Fans: *Love for the club*

The fans have similar results as the entire sample, as they cover 90% of the total number of respondents ($n = 4,482$). In the Section 1 of this chapter, we showed the results regarding the questions that were answered by the entire sample, i.e., fans and non-fans. Therefore, in this section we show an overview of the results that were answered by fans, but not by non-fans. Detailed and compared information is presented in the following sub-sections, which compare groups.

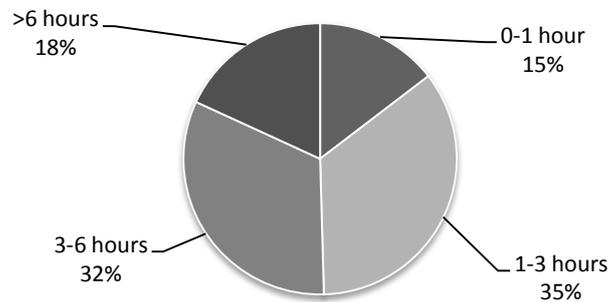
Profile

The people that answered to this survey were highly identified with their team ($X = 5.3$, $SD = 1.1$). They became fans around 12 years old ($X = 12.3$, $SD = 9.26$), and before 18 years old, 80% of the people had their heart stolen by their club. In average they are fans already for 23 years ($X = 23.2$; $SD = 14.5$). They became fans of that team because it was the club of their region, saw a significant victory, or because of some players. The father (31%) and the friends (38%) were their strongest influences to become a fan.

Regardless of this strong profile as fans, only 29% of these people are members of a fan club, and only 39% hold a season ticket. They attended only around nine home games ($X = 8.7$; $SD = 7.8$), and around two away games ($X = 2.1$; $SD = 4.1$), during the previous season. In fact, 50% of the people attended less than six home games during the previous season, showing that there is still a big market share to explore.

We asked people how much time per week they usually spent with their club. Whether watching or attending games, or following the club online or through the newspapers, behavioural loyalty is shown. Half of the respondents dedicate less than three hours to the club and the other half between three and six, as shown in Figure 8. These fans live around one hour distance from their home stadium ($X = 58'$, $SD = 47'$). They are only moderately connected to their home stadium, as their place attachment is not so high ($X = 3.0$, $SD = 1.0$). This fact may be related to the perception of bad sportscape that the fans show, as can be seen as follows.

Figure 8 Results of the fans for the question 'How much time do you dedicate to your club during a week?' ($n = 4,482$)



To attend or not to attend, that is the question

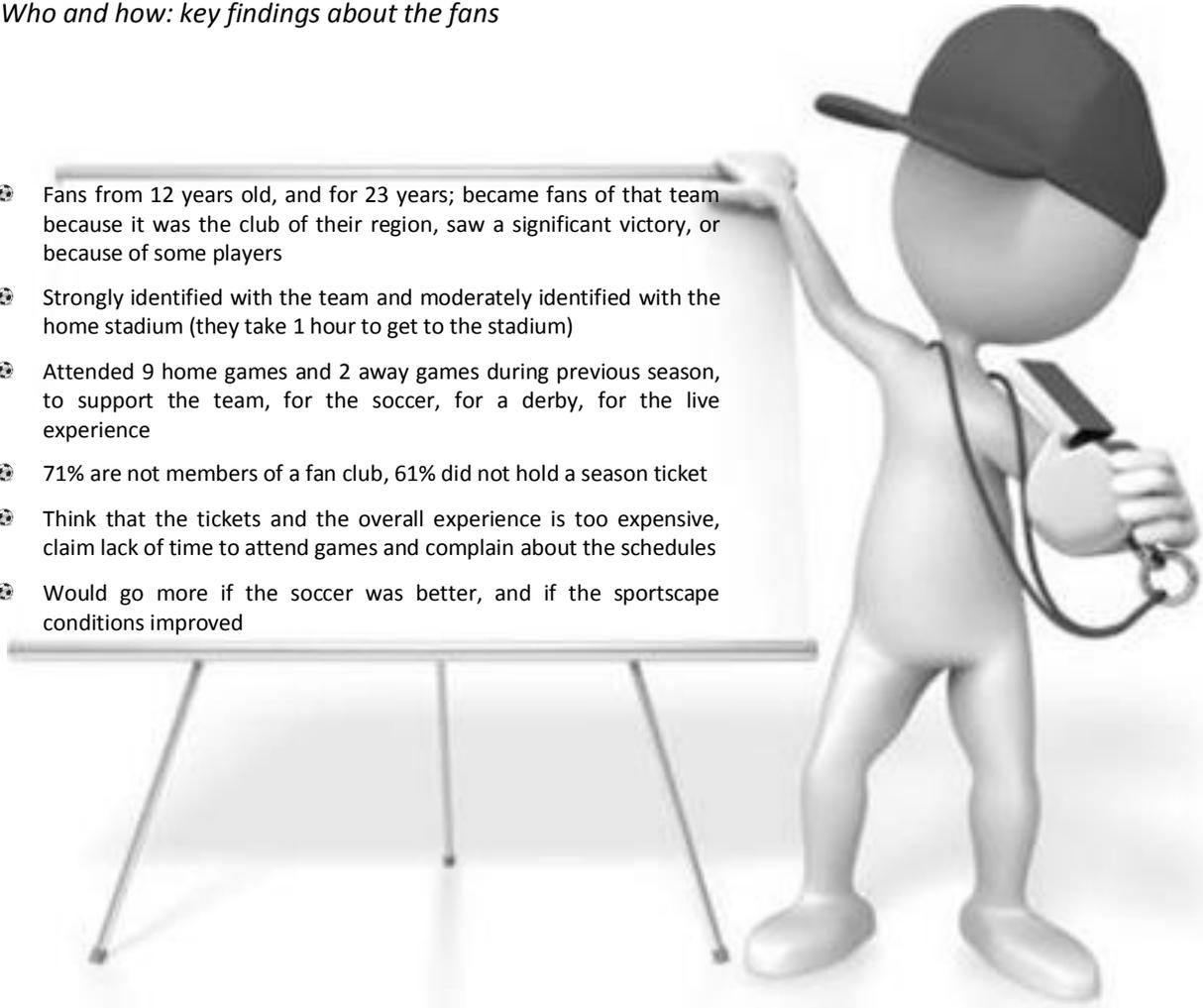
For the question *When you decide to attend a soccer game, to what extent do the following motives affect your decision to attend?*, the most important component reported is *sociopsychological motives* ($X = 3.7$, $SD = 0.7$), such as being with friends, with family, and with other fans at the stadium, or to support the team, or even for a special game, such as a derby, among others (for explanation about the components, we refer to Appendix A3). Also the component related with *level of play* shows high scores ($X = 3.6$, $SD = 1.0$).

In addition, for the question *When you decide not to attend a soccer game, to what extent do the following motives affect your decision to not attend?*, the results show *money related issues* being on the top of the list ($X = 2.8$, $SD = 1.1$). The second strongest component is *bad sportscape & violence* ($X = 2.5$, $SD = 1.1$), confirming that the respondents have a deep negative perception about the sportscape of the Belgian stadiums (for explanation about the components, we refer to Appendix A4).

If we pay attention to the items individually, we find that people think the tickets and the overall experience is too expensive, they claim lack of time to attend games and complain about the schedules of the games. In general, they would attend more soccer games if the soccer was better, and if the sportscape conditions improved. Further discussion about these answers is presented in the next sub-sections.

Who and how: key findings about the fans

- ⚽ Fans from 12 years old, and for 23 years; became fans of that team because it was the club of their region, saw a significant victory, or because of some players
- ⚽ Strongly identified with the team and moderately identified with the home stadium (they take 1 hour to get to the stadium)
- ⚽ Attended 9 home games and 2 away games during previous season, to support the team, for the soccer, for a derby, for the live experience
- ⚽ 71% are not members of a fan club, 61% did not hold a season ticket
- ⚽ Think that the tickets and the overall experience is too expensive, claim lack of time to attend games and complain about the schedules
- ⚽ Would go more if the soccer was better, and if the sportscape conditions improved



4. 1st league versus lower leagues: *does the level of play matter?*

The respondents of the online survey are mainly fans of clubs playing in the 1st league, the *Jupiler League* (n = 4,279). Among the people that consider themselves as fans, only 5% are fans of lower leagues clubs (n = 203). Accordingly, the *Belgacom league*, the second league, had an occupation rate of only around 2,000 spectators/game during the season 2012-13 (Mapfurno, 2013).

Nevertheless, we can investigate the motivations of the two groups, to understand if the league matters when it comes to decide to attend a game or not. As expected, and because the survey was translated in Dutch, the fans belong mainly to teams located in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium.

Profile

First, we present the distribution of the fans among the clubs (Table 9). Clubs with the representation of eight fans or less were left out of this table (for more details about the clubs with lower number of fans, as well as about the foreigner clubs listed, we refer to Appendix D).

Table 9 *Number and percentages of fans of the clubs with nine fans or more (n = 4,482)*

	League	n	%
Club Brugge	1 st league	1,639	36.1
Anderlecht	1 st league	712	15.7
Mechelen	1 st league	283	6.2
Racing Genk	1 st league	282	6.2
AA Gent	1 st league	253	5.6
Cercle Brugge	1 st league	200	4.4
Lierse SK	1 st league	164	3.6
OH Leuven	1 st league	144	3.2
Standard	1 st league	143	3.1
Zulte Waregem	1 st league	114	2.5
Lokeren	1 st league	111	2.4
Beerschot AC	1 st league	105	2.3
Kortrijk	1 st league	81	1.8
Royal Antwerp Football Club	2 nd league	56	1.2
Waasland-Beveren	1 st league	45	1.0
STVV Sint-Truidense VV	2 nd league	32	.7
KVC Westerlo	2 nd league	22	.5
SC Eendracht Aalst	2 nd league	19	.4
KV Oostende	2 nd league	9	.2

While fans of the 1st league are more identified with the team than the fans of lower leagues, the opposite happens about the stadium, as fans of lower leagues clubs are more attached to the stadium than fans of the 1st league. Interestingly, the average number of home games attended the previous season is of nine games, but there is a significant difference when it comes to away games, with fans of lower leagues clubs attending the double of the away games.

In Table 10, we highlight the strongest differences between the two groups. More information about the averages, standard deviations and results of the tests to find differences between the groups can be found on Appendix E.

Table 10 *1st League fans versus lower leagues fans: most remarkable differences*

	1st league (n = 4,279)	versus	Lower leagues (n = 203)
⚽	Are younger (X = 34.8)	⚽	Are older (X = 39.9)
⚽	89% are male	⚽	91 % are male
⚽	Became fans at a younger age (X = 12.2)	⚽	Became fans at an older age (X = 14.2)
⚽	Became fans of their team mainly because it was the club of their region, because of one or several players, and because they saw a memorable victory of the club	⚽	Became fans of their team mainly because it was the club of their region, for family tradition, and because they saw a memorable victory of the club
⚽	Their strongest influences to become a fan were the friends (38%), the father (30%), and brothers or sisters (10%); 24% say they were not influenced by someone; only 1% were influenced by their children	⚽	Their strongest influences to become a fan were the friends (41%), the father (35%), and brothers or sisters (11%); 18% say they were not influenced by someone; almost 4% were influenced by their children
⚽	Attended nine home games and two away games on average during the previous season	⚽	Attended nine home games and four away games on average during the previous season – attended significantly more away games than the fans of the 1 st league
⚽	Live further from their home stadium (1 hour distance)	⚽	Live closer to the stadium of their team (half an hour distance)
⚽	Highly identified with the team (X = 5.3)	⚽	Highly identified with the team (X = 5.1)
⚽	Less identified with the stadium (X = 3.0)	⚽	More identified with the stadium (X = 3.4)

To attend or not to attend, that is the question

For both fans of 1st league and fans of lower leagues, the most important motives to attend or not to attend soccer games are similar (Appendix E). For the question *When you decide to attend a soccer game, to what extent do the following motives affect your decision to attend?*, the most important component reported is *sociopsychological motives*, such as being with friends, with family, and with other fans, or to support the team, or even for a special game, among others (for explanation about the components, we refer to Appendix A3). The level of play is significantly more important for the fans of the 1st league than for the fans of lower leagues, when they are deciding to go to a game.

Also for the question *When you decide not to attend a soccer game, to what extent do the following motives affect your decision to not attend?*, the results are similar between the fans of the 1st league and the fans of the lower leagues, with *money related issues* being on the top of the list to everyone (for explanation about the components, we refer to Appendix A4).

When it comes to the question *What can the club improve to make you attend more?*, fans of the 1st league demand for cheaper tickets, a better sportscape (especially outside of the stadium), and a better level of soccer in order to attend more games. Similarly, fans of lower leagues demand for cheaper tickets, a better sportscape (especially inside of the stadium), and a better level of soccer.

Cheaper tickets, and better conditions around the stadium, are significantly more important for fans of the 1st league than for fans of lower leagues. On the contrary, a better level of play, a better ranking, a better management, and more media exposure and information, are significantly more important among fans of lower leagues than among fans of the 1st league. Table 11 shows more in detail, what the fans think the clubs can do to make them go to more games.

The competition formula discussion

When asked what they would change in the current competition formula of the 1st league (explained in Chapter 3, Section 2.2.), 90% of the fans of the 1st league and 95% of the fans of lower leagues would change something (Figure 9). In fact, 60% of the fans of the 1st league are not satisfied, or totally not satisfied, with this competition formula. For the fans of lower leagues, this number reaches 78%. Only 19% of the fans of the 1st league, and only 8% of the fans of lower leagues, are satisfied or totally satisfied with this system.

The fans of lower leagues expressly stated that 18 teams would be the best solution, maybe because in that manner, more teams of the 2nd league could reach the 1st league. Actually, the fans of the lower leagues are significantly more against the current competition formula of the 1st league and go less to games because of that.

Among the respondents who would only partially change the competition formula, the fans of the 1st league highlight that they would keep all the points of phase 1, by *abolish the reduction by half of the points of phase 1* (23%), but they also want to *abolish play-off 2* (13%), *abolish play-off 3* (12%), or *increase the number of teams in play-off 1* (8%).

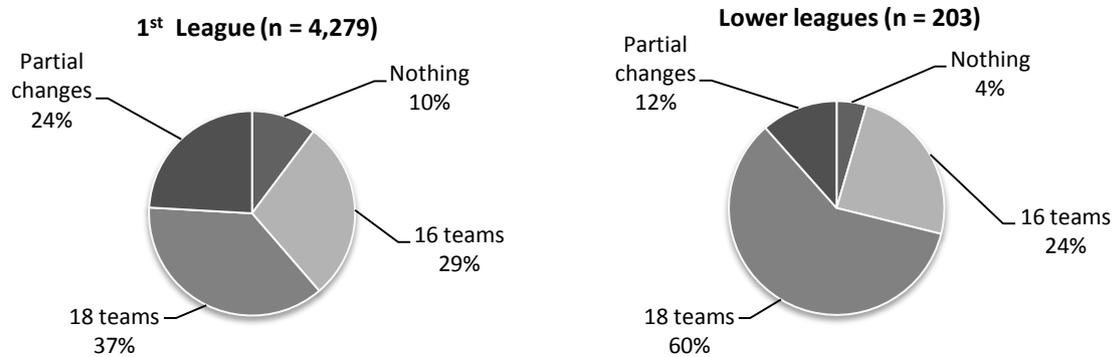
Table 11 Results of the fans of 1st league and of fans of lower leagues for the question ‘What can the club improve to make you attend more? Choose the three most important measures that the club can take’ (n = 4,482)

	1st league (n = 4,279)		Lower leagues (n = 203)	
	n	%	n	%
Cheaper tickets	2,329	54	95	47
Better stadium conditions	1,352	32	51	25
Play better soccer (attractive/better quality)	1,207	28	73	36
Better conditions around the stadium	1,228	29	33	16
Offers/promotions (free consumptions/gifts)	824	19	38	19
Better ranking	518	12	39	19
Hire good/famous players	626	15	37	18
Improve safety around and inside stadium (less violence)	382	9	21	10
Special prices for groups (friends and family)	398	9	16	8
More side entertainment	256	6	13	6
Better management	218	5	18	9
Media exposure and information	132	3	17	8
Nothing, I won't go anyway	140	24	4	32
Nothing, I'm already going often	1,040	5	65	2

The fans of lower leagues have different opinions, as 12% want to *abolish the reduction by half of the points of phase 1*, but they also want to *abolish play-off 2* (12%), *abolish play-off 3* (10%), or *increase the number of teams in play-off 1* (3%).

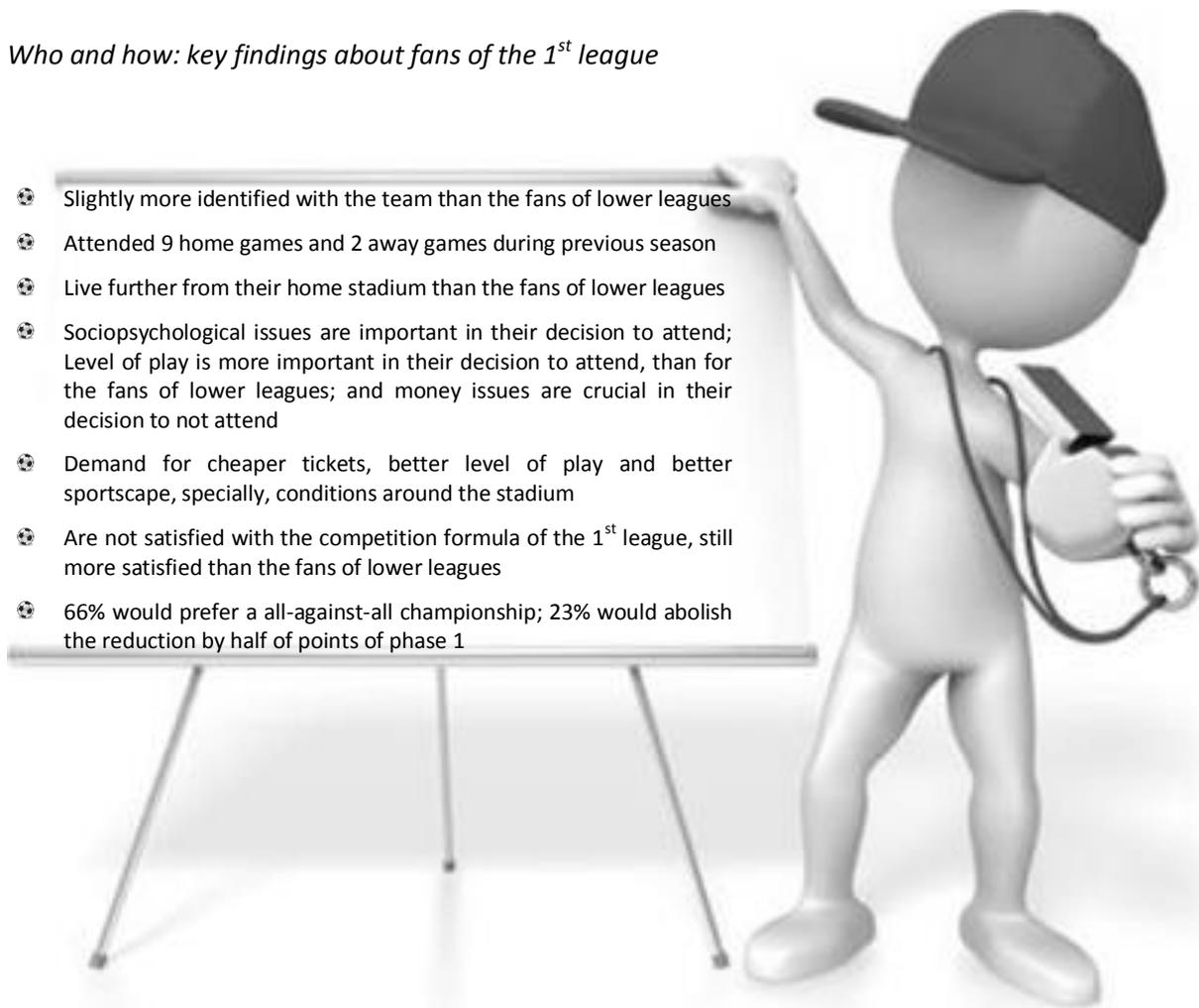
At the moment, 27% of the fans of the 1st league and 35% of the fans of lower leagues, is attending less or much less games than with other competition formula. Around 60% of fans of the 1st league and of the fans of lower leagues did not change their attendance because of the system.

Figure 9 Results of the 1st league fans (on the right) and of the lower leagues fans (on the left) for the question ‘What should change in the competition formula of the 1st league?’

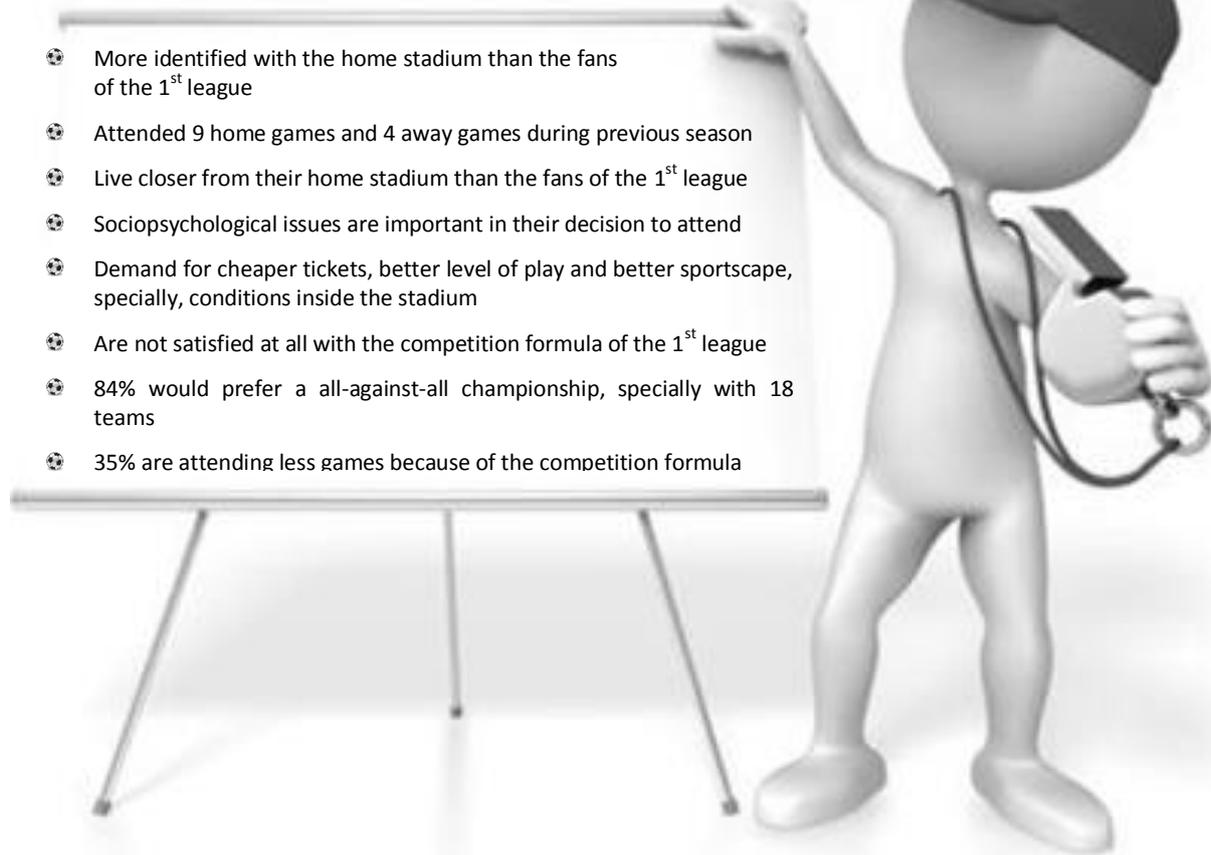


Who and how: key findings about fans of the 1st league

- ⚽ Slightly more identified with the team than the fans of lower leagues
- ⚽ Attended 9 home games and 2 away games during previous season
- ⚽ Live further from their home stadium than the fans of lower leagues
- ⚽ Sociopsychological issues are important in their decision to attend; Level of play is more important in their decision to attend, than for the fans of lower leagues; and money issues are crucial in their decision to not attend
- ⚽ Demand for cheaper tickets, better level of play and better sportscape, specially, conditions around the stadium
- ⚽ Are not satisfied with the competition formula of the 1st league, still more satisfied than the fans of lower leagues
- ⚽ 66% would prefer a all-against-all championship; 23% would abolish the reduction by half of points of phase 1



Who and how: key findings about fans of the lower leagues



5. Men versus women: sex war at the stands?

The female representation among the fans is only 13%. Men constitute 87% of the sample. Nevertheless, we can still compare and understand if there are differences between these groups, and which marketing strategies are appropriated for each of them.

Profile

The male profile as a fan appears, at a first glance, stronger than the one of women. For instance, men are more interested in soccer, became fans at a younger age, and they are fans for a longer time already. However, the team identification does not differ, and women are even more attached to the stadium than men. Besides, a higher percentage of women have a season ticket. Nevertheless, there is no difference on the number of games attended, between men and women. In Table 12, we highlight the most remarkable differences between the two groups. More information about the averages, standard deviations and results of the tests to find differences between the groups, can be found in Appendix F.

Table 12 Men versus women: most remarkable differences among the fans

Men (n = 3,919)	versus	Women (n = 471)
⚽ Are older (X = 35.5)	⚽	Are younger (X = 32.3)
⚽ Became fans at a younger age (X = 11.9)	⚽	Became fans at an older age (X = 15.2)
⚽ Became fans of their team mainly because it was the club of their region, because of one or several players, and because they saw a memorable victory of the club	⚽	Became fans of their team mainly because it was the club of their region, because of one or several players, and for family tradition
⚽ Their strongest influences to become a fan were the friends (38%), the father (30%), and brothers or sisters (9%); however, 25% say they were not influenced by someone, which is significantly higher than the women's result	⚽	Their strongest influences to become a fan were the friends (37%), the father (36%), and brothers or sisters (17%); 16% say they were not influenced by someone; they were significantly more influenced by the mother, the brothers and sisters, the husband and the children
⚽ 95% are fans of 1 st league, 23% are members of a fan club, and 39% have a season ticket	⚽	96% are fans of 1 st league, 25% are members of a fan club, and 46% have a season ticket
⚽ Less identified with the stadium (x = 2.9)	⚽	More identified with the stadium (x = 3.1)

Attend or not attend, that is the question

For both men and women, the most important motives to attend or not to attend soccer games are similar (Appendix F). For the question *When you decide to attend a soccer game, to what extent do the following motives affect your decision to attend?*, the most important component reported is *sociopsychological motives*, such as being with friends, with family, and with other fans, or to support the team, among others (for explanation about the components, we refer to Appendix A3). For women this reason is even more significantly important than for men. In addition, in comparison with men, women give more importance to marketing actions, such as price and promotions related issues.

Also for the question *When you decide not to attend a soccer game, to what extent do the following motives affect your decision to not attend?*, the results are similar, with *money related issues* being on the top of the list to everyone. *Organisational issues*, the component that includes lack of time or the fact that the game is on television, and also the bad level of play, is significantly more important for men than for women on their decision to not go to a game (for explanation about the components, we refer to Appendix A4). Men present higher scores in the components of this question, meaning that they complain more than women, in general.

When it comes to answering the question *What could the club improve to make you attend more?*, men demand for cheaper tickets, a better sportscape, and a better level of play in order to attend more games. Similarly, women demand for cheaper tickets, a better sportscape (especially inside of the stadium), and a better level of soccer in order to attend more games. Women also wish for offers and promotions.

A better sportscape, a better level of play, and more famous or good players in the club, are significantly more important for men than for women. On the contrary, marketing related measures, such as offers or promotions, and special prices for groups are significantly more important for women than for men. Table 13 shows more in detail, what the fans think the clubs could do, to make them go to more games.

The competition formula discussion

When asked about the current competition formula of the 1st league (explained in Chapter 3, Section 2.2.), men and women show different opinions.

In fact, men are deeply dissatisfied with the current competition formula, with 62% of them being not satisfied, or totally not satisfied. Only 18% of men are satisfied or totally satisfied with this competition formula. Because of this dissatisfaction, 28% of men go to fewer games. For women, this number is lower, with still 43% of them being not satisfied or totally not satisfied. However, one fourth of the women are satisfied or totally satisfied with the competition formula of the 1st league. Only 18% of women go less to games because of the system.

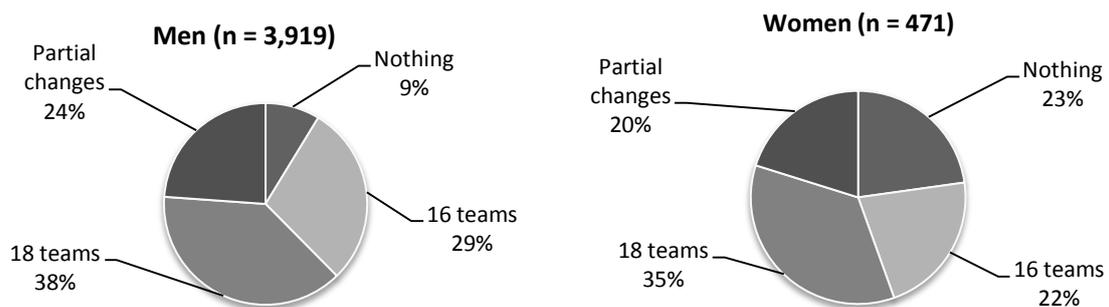
Among men, only 9% agree with the competition formula, and would not change it, with 67% of them preferring a championship all-against-all with 16 or 18 teams instead. Among women, 23% would not change a thing about the competitive system (Figure 10).

Among the ones that would only partially change the competition formula, men and women have similar opinions. First, they would keep all the points of phase 1, by *abolish the reduction by half of the points of phase 1* (22% for men, and 16% for women). *Abolish play-off 2* (13% for men, and 9% for women), comes next, followed by *abolish play-off 3* (13% for men, and 8% for women). On the bottom of the list there is *increase the number of teams in play-off 1* (9% for men, and 7% for women).

Table 13 Results of the men and women for the question ‘What can the club improve to make you attend more? Choose the three most important measures that the club can take’

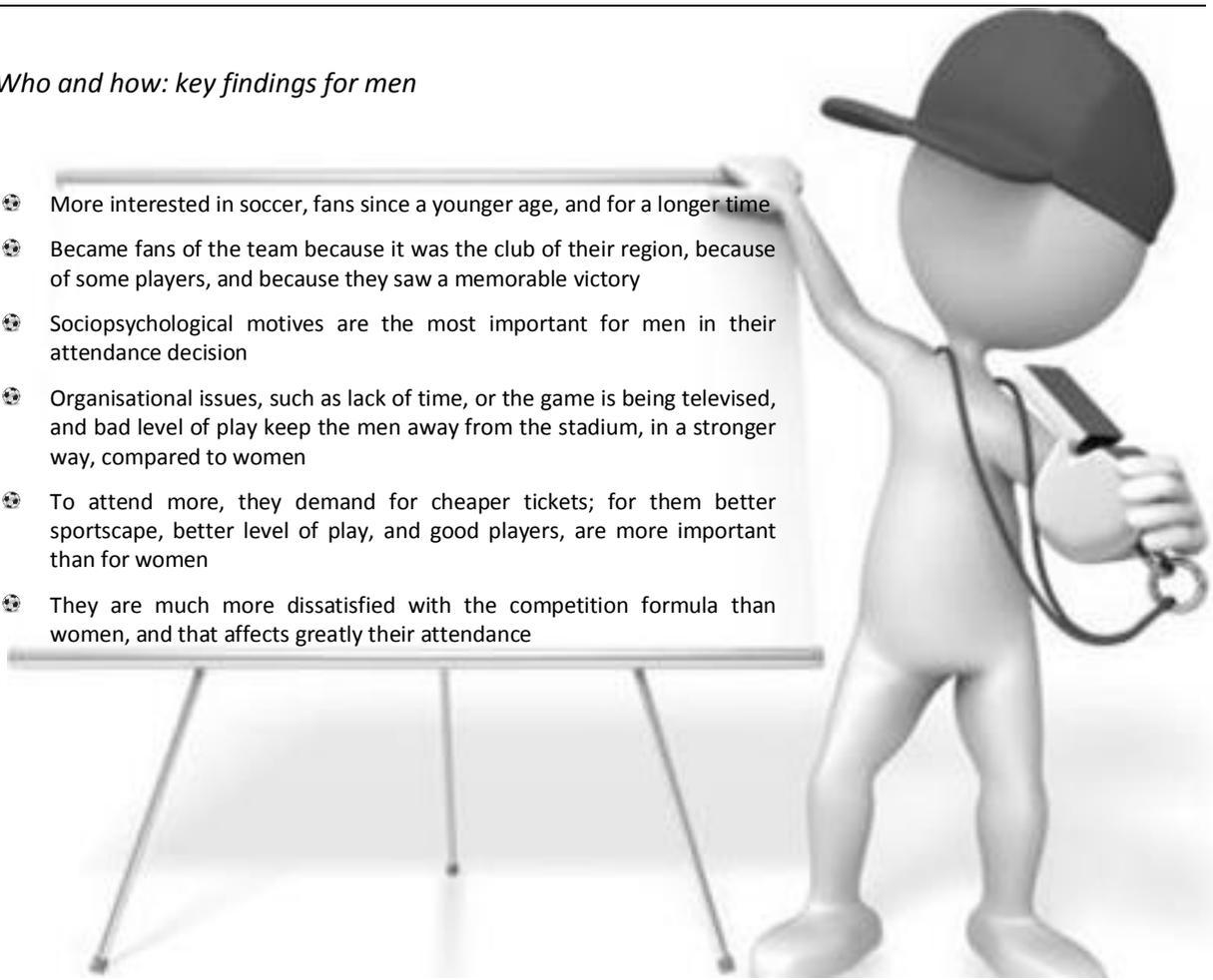
	Men (n = 3,919)		Women (n = 471)	
	n	%	n	%
Cheaper tickets	2,135	55	252	54
Better stadium conditions	1,282	33	105	22
Play better soccer (attractive / better quality)	1,162	30	102	22
Better conditions around the stadium	1,147	29	96	20
Offers / promotions (free consumptions/gifts)	717	18	128	27
Hire good/famous players	614	16	37	8
Better ranking	495	13	50	11
Improve safety around and inside stadium (less violence)	350	9	40	9
Special prices for groups (friends and family)	336	9	68	14
More side entertainment	240	6	24	5
Better management	212	5	23	5
Media exposure and information	121	3	21	5
Nothing, I won't go anyway	135	3	8	2
Nothing, I'm already going often	941	24	152	32

Figure 10 Results of the men (on the right) and of the women (on the left) for the question ‘What should change in the competition formula of the 1st league?’



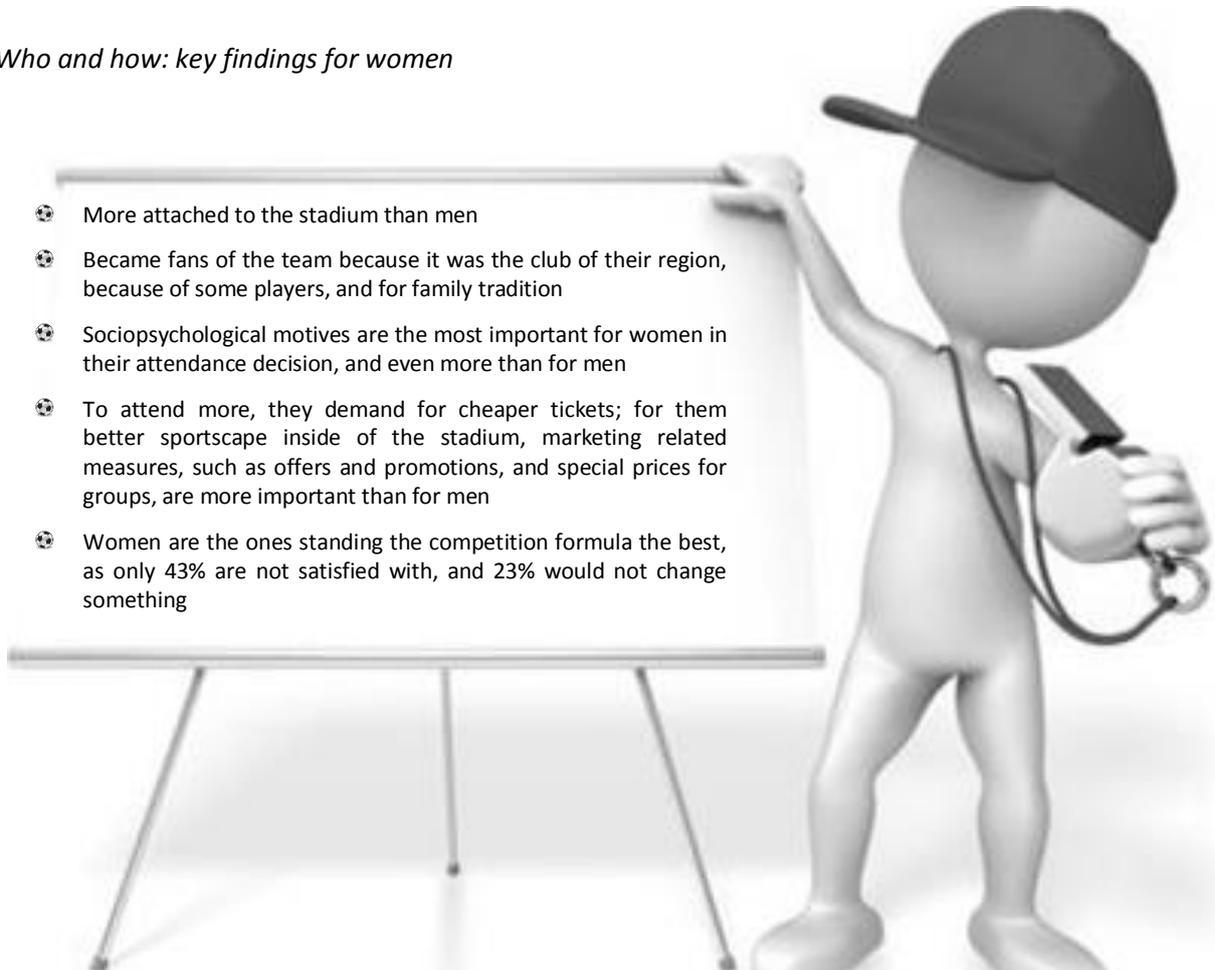
Who and how: key findings for men

- ⚽ More interested in soccer, fans since a younger age, and for a longer time
- ⚽ Became fans of the team because it was the club of their region, because of some players, and because they saw a memorable victory
- ⚽ Sociopsychological motives are the most important for men in their attendance decision
- ⚽ Organisational issues, such as lack of time, or the game is being televised, and bad level of play keep the men away from the stadium, in a stronger way, compared to women
- ⚽ To attend more, they demand for cheaper tickets; for them better sportscape, better level of play, and good players, are more important than for women
- ⚽ They are much more dissatisfied with the competition formula than women, and that affects greatly their attendance



Who and how: key findings for women

- ⚽ More attached to the stadium than men
- ⚽ Became fans of the team because it was the club of their region, because of some players, and for family tradition
- ⚽ Sociopsychological motives are the most important for women in their attendance decision, and even more than for men
- ⚽ To attend more, they demand for cheaper tickets; for them better sportscape inside of the stadium, marketing related measures, such as offers and promotions, and special prices for groups, are more important than for men
- ⚽ Women are the ones standing the competition formula the best, as only 43% are not satisfied with, and 23% would not change something



6. From non-users to heavy users: from *I don't care...* to *I'm always there*

In this section we analyse people according to the number of games they attended during the previous season. Due to the fact that we are studying what the clubs can do to attract people to their own stadium, we accounted the home games attended, and not the away games attended, to split these groups. Previous research has divided the groups in a different way, namely, put zero games attended together with one or two games. In our case, we really wanted to show a differentiation between people that never go, and the people that are already open to do it. Following, the occasional users are the ones that visited the stadium during the previous season, but in a sporadic way. The light users, with four to eight games, already show a compromise with their club, but for some reason, they do not go more often to the stadium. The moderate users give priority to soccer during their weekends, and the heavy users are the die-hard spectators, always being there. Of the people with a season ticket, 90% are included in these two last groups.

Obviously, for the clubs the aim would be to move people up in the scale, from non-users to occasional users and so on, until all the segments would be heavy users. Therefore, we can take a look to the segments attending more and understand what is needed.

We did not elaborate this section as the previous ones, with the subsections analysing each part of the information. Instead, we prefer to show a scheme of the strongest characteristics of each segment.

As shown in Figure 11, the relationship of the different users with their club varied according to the number of games they attended. The fanographic results are stronger with a higher number of games attended. For instance, team identification and place attachment are stronger for people that attend more games. This does not imply a causal relationship, i.e., we are not proposing that one causes the other one (e.g., team identification causes attendance or the opposite). We are only showing the relationships that already exist. Sociopsychological motives to attend are also stronger for people that attend more games. On the contrary, people attending less are more worried with safety issues at the stadium and around the stadium, and more dissatisfied with the competition formula.

Figure 11 *Fandom and consumption related measures, according to the number of home games attended*



Table 14 shows specific features of the different groups. It is possible to identify that probably one of the strongest motives for the non-users not to go to the stadium is because they live further from the stadium. They also show a weaker will to attend, and prefer to see it on TV. The non-users seem a difficult target to attract. On the contrary, occasional users and light users give tips of how they can be satisfied. Lower prices of the tickets and marketing actions would bring them to the stadium.

As we look up in the usage, a good sportscape is important for people attending. However, for the really heavy users, that is not so important anymore. These heavy users are the ones showing the passion they have for the club, and the feeling of belonging, by going to the games.

Table 14 *Fandom and consumption main characteristics, according to the number of home games attended (n = 4,482)*

Non-users 0 games (15%)	Occasional users 1-3 games (20%)	Light users 4-8 games (22%)	Moderate users 9-15 games (22%)	Heavy users >15 games (21%)
Live further from the stadium	Good sportscape	Good sportscape	Good sportscape	Belonging
Lower reasons, in general, to go	Marketing actions	Marketing actions	Belonging	Passion for the club
11% will not attend anyway	Cheaper tickets or special prices	Better players	Season ticket	Season ticket
On TV			Want more side entertainment	Championship with 18 teams

CHAPTER 6

HOW TO BRING PEOPLE INTO THE STADIUM

This chapter shows what a service provider, such as a club, federation or local authority, might do in order to keep their fans and attract other consumers to the stadium.

First, based on the analysis of our results, we launch some specific advice for the Belgian case. With an accurate research and a sound segmentation, the Belgian soccer entities should be able to offer the best services and specialities to each group, even to each person. In this manner, based on the data we gathered, we give a perspective of what can be done with each different segment of fans, making use of the appropriate marketing strategies, and without extra money needed.

We finish with a general overview of what can be done, in general, according to some recent marketing trends. This part is not directly related with our findings. Alternatively, this is a collection of some options or ideas the clubs or service providers might follow, if they find it appropriate in their context and specific situation.

1. For fans and non-fans in Belgium

The following marketing tips are transversal to all the segments that filled out our survey, as these measures were strongly enhanced by all kind of participants.

- 🏆 **All-against-all championship.** The strongest marketing illation we can take regarding the perceptions of the entire sample is that people are not satisfied with the current competition formula. If the objectives of the play-off system are increasing the attendance numbers and the satisfaction of the consumers, the fans especially, but also the non-fans, we can clearly notice that they are not being accomplished. Therefore, the first thing that could be done to bring more people into the Belgian stadiums would be returning to a competition formula of all-against-all, above all, with 18 teams.
- 🏟️ **A better sportscape.** The current sportscape of the Belgian stadiums is old and it is of the common knowledge that it needs improvements. A better sportscape is a request of this sample of highly interested in soccer people. New stadia designed to enhance the power of entertainment experiences is advised (e.g., large screens for replays, computer graphics,

luxury boxes, full range of food and beverage services from restaurants to ice-cream, improved seating).

- 
Cheaper tickets and a better level of play. In general, people think that the tickets, and the overall experience, are too expensive. The low level of play is also a general criticism. Actually, what people seem to want to communicate is that the relationship between price and quality in Belgian soccer is bad. Therefore, clubs have two directions they might choose to follow on their marketing strategies. Whether clubs try to convince people that their product and services are worth the money they have to pay, or they lower the prices of the tickets.

2. For non-fans specially

By focusing its efforts on retaining the fans that already attend games, the providers are ignoring some very important segments of the population consisting of people who, for various reasons, do not attend games, or attend only very infrequently. It is very important to identify these segments and investigate the various reasons that people have for not attending soccer games. These market segments are quite considerable in size and represent a big opportunity for growth through the expansion of the current fan base.

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The anonymous that we do not know. We are aware that our sample is not representative from the Belgian population. Either because the survey was filled out in Dutch only, or because people that are not interested at all in soccer, would not bother to fill it out. About the ones who are out of this scope, who did not fill out our survey, the ones who have no interest whatsoever in soccer, we would say that they are the most difficult segment to target. Turning an older person, who cannot stand one more game on TV, into a fan might be a utopia. Therefore, the only advice we could give to clubs about the non-fans with no interest in soccer, would be paying attention to the children, because those are the ones that are still defining their interests and that are still open to change.
- 
There is still hope. However, we can identify that the non-fans who filled out our survey, are still highly interested in soccer, being this sport their favourite one to watch and to practice. Non-fans that filled out our survey are a potential segment to reach. They like soccer, but they are just not connected to a special club. Only 25% of people affirm that they would not attend a game, but 60% did not attend any game the previous season. Therefore, 35% of these non-fans just have to be convinced to pay a first visit to the

stadium. Clubs might use the 'it's your region' factor with these people, associated with some promotions and offers, which might not even be related to soccer directly, at first. If clubs want to attract these people, changing the bad image about the level of play is also an answer.

3. For fans in Belgium

This segment is a huge market to explore. A big number of fans are still not attending games on a regular basis. In this manner, the team identification of these fans can still be maximised.

It is important to notice that people expressly stated that they are going less to the stadium because of the conditions around and inside the stadium. However, they did not say that good stadium conditions would make them attend more. This means that for the Belgian consumers, minimum conditions of sportscape are indispensable but what moves them into the stadium are the sociopsychological motives, such as entertainment, diversion, being with family, friends, and other fans at the stadium, among others.

4. 1st league versus lower leagues

- 🌐 **Cheaper tickets for 1st league.** Certainly the strongest complaint of the fans of the 1st league is the price of the tickets. People still feel that they spend too much money for one game. Cheaper season tickets and differentiated prices for each game, i.e., lower prices for the worst places at the stadium, are demanded by fans.
- 🌐 **All-against-all championship for lower leagues.** The lower league fans might be dreaming about their own team playing in the 1st league. A championship of the 1st league with 18 teams would at least give them the idea that it is possible, and they could feel more attracted to support their team. Perhaps for the fans of the lower leagues, a 1st league even with more teams (20 or 22 teams) would also be an added value.
- 🌐 **Lower league fans live closer.** Therefore, it is easier for them to get out of their home and visit the stadium. Clubs might enhance this fact close to the fans, by showing that they will not lose a lot of time to go to the game.

5. Men versus women

Segmenting by gender makes sense in view of empirical data from previous research (Hall & O'Mahony, 2006), but also from our research.

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Girls only. VfB Stuttgart, a German soccer club, offers special merchandise for girls only, such as fashion accessories, hats, female t-shirts, and scarves for her (Buhler & Nufer, 2010). Also Hertha BSC Berlin targets female supporters with a website dedicated exclusively to female Hertha fans, the *Hertha Freudin website*. No research was conducted about the success of these cases specifically. We present them to illustrate some of the offers made by professional sporting organisations to target women.
- 
Marketing actions for women. As we saw in our research, women give more importance to marketing actions, such as price and promotions related issues. Letting them know that there are available family meal deals (Rein et al., 2006), with for instance four tickets, four hamburgers, four drinks and four souvenir cups, may call their attention.
- 
For men, the focus on soccer. Men ask for better level of soccer and famous players. As these are demands that involve bigger amounts of money, it might be difficult for some clubs to accomplish them. Therefore, clubs could try to improve their youth teams, so they can reach a senior team with more quality. A certain attractive model of game is also a possible way of calling the attention of some people (e.g., more aggressive, more attacking, more aesthetic).
- 
Men complain more, but they are more passionate. Measures of the *reasons not to go to the games* scored always higher with men in our research. This means that men complain more. Nevertheless, they are the ones attending more, and they cover a big number of the fans. We think they still attend more, because their passion is stronger. Increasing the passion for soccer with women might be a solution to attract them to the stadium.

6. Depending on the number of games attended

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With less regular attendees something extra is needed. Fans that are attending fewer games need to be motivated once in a while to do it. Therefore, clubs could employ external motivators, such as prizes, or triggers, such as an action on the Facebook to remind them about the next home game.

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- ⚽ **Safety issues.** In our research, less regular attendees showed to be worried with safety issues, and a lot of them referred they prefer to see the games on TV. Fans have to be shown that there are huge advantages when they chose to go to the stadium, instead of sitting comfortably in their home sofa. Clubs might explore what is special about their stadium and show it to their fans.
 - ⚽ **Regular base attendees should be rewarded.** Fans that attend games in a regular basis should be rewarded sometimes. Associating a season ticket with special actions, only available to the ones that have shown since the beginning that they were going to be there, might be an option with these fans, who want to feel special. A fan loyalty card can also be a good idea; not only with the intention of providing cheaper games, but to increase the feeling of belonging to the club, as carrying the colours and symbol of the club in the wallet might be a matter of pride to the fans. The bond between club and fan gets stronger, and in addition, the fan becomes voluntarily a communication machine of the club. A good example of a membership scheme is the soccer club Juventus Turin, from Italy (to know more about it, check www.juventus.com/wps/portal/juve/en/4you/juventus-member/essere-member).
 - ⚽ **Nostalgia as an added value.** If the club has a past of titles or of great conquers, or some conquers at least, should embrace it. Otherwise, looking in the club's past for something that made it what it is nowadays, might also work from the marketing perspective. The fans that are attending more games are usually interested in the history of the club, in funny stories of the past, statistics throughout times (Rein et al., 2006). The club can make these fans feel even more special, by selling combined tickets for a game and for the museum of the club. Other activity that may please the die-hard fans is showing questions on the screen at the stadium, before the game starts, or during the break, about the recent or not so recent history of the club. It does not even need to be a contest, as people spread at the stands can adhere or not.
 - ⚽ **The next step.** The main idea is to move people to the next step of sport attendance. Obviously, it will be difficult to turn non-spectators into season ticket holders, attending all games, directly. However, it is possible to motivate a person that rarely goes to the stadium, with an offer of a special ticket for five games during the season, at a special price. As we saw in our research, people going less to games are more sensitive to marketing actions. It is also possible to take a person that is already going often to the stadium and develop a mega-kit at the beginning of the season, including a season ticket

but also other special features, that enhances that the fans are the strongest priority of the club.

-  **Passion and belonging.** What makes the heavy users different from the other people is mainly their passion and feeling of belonging. Therefore, the main aim of the clubs should be increasing these feelings in every fan.

7. General marketing suggestions

A healthy and longstanding relationship between the fans/fans-to-be and the provider should be, from the marketing perspective, the main aim of the provider. Sport organisations should get to know their consumers, understand how to find them and how address them, and define their target groups. Relationship marketing is the most successful path nowadays, as the traditional marketing actions, such as flyers or banners, no longer meet the challenges put forward by a highly competitive consumption world.

-  **Involving the fans in the club's decisions.** Fans can be part of the decisions of the club (Buhler & Nufer, 2010). Customers are increasingly gaining power and taking control over and within organisations (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). An illustrating example of extreme power given to sport fans is the Ebbsfleet United (for more information about this case, check Chapter 2, Section 5.). However, clubs do not have to go so far. FC Barcelona, the Spanish soccer club, has more than 150,000 members that have the right to participate in the presidential elections. Clubs can provide the opportunity for the fans to vote online in a certain issue that is being discussed at the moment (option to buy a player, building of a new stadium, in which conditions, etc.).
-  **Interacting online with the fans.** Facebook pages, blogs, official website, online gaming, are some of the best tools to be close to the fans. These tools should be presented in several languages, to be accessible to international targets. Even for a club of smaller dimension, these tools can be useful and cheap.
-  **Getting to know the fans.** A systematic relationship system, not only with the database of the fans, but with special features for different kind of fans is advised. A *happy birthday* card or e-mail is just an example of a small action that the club can carry out to remind the fan that they care. Selecting which information to send to the fans, and the kind of communication based on their profiles, is the next step (Buhler & Nufer, 2010). This process can be accomplished with the use of customer relationship management software.

Smaller clubs can opt for simpler solutions, such as manually grouping the fans according to their needs.

-  **Giving fans the due importance.** It is important to make the fans feel really important to the club, as if they were unique. Actions like the one of the All Blacks, the New Zealand's national Rugby team, are good examples of this special feeling (Buhler & Nufer, 2010). On their website, fans can leave messages for the team or for the players. These messages are afterwards shown to the team. Also messages or pictures shown on the screens during the games would be a possible action to make people feel special, even if for only one moment. Recently, an 11 year old kid got his wrist broke by Cristiano Ronaldo, and he declared 'it's one of the most spectacular ways you can get your arm broken.' (www.mstarz.com/articles/16967/20130725/cristiano-ronaldo-breaks-11-year-old-fans-wrist-video-real.htm). This example represents how crazy fans can be about a club or player and clubs just have to embrace it.
-  **Asking the fans for help to improve.** Directly using a simple e-mail, the club can get to know what the fans think that has to be improved. Quantitative surveys, such as the one used in this research, but adapted to each particular club, are also a solution. Qualitative focus groups, where random or specific targets of fans are chosen to seat together and discuss about the improvements the club could perform.
-  **Delighting the fans.** The quality of the sport venues and of the sport events has risen. This is, at the one hand, a positive fact, because it attracts more people to the stadium. On the other hand, people are always expecting something with minimum quality. Nowadays, the fans' expectations are higher and the offer is huge (Rein, Kotler, & Shields, 2006). If their expectations are not covered, fans get frustrated and use the word of mouth to spread the negative experience. This word of mouth is nowadays maximised by the use of tools such as Facebook or Twitter. Therefore, the aim of the club should be to always satisfy the expectations of the fans. In addition, what can turn a sport club, team or event into something special, is the delight (Brito, Ramos, & Carvalho, 2006). More than satisfying the expectations of the fans, it is important to delight them sometimes, i.e., it is important to exceed their expectations, surprise them, and make them feel special. Not always, because otherwise it stops being special, and it becomes usual and boring for the fans to be delighted. Clubs should delight fans just in the right measure, keep them engaged, but not overwhelmed by novelty.
-  **Taking complains seriously.** The club should be sensitive to the problems or proposals of the fans. It is important to listen and answer to the fans. It may seem a waste of money to

have a full-time person in the club just to be a go-between, but most of the times, that money is spared in problems of other kind, such as back-off of fans, negative word of mouth or disloyalty.

🌐 **Building the stadium for the fans.** The stadiums should be planned thinking about their short-term, medium-term and long-term future use. Parameters such as number and kind of fans that are already visiting the stadium, potential clients, number of games per year, number of non soccer activities per year, size and economic situation of population, cultural and sport competitors, and accessibility, should be included when planning the stadium construction.

🌐 **Thinking the stadium for the fans.** Fans should be able to use their stadium as their second home, for their shopping, wedding, conference or visit with friends. The place attachment (explained in Chapter 2, Section 3.3.2.) can be enhanced during the match-day, but also during all year. Several clubs in Europe opt to build shops, fitness centres and parking not only around, but also inside the stadium, e.g., Estádio do Dragão, from Futebol Clube do Porto, a soccer club from Portugal.

🌐 **Thinking about the kilometres.** Fans that live further from the stadium, have, as we also found in this research, more difficulties to go to the games, whether because they do not have time to travel to the game, or because of money related issues, such as total price of travel, food, and ticket to attend. It is not just the time the activity takes, but also the time that takes to engage on it (Rein et al., 2006). For those fans, special packs could be defined, in order to make the offer more attractive (e.g., 'bring a friend for free if you live further than...'). Integrating transportation considerations into all facility design plans is also essential (Rein et al., 2006). However, forcing all the fans to travel in a certain bus when they want to attend away games (the *combiregeling* in Belgium obliges fans to travel to some away games, which are considered of high risk, in an organised bus, not allowing them to travel in their private transportation) cannot be the only solution, as several respondents of our survey showed unpleasantness for it. On the other hand, if the fans live in the surroundings of the stadium, they can be informed on short notice if there are still available tickets for the match (Buhler & Nufer, 2010).

🌐 **Special segments, special actions.** Sometimes, specific smaller groups might be stimulated by the club with special actions. Corporate social responsibility (CSR), a trendy concept that puts in a simple way the idea that the wealthy in a society should help those less fortunate via philanthropy or charity is, of course, not new (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). But recently some clubs are taking some actions in order to put something back in society. It can be

argued that these actions have a recognition aim, and therefore, they can no longer be associated with CSR. Anyway, we present some examples of what has been done with minorities. Hertha BSC Berlin, a German soccer club, offers unemployed and socially disadvantaged fans discounted tickets for some low-profile games during the season (Buhler & Nufer, 2010). Arsenal Football Club, from England, helps people in need, such as disadvantaged children. The Arsenal Foundation works on the field with several institutions (to check for more, consult www.arsenal.com/thearsenalfoundation).



Becoming a fan, becoming an attendee. Non-fans rarely attend games, as we shown with this research. We also found that people became fans of their club especially due to their father and also to their friends. The fact that the club was the club of their city or region was also a big plus point to become a fan. In average, people became a fan at twelve years old, and more than 80% became fans before they were sixteen years old. Reaching youth early in the child development, imprints the club on the child's memory channel, and increases the potential for creating and enduring fandom (Rein et al., 2006). Therefore, clubs should find strategies to attract the local youngsters to be their fans, through their father and friends specially. Some examples of good practices are presented as follows (Buhler & Nufer, 2010). Borussia Dortmund, from the German Bundesliga, invites youngsters from eleven to sixteen years old with a discounted price, to a special section on their standing terrace, where the number of fans is limited, to avoid squeezes. In addition, they are sometimes invited to play in the field before the actual game. Babysitting services are becoming also more common in several clubs, allowing the parents to comfortably attend the game, and connecting the children to the club since a young age. Another example is the German Bundesliga club Hannover 96, that gives a discount to fathers or mothers that bring their children to the stadium.



The right stakeholders. The club should associate with stakeholders, e.g., sponsors, partners, official entities, that share the same values as the club. The club can collaborate with them, to offer joint products and services to the fans. But these offers should always be focused on the clients and on the values of the club. Sometimes, a brand is almost blended with the club itself. An example of this situation is the relationship between Futebol Clube do Porto, a soccer club from Portugal, and Révigrés, a ceramics company. In fact, the advertising Revigrés assumed a status in the club that resembles a true symbol. In 2003 the contract has undergone a redefinition, with the name of Revigrés appearing only in Futebol Clube do Porto international competitions (in domestic competitions it was replaced by the logo of another brand). By then, many fans considered this partial

substitution of Revigrés in the uniform as a loss of part of the identity of the club. On the contrary, Tottenham, from England, faces a problem with the cup sponsor for the season 2013-14 (Unknown, 2013b). The new kit has big red letters, the colour of the cup sponsor, on the front of their shirts. Fans already showed their negative reactions on their Facebook or Twitter accounts, as they do not appreciate to have the red of their biggest rivals Arsenal on their shirt.

Evaluate and control. The relationship between the club and the fans can always go better. The club should think about what they have done, improve what went wrong, and even if it is working, try to go further. Some strategies may work better than others. However, that fact should not stop clubs from innovating and looking for the attention of the consumers (Rein et al., 2006). Being pro-active and creative, and enjoying the opportunities that are given at each moment by the context, can be a successful option. The fact that we are in a digital area, allows clubs to use situations that happened in the game the weekend before, immediately for the next game, headed for thousands of fans.

8. Safety issues

One of the motives that keep people away from the stadium, especially the older ones, is the fear for violence or problems with safety at the stands. In our survey, people referring that the clubs should improve safety inside and around the stadium were, in average, fifteen years older ($X = 45.8$, $SD = 16.8$) than the ones that did not refer to it ($X = 34.1$, $SD = 15.0$). The media pay a huge attention to it, and every small incident turns into a newspaper headline. Although it was not our aim to study the specific issue of violence and safety, neither the particular group of fans that can cause violence at the stadium, we know this is a subject that arouses interest from the fans, as well as from the boards of the clubs. Following, we articulate some tips or examples to prevent, diminish or control this problem, the best way possible.

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Friendly but firm low-profile. Findings support that there is a connection between low-profile policing and non-violent norms among crowds attending international tournaments (Schreiber & Stott, 2012). According to data collected on the Euro2004, the European championship of soccer, held in Portugal, a 'friendly but firm' low-profile approach can be a solution.
- 
Prevention is the best way. A ticketing process that has into account the distribution of fans of both clubs in the stands, a smooth organization of the entrances and ways out of

the stadium, avoids dissatisfaction at first. The study of Schreiber and Stott suggests that a key feature of the approach at Euro2004 was the fact that police officers (both plainclothes and uniformed police) were embedded within the crowd, enabling them to monitor and react to emerging problems at an early stage. As such, they were able to deal with events before they escalated and therefore potentially to avoid initiating the group-level dynamics known to be responsible for rioting at previous international tournaments in Europe.

🌐 **Research meets practice.** A further factor for the success of Euro2004 can be seen in the effective cooperation between research and police practice (Schreiber & Stott, 2012). This relationship must work in both directions, and also with the clubs.

🌐 **Do not ignore troublemakers.** As a service provider, i.e., as the organising club, federation, or local authority, do not ignore the troublemakers (Buhler & Nufer, 2010). Hertha BSC Berlin, a German Bundesliga club, appointed three full-time employees to take care of their fans. If a group of fans wants to be recognised by the club as an OFC (Official Fan Club of Hertha BSC Berlin), and get some benefits, they have to sign a contract, where they have to commit themselves to behave in a positive manner. In return, they receive e.g., ticket discounts, round tables with players of the first team, and special events and actions just for them. To date, there are more than 350 OFC's (Buhler & Nufer, 2010).

🌐 **Embrace rivalry.** In a healthy way, rivalry can be positive. Rivalry is one of the most powerful ways to produce awareness for a brand (Rein et al., 2006). People have a natural attraction to conflict, and an extra story line can transform a boring game in an involving experience. However, be careful with establishing boundaries between rivalry and violence. The All Blacks Aka, the traditional ritual the New Zealand national rugby team performs before each game is an example of good practices in this field.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In small countries, such as Belgium, soccer stadiums are harder to fill. Clubs, cities and federations should be careful not to build *white elephants*, i.e., big and pretty stadiums that are very costly, but that remain empty after the novelty effect fades out. Empty stadiums are a public issue, because they are often directly or indirectly financed by the tax payers. From the perspective of the sport provider, an empty stadium also means less money that flows from the game itself, or from the sponsors. In that case, less money can be spent with players, coaches, youth teams, or improvements in the community. Strong measures should be taken to bring more people into the stadium, considering that sport fans are overwhelmed with other consumption offers as well. However, clubs should be specific in their quest for attendees, i.e., each segment should be targeted in a particular way. In the case of Belgium, some important recommendations can be drawn based on our extensive survey among soccer fans and non-fans.

Fans are not pleased with the price of the tickets. Therefore, either the tickets get cheaper, or the fans/the clients get convinced that the money is worth spending in a soccer game, compared to the big consumption offer of other entertainment activities, such as other sports, cinema, arts, TV, videogames, or internet. Besides, people complain about accessibilities and service quality, and state that they attend fewer games for that reason. In this manner, sportscape related issues seem to influence attendance in a strong way. In addition, the competition formula is a big issue for the majority of people, as 65% of them would prefer a normal championship with 16 or 18 teams.

The marketing implications were deeply extended in the previous chapter. In summary, the clubs have to (1) eliminate the lack of safety, and the soccer related prejudice, such as, e.g., 'soccer is for violent or unpleasant people', (2) arouse the interest of the non-fans and non-spectators for the sport itself, and particularly for the live experience, (3) turn non-attending fans into loyal spectators, by offering either a better service, or a better level of soccer, (4) and care for the ones that are already going to the stadium, by giving them exceptional treatment and making them feel special, with exclusive actions. It goes without saying that the chosen strategies should vary according the aims and the budget of each institution. A club can adopt all these measures at the same time, or choose only some of them, depending on the money it can spend, and depending on the professional expertise it has inside of the club, i.e., marketeers and managers.

Future research should focus on the other side of the relationship, i.e., the clubs, the federations, and the cities. We know what fans want, but what are the clubs doing at the moment? In which fields can they improve? Which are the management models that are being used, and which marketing strategies are being adopted? Are clubs doing the best they can with their resources and context?

Steven Martens, the General Secretary of the Royal Belgian Football Association, recently stated '(...) our [URBSFA-KBVB] long-term goals include an increase of the number of football fans (...). This is only possible if we have modern stadiums that can assure a good hospitality for the fans. Therefore, we would like to establish five brand new stadium cases' (Sporza, 2012). Are the Belgian soccer related institutions working enough to fill these new soccer stadiums with spectators? Or is Belgium tracking the wrong managerial path that other countries have followed before, and will it have to deal with white elephants? An example of this situation is the case of Portugal. After organising the European championship of soccer, in 2004, several modern and high quality soccer stadiums in the country became difficult or impossible to fill with spectators (more information about the case of Portugal will be presented in the second part of this report).

Future research should also focus on the ideal dimensions of the stadiums, i.e., optimal number of seats, which kind of seats, parking places, and others, according to each context, club and/or city. This research should be based on indicators such as (1) the size of population of the country and/or of the region, (2) the number of fans, (3) the socioeconomic situation of the population and of the fans, (4) the history and the future of the club, regarding their financial situation, ranking and short-term and long-term objectives, (5) the kind of use of the facility, e.g., soccer games only, multisport, or multifunctional arena, and the kind of activities organised, (6) and the available budget. This criterion research could assist the decision makers when planning the new stadiums, or renewing the older ones.

Sport marketing strategies should be based both on the work of scientists who conduct sound research using modern marketing science, as well as on the work of field experts that complete it with creative ideas (Shank, 2009). In our research, our aim was to collect and analyse data, but also to make it useful to the sport community. We hope that our work turns out to be valuable, not only for the scientific audience, but to the service providers that are soccer related as well.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Survey details (scales and principal component analysis conducted)

Appendix A1 Sport spectator identification scale (SSIS)

A Dutch version of the SSIS (Theodorakis, Wann, de Carvalho, & Sarmento, 2010; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001) is used to assess levels of team identification. Several studies provided evidence regarding the SSIS's factor structure, internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and construct validity (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). The options range from 1 – *nothing* to 7 – *totally*.

A Principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the 7 items of the SSIS with orthogonal rotation (varimax). The KMO measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .89. Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2(21) = 14949.15$, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. After analysis of the scree plot and eigenvalues, one component was extracted explaining 58% of the variance. The SSIS with the seven final items measuring the TI, showed a high reliability by the means of the Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = .85$).

Table A1 SSIS: means and standard deviations ($n = 4,482$)

	M	SD
How important to YOU is it that the team wins?	5.8	1.1
How strongly do YOU see YOURSELF as a fan of the team?	5.9	1.1
How strongly do your FRIENDS see YOU as a fan of the team?	5.7	1.3
How closely do you follow the team?	6.3	1.0
How important is being a fan of the team to YOU?	5.6	1.3
How much do you dislike the greatest rivals of the team?	4.4	2.1
How often do YOU display the team's name or insignia?	3.7	1.9

As this scale showed only one component, the average of the seven items is used for the calculations with the team identification concept.

Appendix A2 Place attachment scale (PAS)

The PAS (Kyle, Graefe, et al., 2004a; Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004) was used. These authors tested the scale and reported good psychometric properties. The options range from 1 – *totally disagree* to 5 – *totally agree*. The scale was used for the first time in the context of professional soccer by de Carvalho and colleagues (2011). In this work, the scale was adapted to measure the attachment to a stadium (substituting the wording related to recreational settings with wording related to soccer). However, due to the extension of the survey, and after pilot-tests we decided to use only some items of the total PAS. The items that were retained correspond to the dimensions *affective attachment* (three items), i.e., current emotional connection with the stadium (e.g., *I have a strong emotional bond with the stadium X*), and *social bonding* (two items), i.e., items related to the memories and nostalgia towards the place (e.g., *I associate special people in my life with the stadium X*).

We also conducted a PCA with the six items of the adapted PAS with orthogonal rotation (Varimax). The KMO measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .84. Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2(15) = 13463.22$, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Only one component with the 5 items was extracted explaining 61% of the variance. The PAS shows a high reliability through the Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = .87$).

Table A2 PAS: means and standard deviations ($n = 4,482$)

	M	SD
Memories of past experiences with family and friends in the X Stadium.	3.4	1.3
I have a strong emotional bond to the X Stadium.	2.9	1.2
I really enjoy the X Stadium.	3.4	1.2
The X Stadium means a lot to me.	3.1	1.2
I associate special people in my life with the X Stadium.	2.5	1.2
The place where the stadium is located means a lot to me.	2.6	1.3

Appendix A3 *Motives for attendance scale (MAS)*

For the MAS, people had to answer the question *When you decide to go to a soccer game, to what extent do the following motives/reasons affect your decision to attend?* Items relative to the sportscape (i.e., stadium aesthetics, crowding, parking, accessibility, hygiene, and quality of food and drinks), game and management related issues, sociopsychological concepts, marketing actions, and economical factors were included. The items were judged on 5-point scales (1 – *nothing* to 5 – *totally*). There was also an extra item, named *Other*, where people could write an extra important reason for themselves. We elaborated this scale based on a sound review of the literature and on a previous pilot-study. Explicitly, the items derived both from existing research (Correia & Esteves, 2007; Douvis, 2007; Hall, O'Mahony, & Vieceli, 2009; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Kim & Trail, 2010), and from an open answer question presented on the pilot-study, asking the motives of the participants to attend soccer games.

A PCA was run on the 23 items of the MAS with orthogonal rotation (Varimax). The KMO measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .92. Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2(253) = 40740.05$, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Based on the scree plot, on the eigenvalues, and on the reliability of the sub-scales, we extracted four components explaining 58% of the variance, in total.

Items clustering around the same component suggested that the Component 1, with 13 items, included the sociopsychological motives; the Component 2, with four items, included the sportscape elements; the Component 3, with four items, included the marketing actions; and the Component 4, with two items, was related with the level of play. All these subscales showed a good ($\alpha > .70$) or a high ($\alpha > .80$) reliability, as shown in the following table.

The items that scored a higher average were *For the soccer itself/liking soccer/for the game/for the of sport* ($X = 4.26$, $SD = 0.83$), *A special game (e.g., derby/decisive/important/international/final)* ($x = 4.17$, $SD = 1.01$), and *To support my team from close* ($X = 4.09$, $SD = 0.98$). Therefore, according to the respondents, these are the reasons that motivate them to attend live soccer games.

The answers for the extra item *Other* were only infrequently filled out, except for one particular answer. The reason *Pride in the club/passion for the club/love for the club/affiliation to the club (part of the tifo)/the club is part of my life* was reported 83 times, which is a pretty high number. People made it clear that passion was one of their important reasons to go to the stadium. The other reasons reported in a higher number were *To meet new people/for the other supporters/to interact with other supporters* (17 people), and *For the tradition/authenticity/mystique/colours/magic/emotion/celebration of goals/memories/songs* (16 people).

Table A3 Factor loadings for exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation of the MAS (n = 4,482)

Items	M (SD)	Components			
		Sociopsic. Motives (1)	Sportscape (2)	Marketing actions (3)	Level of play (4)
For the excitement / for the adrenalin	3.95 (0.98)	.762			
To support my team from close	4.09 (0.98)	.737			
For the fun / amusement / diversion / pleasure / joy / happiness	4.05 (0.88)	.715			
Feeling of belonging / to be part of something big / to share the moment with the crowd / to interact with other fans	3.50 (1.13)	.704			
To escape / to do something else / to relax / to be away from home / to let the stress go / to get away from the routine	3.54 (1.14)	.664			
For the live experience / prefer seeing soccer live	4.02 (1.03)	.660			
A special game (e.g. derby / decisive / important / international / final)	4.16 (1.01)	.629			
For the soccer itself / liking soccer / for the game / for the of sport	4.25 (0.83)	.608			.451
To be with friends at the stadium / to go with friends / to do something with friends	3.64 (1.16)	.585			
A good atmosphere at the stadium	3.91 (1.01)	.573			
To see the players live / for the players (e.g. famous / good players)	3.63 (1.11)	.531			
Special actions with the team (e.g. interaction of the players with the fans)	2.52 (1.25)	.510		.403	
To be with family at the stadium / to go with family members / to have family moments	2.70 (1.32)	.434			
Safety (e.g. easy movement along the stands and corridors / nonviolent environment)	3.30 (1.18)		.801		
Accessibility (e.g. enough parking / public transports / easy to reach)	3.13 (1.26)		.802		
Good stadium conditions (e.g. comfortable / clean / good service quality / good screens / good view to the field)	3.18 (1.24)		.787		
Pretty stadium / good architecture	2.86 (1.26)		.768		
Special marketing actions (e.g. free consumptions / offers during the game / entertainment before game, or during the break)	2.59 (1.26)			.780	
Free entrance	3.11 (1.48)			.771	
Low price of the tickets (e.g. cheap / cheaper than usual / promotions with the price of the ticket)	2.96 (1.27)			.762	
Knowing someone that plays or played in the team / playing or having played in the team	2.41 (1.34)			.537	
Good level of play / attractive soccer	3.65 (1.02)				.734
Good performances of my team	3.61 (1.11)				.681
Eigenvalues		8.02	2.91	1.30	1.08
% of variance		34.8	12.6	5.6	4.7
α		.89	.87	.77	.79
Number of items		13	4	4	2

Note: Factor loadings < .40 were suppressed to assist the screening.

Appendix A4 *Motives for non-attendance scale (MNAS)*

For the MNAS, people had to answer the question *When you decide to go to a soccer game, to what extent do the following motives/reasons affect your decision to not attend?* Items that were similar to the MAS were included, but on the other direction, e.g., *Lack of interest*, *Game being played on TV*, or *Lack of time*. The items were judged on 5-point scales (1 – *nothing* to 5 – *totally*). There was also an extra item, named *Other*, where people could write an extra important reason for themselves. We elaborated this scale based on a sound review of the literature and on a previous pilot-study. Explicitly, the items derived both from existing research (Correia & Esteves, 2007; Douvis, 2007; Hall, O'Mahony, & Vieceli, 2009; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Kim & Trail, 2010), and from an open answer question presented on the pilot-study, asking the motives of the participants to attend soccer games.

A PCA was run on the 21 items of the MNAS with orthogonal rotation (Varimax). The KMO measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .90. Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2(210) = 36501.52$, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Based on the scree plot, on the eigenvalues, and on the reliability of the sub-scales, we extracted four components explaining 57% of the variance, in total.

Items clustering around the same component suggested that the Component 1, with 5 items, included the motives related with bad sportscape and violence; the Component 2, with eight items, included organisational issues and bad level of soccer; the Component 3, with five items, included the wish of the respondents to be detached from this sport, somehow, and their disinterest also; and the Component 4, with three items, was related with money issues. All these subscales showed a good ($\alpha > .70$) reliability, as shown in the following table.

The items that scored a higher average were *Expensive tickets/too expensive tickets* ($X = 3.20$, $SD = 1.30$), *Lack of time/being too busy/work reasons* ($X = 3.09$, $SD = 1.33$), and *Bad schedules/we only know the schedules too late* ($X = 2.84$, $SD = 1.37$). Therefore, according to the respondents, these are the most important reasons that keep them away from the stadium.

The answers for the extra item *Other* were only infrequently filled out. The reasons that were referred in a more frequent way were *Too far from home/too much time to get to the stadium* (38 people), and *Other activities/other activities at the same time* (37 people).

Table A4 Factor loadings for exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation of the MNAS (n = 4,482)

Items	M (SD)	Components			
		Bad sportscape & violence (1)	Organisational issues & bad level of play (2)	Detachment from soccer & disinterest (3)	Money issues (4)
Crowded / unsafe / chaotic stadium	2.47 (1.40)	.875			
Violence at / around the stadium / hooliganism	2.55 (1.51)	.828			
Bad stadium conditions	2.64 (1.40)	.824			
Ugly stadium / bad architecture of the stadium	2.09 (1.21)	.656			
Bad accessibility (not enough parking / no public transports or too expensive / difficult to reach)	2.57 (1.35)	.619			.431
Bad schedules / we only know the schedules too late	2.84 (1.38)		.687		
Lack of time / being too busy / work reasons	3.08 (1.33)		.623		
Nobody to go with / Disinterest of friends or family	2.23 (1.30)		.570		
Bad atmosphere (not enough people at the stadium / not cosy enough)	2.02 (1.16)		.536		
Bad ranking or winning record / disappointment with the team	1.87 (1.08)		.532	.405	
Bad weather conditions (cold / rain / cold and rain)	2.44 (1.28)		.520		
Lack of attractiveness / quality of soccer / bad opponent	2.45 (1.26)	.462	.471		
The game being played on TV	2.61 (1.35)		.404		
It's a waste of time	1.35 (0.75)			.798	
Soccer is boring, in general	1.31 (0.74)			.783	
Lack of interest	1.33 (0.77)			.743	
Soccer mentality (too much money involved / no fair-play / corruption / too much attention to soccer)	1.97 (1.18)			.498	
The kind of people that attend	1.83 (1.08)			.471	
Expensive tickets / too expensive tickets	3.20 (1.38)				.836
Expensive drinks / food / trip / all together	2.66 (1.38)				.789
Lack of money / alternative activities to spend money with	2.46 (1.32)				.657
Eigenvalues		7.26	2.01	1.49	1.19
% of variance		34.6	9.59	7.11	5.7
α		.88	.78	.77	.79
Number of items		5	8	5	3

Note: Factor loadings < .40 were suppressed to assist the screening.

Appendix B *Demographic data of entire sample***Table B1** *Educational status (highest level reached)*

	n	%
No education	27	0.6
Primary school	278	5.7
Basic school	597	12.2
High school (professional)	398	8.2
High school (technical)	872	17.9
High school (sciences)	789	16.2
Bachelor or Graduation	1,137	23.3
Master or PhD	777	15.9

Table B2 *Marital status*

	n	%
Married	1,750	35.9
Single	1,702	34.9
Living together	749	15.4
In a relationship	478	9.8
Divorced/separated	164	3.4
Widowed	27	0.6

Table B3 *Employment status*

	n	%
Employed full time	2,686	55.2
Student	1,381	28.4
Retired	479	9.8
Employed part time	173	3.6
Unemployed	123	2.5
Housewife/househusband	25	0.5

Table B4 *Professional status*

	n	%
I've never had a job before	1,091	22.6
Higher clerk / official / manager	1,063	22.0
Clerk / servant	827	17.1
Skilled worker / labourer	667	13.8
Other	428	8.9
Teacher / lecturer	274	5.7
Unskilled worker / labourer	159	3.3
Small business owner (less than 50 employees)	132	2.7
Independent worker (doctor / lawyer)	101	2.1
Medium / big business owner (more than 50 employees)	81	1.7
Farmer	13	0.3

Appendix C Sport preferences (Favourite sport to watch/attend or to practice)

Table C1 Favourite sport to watch/attend

	n	%
Soccer	4,086	84.5
Road cycling or cycling in general	241	5.0
Basketball	73	1.5
Tennis	62	1.3
Cyclo-cross	59	1.2
Volleyball	43	0.9
Athletics	43	0.9
Gymnastics	22	0.5
Formula 1	19	0.4
Rugby	14	0.3
Horse riding	14	0.3
Handball	13	0.3
Swimming	8	0.2
Dance	8	0.2
Motorsports	8	0.2
Recreational cycling	7	0.1
Indoor soccer	6	0.1
American football	6	0.1
Rope skipping	6	0.1
Golf / Mini golf	5	0.1
Field hockey	5	0.1
Motocross/Enduro	5	0.1
Other sports	85	1.8

Table C2 Favourite sport to practice

	n	%
Soccer	1,940	42.9
Recreational cycling	452	10.0
Running	302	6.7
Walking	192	4.2
Road cycling or cycling in general	180	4.0
Tennis	163	3.6
Fitness classes / Aerobics / Zumba	146	3.2
Swimming	129	2.9
Volleyball	86	1.9
Indoor soccer	79	1.7
Basketball	78	1.7
Jogging	70	1.5
Badminton	68	1.5
Athletics	49	1.1
Mountain bike / BTT / Downhill	46	1.0
Mini football	46	1.0
Dance	45	1.0
Table tennis	38	0.8
Squash	36	0.8
Billiard / Snooker	36	0.8
Ski	26	0.6
Gymnastics	22	0.5
Horse riding	22	0.5
Golf / Mini golf	19	0.4
Handball	17	0.4
Other sports	238	5.3

Appendix D *Distribution of fans among the clubs*

	League	n	%
Club Brugge	1 st league	1,639	36.1
Anderlecht	1 st league	712	15.7
Mechelen	1 st league	283	6.2
Racing Genk	1 st league	282	6.2
AA Gent	1 st league	253	5.6
Cercle Brugge	1 st league	200	4.4
Lierse SK	1 st league	164	3.6
OH Leuven	1 st league	144	3.2
Standard	1 st league	143	3.1
Zulte Waregem	1 st league	114	2.5
Lokeren	1 st league	111	2.4
Beerschot AC	1 st league	105	2.3
Kortrijk	1 st league	81	1.8
Royal Antwerp Football Club	2 nd league	56	1.2
Waasland-Beveren	1 st league	45	1.0
STVV Sint-Truidense VV	2 nd league	32	.7
KVC Westerlo	2 nd league	22	.5
SC Eendracht Aalst	2 nd league	19	.4
Barcelona	Foreigner	12	.3
KV Oostende	2 nd league	9	.2
AFC Ajax	Foreigner	8	.2
KSV Roeselare	2 nd league	6	.1
FC Brussels	2 nd league	5	.1
Lommel United	2 nd league	5	.1
De Rode Duivels	-	5	.1
KSK Heist	2 nd league	4	.1
Berchem Sport	Lower division	4	.1
Racing Mechelen KRC	Lower division	4	.1
KMSK Deinze	Lower division	4	.1
Manchester United	Foreigner	3	.1
PSV Eindhoven	Foreigner	3	.1
Liverpool FC	Foreigner	3	.1
NAC Breda	Foreigner	3	.1
Real Madrid	Foreigner	3	.1
Charleroi	1 st league	2	.0
KVC Houtvenne	Lower division	2	.0
KSC Grimbergen	Lower division	2	.0
Royale Union Saint-Gilloise	Lower division	2	.0
FC Dender EH	Lower division	2	.0
Arsenal FC	Foreigner	2	.0
FC Bayern Munchen	Foreigner	2	.0

Bergen	1 st league	1	.0
KFC Dessel Sport	2 nd league	1	.0
KV Woluwe Zavemtem	2 nd league	1	.0
KV Turnhout	Lower division	1	.0
Kadijk SK Overpelt	Lower division	1	.0
KFC De Kempen	Lower division	1	.0
Verbroedering Geel-Meerhout	Lower division	1	.0
KBS Poperine	Lower division	1	.0
SW Harelbeke	Lower division	1	.0
VK Heindonk	Lower division	1	.0
Hoogstraten VV	Lower division	1	.0
KVV Oostduinkerke	Lower division	1	.0
FC Kersken	Lower division	1	.0
Londerzeel SK	Lower division	1	.0
Olympia SC Wijgmaal	Lower division	1	.0
Torhout 1992 KM	Lower division	1	.0
KFC Zwarte Leeuw	Lower division	1	.0
KVK Tienen	Lower division	1	.0
Royal Mouscron-Péruwelz	Lower division	1	.0
KSV Temse	Lower division	1	.0
KRC Gent	Lower division	1	.0
VC Leeuwkens Terafene	Lower division	1	.0
KVVC Koksijde	Lower division	1	.0
KFC Bo Beerzel	Lower division	1	.0
FC 't Hoekske	Lower division	1	.0
Young teams	Lower division	1	.0
Manchester City	Foreigner	1	.0
Newcastle	Foreigner	1	.0
FC Koln	Foreigner	1	.0
Schalke 04	Foreigner	1	.0
A foreigner club	Foreigner	1	.0
Juventus	Foreigner	1	.0
AS Roma	Foreigner	1	.0
Bayer 04 Leverkusen	Foreigner	1	.0
Galatasaray	Foreigner	1	.0
Chelsea	Foreigner	1	.0
RC Lens	Foreigner	1	.0
Borussia Monchengladbach	Foreigner	1	.0
FC Twente	Foreigner	1	.0
Benfica	Foreigner	1	.0

Appendix E Comparison between fans of 1st league and the lower leagues fans (LLF)

	1 st league n = 4,279	Lower league n = 203		Differences
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Age	34.88 (15.41)	39.93 (16.91)	t (213) = -4.13***	LLF are older
Financial situation	3.63 (0.81)	3.65 (0.83)	T (4388) = -0.30	No differences
Interest for soccer	4.70 (0.55)	4.65 (0.57)	t (4480) = 1.29	No differences
Age they became fans	12.17 (9.16)	14.23 (10.89)	t (206) = -2.59**	LLF became fans at a higher age
Number of years as a fan	23.10 (14.44)	25.09 (16.48)	t (203) = -1.64	No differences
N.º of home games attended	8.68 (7.81)	9.40 (6.53)	t (230) = -1.53	No differences
N.º of away games attended	1.97 (3.95)	3.92 (5.53)	t (211) = -4.97***	LLF attended more away games
Minutes to the stadium	59.85 (47.0)	29.60 (23.33)	t (285) = 16.88***	LLF live closer to the stadium
SSIS – team identification	5.33 (1.05)	5.12 (1.05)	t (4384) = 2.84 **	1 st league fans have higher TI
PAS – place attachment	2.95 (0.96)	3.43 (0.94)	t (4389) = -6.97 ***	LLF are more attached to their home stadium
MAS – Sociopsychological motives (1)	3.69 (0.70)	3.68 (0.64)	t (4128) = 0.19	No differences
MAS – Sportscape (2)	3.11 (1.05)	3.06 (1.10)	t (4299) = 0.74	No differences
MAS – Marketing actions (3)	2.77 (1.03)	2.78 (1.04)	t (4304) = -0.15	No differences
MAS – Level of play (4)	3.64 (0.97)	3.45 (0.98)	t (4379) = 2.56*	1 st league fans give more importance to the level of play
MNAS – Bad sportscape & violence (1)	2.46 (1.13)	2.44 (1.24)	t (207) = 0.28	No differences
MNAS – Organisational issues & bad level of play (2)	2.44 (0.80)	2.38 (0.81)	t (4228) = 0.65	No differences
MNAS – Detachment from soccer & disinterest (3)	1.56 (0.66)	1.57 (0.63)	t (4240) = -0.38	No differences
MNAS – Money issues (4)	2.78 (1.13)	2.72 (1.31)	t (211) = 0.58	No differences
Satisfaction with competition formula of 1 st league	2.28 (1.21)	1.78 (1.02)	t (177) = 5.96***	LLF are less satisfied with the 1 st league competition formula
Attendance in function of the competition formula of 1 st league	2.76 (0.84)	2.50 (0.91)	t (165) = 3.52**	LLF go less to games because of the 1 st league competition formula
	%	%		
Men	89	91		No differences
Women	11	9		No differences
Season ticket holder	39	37		No differences
Member of a fan club	24	22		No differences

Note. PAS = Place attachment scale; SSIS = Sport spectator identification scale; MAS = Motives for attendance scale; MNAS = Motives for non-attendance scale; *p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001, two-tailed.

Appendix F Comparison between men and women

	Men	Women		Differences
	n = 3,919 87%	n = 471 13%		
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Age	35.45 (15.60)	32.27 (14.47)	t (609) = -4.47 ***	Men are older
Financial situation	3.65 (0.80)	3.45 (0.85)	t (4388) = -5.11 ***	For men it is easier financially
Interest for soccer	4.72 (0.53)	4.49 (0.68)	t (541) = -6.91 ***	Men are more interested
Age they became fans	11.90 (9.07)	15.21 (10.31)	t (526) = 6.41 ***	Men became fans at a younger age
Number of years as a fan	23.91 (14.56)	17.19 (12.91)	t (584) = -10.2 ***	Men are fans for a longer time
N.º of home games attended	8.79 (7.82)	8.28 (7.37)	t (605) = -1.42	No differences
N.º of away games attended	2.09 (4.06)	1.81 (3.99)	t (4387) = -1.39	No differences
Minutes to the stadium	58.82 (46.23)	56.70 (50.55)	t (4354) = -0.93	No differences
SSIS – team identification	5.32 (1.04)	5.34 (1.15)	t (547) = 0.35	No differences
PAS – place attachment	2.96 (0.96)	3.10 (0.99)	t (4301) = 2.93 **	Women are more attached to the stadium
MAS – Sociopsychological motives (1)	3.67 (0.68)	3.85 (0.79)	t (515) = 4.52 ***	Stronger for women, when it comes to deciding on going to the stadium
MAS – Sportscape (2)	3.10 (1.03)	3.16 (1.14)	t (552) = 1.02	No differences
MAS – Marketing actions (3)	2.74 (1.01)	2.88 (1.15)	t (537) = 2.38 *	Women give more importance to marketing actions than men
MAS – Level of play (4)	3.61 (0.96)	3.70 (1.00)	t (4302) = 1.89	No differences
MNAS – Bad sportscape & violence (1)	2.47 (1.13)	2.39 (1.17)	t (4217) = -1.50	No differences
MNAS – Organisational issues & bad level of play (2)	2.46 (0.79)	2.28 (0.85)	t (541) = -4.20 ***	Men have more into account these, when they decide not to go to a game
MNAS – Detachment from soccer & disinterest (3)	1.56 (0.65)	1.50 (0.68)	t (4176) = -1.86	No differences
MNAS – Money issues (4)	2.79 (1.13)	2.69 (1.21)	t (559) = -1.77	No differences
Satisfaction with competition formula of 1 st league	2.21 (1.20)	2.68 (1.17)	t (3407) = 6.57 ***	Men are less satisfied
Attendance in function of the competition formula of 1 st league	2.73 (0.84)	2.94 (0.84)	t (374) = 4.20 ***	Men's attendance is more negatively affected by the competition formula
	%	%		
1 st league fans	95	96		No differences
Lower leagues fans	5	4		No differences
Season ticket holder	39	46		Women have more season tickets
Member of a fan club	23	25		No differences

Note. PAS = Place attachment scale; SSIS = Sport spectator identification scale; MAS = Motives for attendance scale; MNAS = Motives for non-attendance scale; *p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001, two-tailed.

*p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001, two-tailed.

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