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THE IMPORTANCE OF FAN ENGAGEMENT AND FAN MANAGEMENT IN SPORTS

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THE IMPORTANCE OF FAN ENGAGEMENT AND FAN MANAGEMENT

IN SPORTS

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAN ENGAGEMENT AND FAN MANAGEMENT
IN SPORTS.

Andrea Previati

This investigation explores the current state of fan management and engagement
in the sports management, and its growing importance within sports clubs as a
driver of revenue. Among the different aspects embedded in sports organizations'
management, "fan experience" has become one of the most relevant and
innovative concepts developed. In 1980s, ticketing represented 90% of the
turnover; currently, ticketing accounts for between 15% and 20% of revenue.
Revenue is now largely derived from other sources of entries: e.g. broadcasting,
TV rights, sponsorship and commercial deals. Fan experience, in this scenario,
arises as a new lever for sports clubs for diversifying and increasing revenues
(establishing a direct relationship between fan engagement and revenues).
Leveraging my position as Press Officer at Juventus FC, data was collected from
interviews with experts in the industry, such as Francesco Campagna (Protocol
Officer President Office at UEFA) and Mike Cragg (Athletic Director at St John's
University), and a survey completed by more than 100 sports fans. The results
point to a positive impact from managing fan engagement on financial outcomes
for sports teams.

DEDICATION

This thesis represents the end of a wonderful journey and at the same time the consolidation of a new and challenging chapter of my life. I am so grateful to all the people who have been close to me, that I cannot help telling this story.

It all started in January 2014. At the Milano Malpensa Airport, I was ready to take off, destination JFK - New York, with two luggage and an incredible longing for new adventures. I still remember my mom and dad, Tiziana and Carlo, at the same time so excited but so worried: that flight was such an important step in my life and a big challenge for them as well. Since I am their only child, they were conscious their life was going to change forever. I will never be able to repay them, nor to put into word all their efforts, their sacrifices and their constant encouragement and teachings. But at least I want to dedicate this success of mine to them. There are few things certain in life. You, mamma e papa, are one. I could not make all of this without you, my pillars and roots. Vi voglio tanto bene, grazie di cuore.

In Italy, we use to say "some trains run only once in a life and you must be ready to catch yours when it comes". Well, this train arrived in June 2013 and it had a name and a last name: Jeff Matteo, the assistant coach of St John's University. I remember when at the end of the game I played in Florence organized by Matteo Gabriele Cioffi (two incredible ex soccer player that I had the pleasure to know, grazie ragazzi!) Jeff told me I was the winner of a full scholarship as a Student-Athlete at St John's University: that was one of the happiest moments of my life. From this train I almost step down when in November 2013, only two months before leaving for the US, during a game I tore my ACL, an injury that almost

One more huge thanks goes to a special person that in the last three years has always been there: helped me when I needed help, supported me when I needed support, talked to me when I needed to talk, hugged me when I needed an hug and found a solution when I was looking for one. Introduced to me by a friend in Barcelona, first coffee in Milan, first kiss in Turin, seen again in New York after three months. Carlotta (for me, Charlie), you became part of my life, you have significantly marked the path of this success, thank you!

As a soccer player I have always loved to be part of a team, I have been lucky enough to be part of an incredible team of friends: they are one of the best presents I could ask for. I must start from who had to bear me for all this long time in US: Filippo Ricupati, Nicolò Florio and Tommaso Vitale. You guys are my best friends and I will always be grateful for all the moments spent together. Then, there are three special friends with whom I had the pleasure to share amazing moments despite the fact that most of the time we couldn't understand each other (sorry guys for my ital-english!): Erick Mirkov, Dimitri Mendrinos and Wilhelm Nilsson, you are the best international friends ever and I can't wait to see you again in Italy, US or Sweden. Moreover, when I left Milan I was scared not to find any Italian people to conversate with, but I was wrong…I found an amazing family of "Finti Amici", thank you: Margherita Bianchin, Marco Torriani, Federico Mussini, Amar Alibegovic, Erica Di Maulo, Francesco Zanetti and Vivian Borroni. Our Italian Dinners at "Piccola Cucina" were the best. I must thank also my "milanesi" friends, they have always been there for me, ready to celebrate every time I was going back to Milan: the "Downs" with many important people, I have to mention at least a few like Filippo Piscopo (your ability to keep together more than 50 friends is

the Juventus Press Office Team and to the Head of Communication Department Mr. Albanese: I'm so proud to work for such an incredible club like Juventus FC.

In the end, the biggest thank you goes to my two grandmothers, Maria e Rosanna. I love you both. Nonna Rosanna, I know how hard was for you to take the news I was leaving for five years, but you've always respected my choices and supported me to do my best, I'm honored to see you proud of what I have achieved in my life. Nonna Maria, you are in my heart, you have been an incredible person, an example to follow. The love I have received from you till the last second will accompany me throughout my life, and I hope all the love I am sending right now can do the same for you, in heaven.

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INTRODUCTION

Over recent years, digital innovation has permeated a wide number of industries.

Among these, it is possible to highlight a huge and growing business sector: the

sports industry. Sports have taken a more central role in entertainment channels.

In Italy, as well as around the world, more people follow sports from the arenas

where the events take place, from home on television or on social networks. For

example, multiple research studies report that soccer has more than 4 billion

followers around the world[1]. As a result, the base of fans around soccer clubs has

become larger. Among the different aspects embedded in the sports

organizations' management, "Fan Experience" is one of the most relevant and

innovative concepts developed over last years. Moreover, while the numbers of

fans were growing, the costs of the clubs also rose significantly. From 2001 to

2019, costs for main European football clubs have increased of more than 100%.

Now the operative costs for sustaining a sport club are very high, mainly due to

the increases in salaries of the players and the staff, which represent around the

70% of the overall operative costs. Total Operating Cost in 2019 for Juventus FC[2]

was 458.5 million euros. represents around 15-20%. Players wages and technical

staff costs were 301.3 million (about the 65% of the Total Operating Costs),

compared to 2001 where those costs were 188.5 million, of which 133.5 million

came from personnel costs (about 71%). The growth in percentage terms is

relatively small, but the costs in absolute terms have doubled. In order to cover

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[1] Sawe, B. E. (2018, April 5) *The Most Popular Sports in the World*
https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-are-the-most-popular-sports-in-the-world.html
[2] https://www.juventus.com/en/club/investor-relations/financial-reports/statements-and-reports/2018-19.php

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these higher expenses, sports organizations must diversify the revenue streams (as opposed to focusing only on the basic revenues coming from the ticketing). In the 1980s ticketing represented 90% of the turnover, whereas now it represents around 15-20%. The remaining is distributed between other sources of revenue: primarily broadcasting, TV rights, sponsorship, and commercial deals. Hence, it seems that today those are becoming the principal sources of revenues in most of the professional sports leagues. Fan experience, in this scenario, arises as a new lever for sports clubs to diversify the nature of revenues and consequently increase them, thereby establishing a direct relationship between fan engagement and revenue. Creating a valuable experience for fans is essential for sports clubs, which must try to maintain a high and constant level of engagement, not only during the sporting event, but in continuously.

In Juventus, for example, this diversification of revenues became necessary due to the increase in costs faced managing the club. As for the others, ticketing today accounts for less than 20%. The residual 80% is between sponsors, merchandising, TV rights and brand value. Fans, therefore, are become the key for the financial gain of the club. In general, a team without fans is, in fact, synonymous with a company without visibility and therefore without revenue.

One of the main drivers of the changes in the way in which clubs are managed and in which they get their revenues are technologies. According to Statista[3], the

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[3] Turner, A. (2020). *How Many Smartphones Are In The World?* https://www.bankmycell.com/blog/how-many-phones-are-in-the-world

current number of smartphone users in the world today is 3.5 billion, and this means 45.04% of the world's population owns a smartphone. The Global Digital Report[4] published by "We Are Social" and "Hootsuite" explores the key trends fans in the sport industry. More than that, I have realized how much time and energy a sport club spends on fan engagement. Linked to the emerging importance of fan experience, the aim of my research is to investigate the management of the relationship with fans by sports firms and the contribution that digital innovation can offer for this goal.

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[4] Kemp, S. (2019, January 31). *Digital trends 2019: Every single stat you need to know about the internet*. https://thenextweb.com/contributors/2019/01/30/digital-trends-2019-every-single-stat-you-need-to-know-about-the-internet/

FAN EXPERIENCE

Defined Fan Management as one of the key points in marketing activations, focuses on the commitment of the fan base within sports firms, nowadays seen as a long-term growth strategy. Yet the interpretation remains dynamic in the application. Fan experience drives revenue for three reasons:

> 1) <u>Previous Experience</u>: fans are more likely to come back to games if they enjoy their experience; if they don't, the chance to see them coming back is quite lower. In the world of sports, game results are one of the main reasons that affect the presence of fans in the stadium. For example, last year FC Internazionale recorded an average of 58.789 fans concluding Serie A at the fourth position in the standings, 21 points off from the first position occupied by Juventus. This year, FC Internazionale is fighting for first place with the average presence per game at the stadium being recorded at 64.889[5]. Positive results resulted in an increase of more than 6000 fans per game at the stadium.

> 2) <u>Recommendations by word of mouth</u>: happy fans are more likely to tell their friends about their experience. Based off a research study conducted by the White House Office of Consumer Affairs[6], *"67% of people spend money after getting recommendations from their friends on online communities, such as Facebook and Twitter."* Therefore, shareability is

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[5] *Serie A 2018/2019 Spettatori totale* (n.a.) https://www.calcio.com/spettatori/ita-serie-a-2018-2019/1/

[6] Dunn, A. (2013, October 4) *6 Reasons Why Customer Service Drives Powerful World of Mouth Marketing Result* https://www.business2community.com/customer-experience/6-reasons-great-customer-service-drives-powerful-word-mouth-marketing-results-0636835

the key for sports clubs, and profitability is directly linked with it. Fans want something that they can tell their friends and family about: they want to feel part of something different, personal and special.

3) <u>Sponsorship</u>: sponsors want to be associated with amazing experiences and will pay to do so. For activating and enhancing the management of fan experience, digital innovation results are fundamental. The sports industry is in the middle of a digital revolution. Billions of people own smartphones and use social media, even in the stadium or the arena, consuming sport related content many times a day. In this digital sports world, marketers are developing smart ways to engage with modern fans.

According to these principles, for a sports club to enhance the fan experience, it must meet fans where they are, not only in the venue and during the match, but everywhere and every day. It is the overall experience that begins before you purchase the ticket and it does not end when the season or the championship is over. The time each fan spends at the venue must be the most memorable experience each and every time they are there. However, the club must remain in contact with the fan even when they are far away from the venue. In this scenario, a digital strategy results in being essential for a sports club's survival, as well as in order to make the most of what the technology offers.

Digital Innovation in Fan Engagement

Digital innovation, in recent years, has been one of the main topics of discussion in various industries, attracting the attention of companies and their managers on

account of its impact on processes, infrastructures and business models. In the future, digital innovation will continue to be a topic of discussion, especially in the business world. Those in marketing, should consider converting to this innovation in order to make their areas of expertise sustainable and profitable. The digital revolution is undoubtedly an ongoing process, especially with technology guiding these times of a new perspective, and most importantly in the sports industry that is materializing day after day. However, with the ongoing change, it is apparent that life in the ordinary state of affairs is being driven by technological acceleration and the development of new interaction of models in sports, as well as in many other segments of the market.

Furthermore, a constant evolution for the world in which we live in, where nothing is immutable, or destined to remain the same for long, has a considerable impact on companies. In fact, sports companies are also focusing on digital transformation with the aim of improving the integration between various touchpoints and physical-digital communication channels; therefore, making the processes more streamlined and without friction for the user. It also introduces more scalable technologies and platforms to add to new revenue sources. In doing so, this creates an omnichannel experience around the new generations of sports fans. The use of events, the elimination of distance, continuous communication, the "to go" entertainment and the new payment methods, are some of the pillars that push sports managers towards the establishment of specific and innovative digital assets to be integrated with the structural ones. Sport Digital Transformation put the attention of sports clubs in an evolutionary process that goes far beyond new technologies and information systems, which extends to

culture, the model of corporate governance, and organizations. In the current

scenario, the ability to analyze and rethink the entire customer experience,

including all the contact points of the new fan experience, is fundamental.

Figure i: Digital Innovation in Fan Engagement

In order to establish a spike of new customer and supporter experience, a

substantial amount of attention must be put on an individual's time, involvement

and on the consequent complexity introduced by the 'distraction' generated by the

online sale giants. (i.e., Amazon). As well as the new digital platform such as

chats, phone calls, messages, emails, social networks, and notifications.

The goal, in this informative chaos, is to create a new journey for sports fans,

before, during and after the match, by integrating the points of contact between

the club and the fans, in order to promote an omnichannel approach with

emotional paths and stimuli. Accomplishing this through the search for a ticket,

the actual purchase, the journey to the stadium, the experience in the arena, the

consumption during the match, social sharing, and the post-match. These factors

must represent a unique *continuum* with new physical places to be structured, for a constant relationship and a 'total' interaction-conversation, like those of retailers.

Digital Transformation and Omnichannel: entertainment, relevance and experience

When it comes to omnichannel, we cannot fail to refer to retail companies and new initiatives that attempt to implement their marketers based on two fields that meet more often over time and identify time and space. By increasing the moments of contact with the brand, a consumer will no longer experience complications on the 'place' of purchase. Especially with a collaboration, it becomes increasingly clear, between the real and the virtual world. There will no longer be contrasts between points of sale, web, mobile, social and other channels to reach individuals. However, an omnichannel model in which there is a unitary management of the distribution of the offer will give a vital importance to the knowledge of the interlocutor. The interlocutor would be put at ease because they eventually will build a relationship of trust with the brand and will be more inclined to provide all of the information necessary for the construction of a personal proposal.

In order to do so, clubs should be oriented among the new needs of the sponsors, that define the digital objectives according to the turnover, remapping processes and systems. Digital transformation is a transformation of the business itself, a business in which it is no longer enough to say there needs to be a change, but in which change needs to be shown. The new marketing is broadcasting

entertainment for an audience to analyze and to optimize their action. It is changing the process of reasoning because it is the company that makes itself editorial.

But how do these dynamics translate into sports management? What tools are available to a sports manager? How can physical and digital best be integrated? Building an omnichannel experience for the customer/the fan, new technology and improved marketing strategies are fundamental for a digital transformation in sports because these factors revolve around the fans.

Sports companies ultimately evolve into media companies because they must enter the life of the public and remain there for a period in order to gather data. Sports companies must do this according to an omnichannel logic, with a well-structured and integrated strategy as mentioned in an article from Fabio Lalli lists[7]:

- information

- activation

- interaction

- involvement

- monetization

"We regard our customers as guests invited to a party, where we are the hosts. Our daily job is to make all the important aspects of the customer experience even better."

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[7] Lalli, F. (2018, May 9*). Sport Digital Transformation: la nuova direzione di Customer e Fan Experience* https://sportthinking.it/2018/05/09/sport-digital-transformation-e-omnicanalita/

As stated by Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon, the advanced sports business model, as well as any other industry, is in operation of the sports experience, so that the fan feels privileged, and aspires to be more privileged over time, allowing the fan to progress from being a simple user to becoming a member. The concept of relevance relates to something that lasts over time, which satisfies a long-term need and not just a momentary need. This is the reason why in sports, relevance comes prior to the arrival of the supporter/the customer on its channels. It is consequent to the creation and choice of content that becomes indispensable for an interaction that continues on a daily basis to repeat itself.

In conclusion, an experience in which the digital dimension and the one in real time, are united in a single solution, are versatile, customizable and built for the individual, who has taken on a more dynamic attitude. Communication must therefore be fluid in the total integration of multiple channels that are based on a single input with a perfect balance. The site, the e-commerce, the official app, and the virtual reality, must be imagined for 90 minutes in the stadium and perhaps much beyond this time frame.

A few examples are the concept of using temporary stores to promote the team's colors, in partnership with the technical sponsors. For example, using stores located throughout a well-known city, or a museum. In Italy, the most famous museum in the sport's field is the J Museum, that last year recorded 192,105 visitors[8], with memorabilia and the history of the club. Also, the sports center, will allow individuals to attend workouts, to be 'lived' like matches, but in an even

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[8] *Juve, crescono le visite al Museum: +15% nel 2018/19*. (2019, July 3)
https://www.calcioefinanza.it/2019/07/03/juventus-museum-numero-visitatori-2018-2019/

more relaxed, and potentially participatory atmosphere, with families and children. As for fan zones, they will be created farther near the arena, which could be elsewhere, perhaps in shopping malls, in turn becoming entertainment points.

The evolution of communication strategies, the optimization of logistical and decision-making processes, new sponsorships, the creation of parallel business opportunities, customer care, and fan interactions changes the sports industries principles, with data analysis to define new paths. However, also to create and distribute its contents such as the matches themselves, with TV competing with augmented reality, virtual reality, streaming social, web and mobile.

The Solution is to create a Sports Platform. A cultural, strategic, as well as technological change that unites the media in an element that simplifies and optimizes. Allowing clubs to get in direct contact with their supporters, because in Sports Experience, it is fundamental that all channels must be aimed at interaction and no longer just simple use. A centralized platform created for fan engagement and loyalty actions will be used to support the digital strategy of the clubs. Moreover, a unique tool will 'combine' online 'physical' ticketing systems, the total database and every single asset and touchpoint, which will allow you to deliver live personalized content and better manage the official communications delivered online and offline. Resulting in this becoming the starting point for acquisition and profiling activities. Telemetry of different systems will use elements of machine learning and data analysis to discover the interests of each individual supporter.

Therefore, why sell to 80,000 people in a stadium when you have millions of fans[9]? It would be beneficial to have a method and structure to analyze them and activate marketing campaigns, practically automated and that are super optimized. The advantages include:

- autonomy of data

- knowledge of one's fan base

- direct communication

- customization of service levels

- business extension

This means that the possibility of offering 'individualized' services are products and action, in line with the users' needs and interests. Such as in shops, merchandising, ticketing, and in-app purchases. Also, a high level of profiled users offers partners, sponsors, and a powerful tool to get in touch with their targets, by conveying communications and commercial offers to those who may be most interested. In sponsorships, advertisements, and targeted actions, the only limit is creativity with the smartphone to represent a business card on the go.

Exploiting the data associated in a unitary way, serves as a prize for a race whose goal is to win the attention of individuals, whom to propose the equivalent of an ecosystem of physical and digital points that is 'liquid' and complete with entertainment and information in the background. Increasing contact times and opportunities for visibility and monetization. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

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[9] (n.a.) (2017, March 27) *Innovation in Digital Sport* https://digitalsport.co/event/innovation-in-digital-sport

multichannel, omnichannel, proximity, experience, interaction, profiling, and sale would be made available.

Examples of Fan Experience Technology in Soccer

In this day in age the game of football has changed, but one thing that remains is the passion. When a fan takes that seat at the stadium or nestles into that couch for the day's festivities, they are in a different "zone": in those hours, the fan is a member of a joint community, a part of something bigger.

Let's think of the modern fans in the digital world. Why must this association end after game time? After all, a fan is a fan on Monday too. Nowadays, it does not have to stop. As football is evolving the way fans interact with clubs is evolving a well. For the modern fans, the digital world is ever evolving and it's changing the way we interact with the sport. Within this, digital apps are altering how you can stay connected with fans and how you can boost the fans experience.

- The Effect of Social Media Apps

Social media and sport have become forever connected. Open any app and a fan can check what his favorite footballer was recently up to. Social media has brought fans closer to the action than ever before. It is now not uncommon to see individuals scrolling on social media during games. Take Twitter, for example, every game now has its own hashtag: if someone wants to see the most up to date information on Juventus FC v AC Milan? The hashtag #JUVMIL will get you all the information with just a click of a button. During an important game, the official hashtag is usually at the top trending tweets, where fans express their live

opinion during the game, such as interactions and comments made during the event. This has totally changed the way sports are watched and reported. Not only are fans able to follow the score and updates, but they can actively engage with other fans in real time. Basically, the analysis is ongoing, and there is no more waiting for a game to end before they dive right in.

- Live playback

If TV changed the radio-game, then this is the whole next level. Many sports apps now give fans the opportunity to watch the game live. Therefore, if a fan is not at the game or cannot make it home on time to watch it, they can simply pick a seat on the bus, take their headphones out and they'll feel as they are at the stadium. What if a fan misses a goal? Sports apps now instantly upload any goals to their device within the minute. The fan can also drop in for an update at any time and see the most important highlights of the game.

- Sense of Community

Sports apps are clever. Often, fans open the app and it will bring them straight to their favorite sports team. The app quickly becomes personalized to what the fan wants. They want to know that they are a part of something bigger. With a host of message boards and specialized chat rooms, the fan is given every chance to get involved with the wider community. Attendance is reaching record levels in Italy and in the UK because technology is playing a key role in this as well. This is because technology is helping to redefine and improve the fans experience at sporting venues. While the sporting competition will always attract fans, the game or the fight is not the only thing that attract the sports passion. Fans are becoming

more engaged thanks to a variety of experiences and services that are offered by technology. These include:

- Digital sports memorabilia

Sports fans simply love sports merchandise and memorabilia. The market is worth a staggering $370 billion according to Forbes. Buying match-worn jerseys and sports equipment, to panini stickers to bobble head figurines is very lucrative. As life has increasingly become digital so has sports memorabilia. For example, Major League Baseball (MLB) is already offering digital "player tokens" which can be traded amongst enthusiasts. The same is happening with the soccer club Juventus FC that signed a partnership with the brand "Socios.com". They launched a digital campaign where fans can buy "Juventus tokens", that will allow fans to vote on some decisions related to the club[10].

- 'Near live' highlights

While the instant replay has long been accepted as a critical part of the sports experience, both in-stadium and on TV, right holders are now offering fans 'near live' highlights from games. Minutes after a goal is scored, fans can catch it on social media, at no cost, and can also share it amongst their fellow supporters or friends in an instant. Thus, prolonging the engagement and interest in the live action. In some circumstances, depending on the league rules, it is possible to watch the replay of a goal or a dangerous attack on the big screen inside the stadium. In MLS for example, the replay of goals is shown on the big screen.

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[10] *Be more than a fan.* (n.a.) https://www.socios.com/juventus/

Personally, I had the chance to follow New York City Football Club games at Yankee Stadium and I found it to be a very enjoyable service that made me appreciate the beauty of a goal even more.

- In-play betting

Thanks to the proliferation of gambling apps, fans have never had more options when it comes to placing a bet on a game. What has really changed the face of sports betting has been the addition of in-play options. It gives fans the ability to bet on a much wider variety of in-game action and it is now estimated that over a quarter (26%) of sports bettors use in-play betting options, according to trade body The Gambling Commission. Newer innovations such as 'cash out' have also become wildly popular amongst sports fans. Pay-per-view television also offers the chance to bet directly from the platform where the fan is watching the sports event, making in-play betting very accessible, giving the fan the possibility to keep watching the event and bet at the same time.

Out of all these experiences, the key takeaway is that while the sporting event is still the most important aspect of the experience, it is not the only aspect anymore. Sports fans now demand convenience, combined with a great experience and are not willing to settle for less. Thankfully, for clubs and sporting associations looking to make the next leap in their matchday experience, technology is the great equalizer and will only become progressively important in the coming years to enhance this experience.

Official Fan Club

A fan club is an organized group of people who all admire the same person or club, for example, a pop singer or sports team. Members of the fan club receive information and can take part in activities such as trips, concerts, or watching games at the Stadium. Fan clubs are very important for a professional club because they represent the core support basis of a team. Usually fan clubs organize trips to watch the game of their beloved team. Members of the fan clubs want to have active roles on the life of a team, which is why sometimes they organize meet & greets with players, or host events with former athletes of the club, and in addition to that they organize and plan trips for away games in order to be present and to support their team even in the opposing stadium. For season tickets, members of the fan clubs usually have advantages, such as discounts and early access to tickets on sale. Often there are official and unofficial fan clubs which associate with big organizations such as Real Madrid, Barcelona, Manchester United, Juventus FC etc., however there is a big difference between the two types of fan clubs.The official fan clubs are directly related with the professional club/organization. For example, Juventus has 569 official fan clubs from 69 different countries all over the world. Italy of course is the country with the most fan clubs, and with Sicily being the region with the most official registered clubs (53) followed by Lombardia (47). As stated in an article from www.calcioefinanza.it[11]: *"An important 2019 closes for Juventus regarding the expansion of Fan Clubs all over the world."* The affiliation campaign of the

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[11] *Juve, nel 2019 boom di Official Fan Club in tutto il mondo.* (2020, January 9)
https://www.calcioefinanza.it/2020/01/09/juventus-fan-club-nel-mondo/

Official Fan Clubs ended in November, confirming the growth and expansion of the Juventus family.

There are 569 JOFCs around the world, speaking to 69 unique nations. Italy is affirmed as the main club by number, with Sicily immovably at the highest point of the positioning of areas with 53 Official Fan Clubs, trailed by Lombardy (47) and Piedmont (38). The record was likewise accomplished gratitude to the solid development recorded abroad. In non-European nations 34 new authority fan clubs were included, which carried the all-out number to 104, contrasted with 70 in the previous season. The region that shows the greatest dynamism is undoubtedly Asia, where the number of JOFCs, also thanks to the Summer Tour 2019, has almost doubled, "further confirming the growth of the Juventus brand and brand," writes the Juventus club. In the 2018-19 season in Asia there were 26 fan clubs, whereas now they are 45, with China obtaining the scepter of a foreign nation with the largest number of active fan clubs.

Being part of a Juventus Official Fan Club makes the fan a "member". As previously stated, members have the opportunities to receive discounts, premium tickets, tour the stadium and be informed of many different activities that the club organizes. Being a member allows a fan to be more involved in the club's activities, thus creating a sort of connection between the supporter and the club. This connection is referred to as "club identity".

Figure ii: Juventus Official Fan Club

Sport identity is formed through a comparison between a supporter's self-concept and their perception of the sport and its attributes. In other words, supporters would see themselves as being a spectator, a sport fanatic, or a member depending on the degree to which their self-concept aligns with a specific product.

For example, a supporter of a local basketball team would consider himself/herself a die-hard fan because the team's success (e.g. winning or losing) has an impact (e.g. positive or negative) on their self-esteem. Whereas being a spectator at a local baseball game is merely a form of entertainment for them. From a marketing perspective, the implication is that one's degree of fandom is interwoven with their involvement and identification with the sport product. Sports marketing literature provides some insight as to how supporter behavior is closely related to their consumption of sports products (e.g., ticket sales and television viewership) in order to predict how supporters will further immerse themselves in sport. However, these studies do not address the supporter who is a 'member.' While the concept of 'membership' may not resonate with most North

American sports managers, it is essential to understand these stakeholders for the continued growth and success of Major League Soccer (MLS) clubs.

For example, FC Barcelona of La Liga has the largest club membership base in the world with 168,000 registered members. The members have owned and operated the club since 1899, which has produced 25 Spanish League Championships, with revenue from membership fees equaling $20-million or 2% of its annual operating budget (McMahon, 2019)[12]. Therefore, based on previous research (Sutic, Fallon, Cieslak & Fullerton, 2011) [13] the objectives of this study were 1) to examine the concept of sport identity (i.e., spectator, sport fan and member) of MLS supporters, 2) to delineate what motivates these supporters (i.e., social interaction (SOC), performance (PER), self-esteem (EST), entertainment (ENT), diversion (DIV), knowledge of sport (KNW), community pride (COM), interest in athletes, (ATH) and customer experience (CUS)), and 3) to determine which factors promote and produce a transition along the sport identity continuum (i.e., from being a spectator, to becoming a sports fan, to becoming a member).

- Methods

This study comprised of two stages utilizing comfort and snowball inspecting strategies to gather information first through quantitative reviews and then through subjective reviews.

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[12] McMahon, R. (2019*). How FC Barcelona Nearly Doubled Its Revenue, To Over $1B, In Just Six Seasons*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/bobbymcmahon/2018/10/02/how-fc-barcelona-nearlydoubled-its-revenue-from-575m-to-over-1b-in-just-six-seasons/#3e04d7d9104a

[13] *Describing and measuring the sport identity and motives offootball supporters.* Submitted for presentation at Sport Marketing AssociationAnnual Conference, 26October 2011, Houston, TX.

Stage 1 had an aggregate of 200-supporters of a recently framed MLS group, who were selected by means of the club executives completing a survey to quantify their game character, motives and demographic characteristics (i.e., member status, sex and match attendance). To fulfill research objectives 1 and 2, descriptive statistics (i.e. frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) and ANOVAs were calculated to compare the independent and dependent variables.

Phase 2 included recruitment of ten supporters of the same MLS club to gain insight, through a semi-structured interview, about their sport identity as well as their motives to support their football club. The qualitative instrument consisted of nine open-ended questions to discover the transition between sport identities. To fulfill research objective 3, the interviews were recorded and transcribed and the information was organized into a matrix in order to establish and identify common themes and trends for cross examination.

- Results

It should be noted that respondents represented supporters of an MLS club that will begin official match play in 2020. Respondents included 120 males (60%) and 80 females (40%), 114 die-hard fans (57%), 72 fair-weather fans (36%) and 14 spectators (7%). Additionally, sixty-four percent of respondents (n=128) claimed that 'Football/soccer is one of my favorite sports.' During the clubs' first season, it will host matches at a temporary stadium; approximately 31-miles outside of the city.

For the 2020 season, 52% of respondents stated they would attend 10 or more home matches while 66% of respondents stated they would watch 10 or more matches. Because there were no significant differences between male and female supporters in their level of identification, the analyses of variances focused on the between group differences as it related to their motives.

An average score per item comparison, indicated these supporters rated 'entertainment' (6.82+/-2.18) as the most important factor followed by SOC (5.56+/-2.80), KNW (5.18+/-2.60), CUS (4.36+/-2.86), DIV (3.72+/-2.24), COM (3.57+/-1.54), EST (3.55+/-2.16) and INT (2.79+/-2.20) with the least important motive being 'performance' (2.14+/-1.82).

The ANOVAs indicated there were significance differences (p<.05) in motives between male and female supporters with males scoring higher for 'knowledge of sport' and 'interest in athletes' and females scoring higher for 'diversion.' Additionally, there were significant differences (p<.05) in motives between spectators and fans with die-hard fans scoring higher than fair-weather fans, who scored higher than spectators for 'knowledge of sport,' 'diversion' and 'interest in athletes.' The preliminary results of the interviews indicated that MLS matches, and club memberships may be classified as symbolic products because the supporter is attempting to communicate an aspect of their self-concept to the other supporters.

- Conclusion

These findings can be useful to MLS clubs and their marketing teams who seek to have higher supporter participation, club membership and team success.

As an example, Geelong FC of the Australian Football League (AFL) has the largest club membership base in the AFL with 63,000 registered members. Both the membership base and ticket sales have increased annually by 6.94% from 1984 to 2016 and 16.3% from 2017 to 2018. Overall, these sales account for $18-million or 28% of the clubs annual operating budget (GFCL, 2018). This continued communal and financial support of the club produced its seventh, eighth and ninth AFL Championships in 2007, 2009 and 2011.

Coronavirus

It will only be a small chapter, but due to the severity of the Coronavirus, it deserves some space in my thesis. As I am writing about the benefits and advantages of fan engagement and fan management, the resources brought by fan engagement and the importance for players, clubs and companies to develop a strong connection between their organizations and the fans, an incredibly destructive and world-changing virus hit the world and in particular the world of sport. Italy is the third most affected country after the U.S.A. and Spain with 156,363 cases and about 19,899 people dead[14].

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[14] https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/ Last updated: April 12, 2020

Country, Other	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Total Recovered	Active Cases	Serious, Critical	Tot Cases/ 1M pop	Deaths/ 1M pop	Total Tests	Tests/ 1M pop
World	1,836,338	+56,595	113,255	+4,476	420,982	1,302,101	50,654	236	14.5		
USA	550,301	+17,422	21,656	+1,079	31,120	497,525	11,662	1,663	65	2,767,980	8,362
Spain	166,019	+2,992	16,972	+366	62,391	86,656	7,371	3,551	363	355,000	7,593
Italy	156,363	+4,092	19,899	+431	34,211	102,253	3,343	2,586	329	1,010,193	16,708
France	132,591	+2,937	14,393	+561	27,186	91,012	6,845	2,031	221	333,807	5,114
Germany	126,656	+1,204	2,908	+37	60,300	63,448	4,895	1,512	35	1,317,887	15,730
UK	84,279	+5,288	10,612	+737	344	73,323	1,559	1,241	156	352,974	5,200
China	82,052	+99	3,339		77,575	1,138	139	57	2		
Iran	71,686	+1,657	4,474	+117	43,894	23,318	3,930	853	53	263,388	3,136
Turkey	56,956	+4,789	1,198	+97	3,446	52,312	1,665	675	14	376,100	4,459
Belgium	29,647	+1,629	3,600	+254	6,463	19,584	1,223	2,558	311	102,151	8,814
Netherlands	25,587	+1,174	2,737	+94	250	22,600	1,384	1,493	160	101,534	5,926
Switzerland	25,407	+300	1,106	+70	12,700	11,601	386	2,936	128	193,800	22,393

Figure iii: Cases of Coronavirus in the World on April 12, 2020

In the past few weeks, the world of sports has also had to face the consequences of this virus. On February 23rd a player from Pianese[15], a third division team in the Italian Soccer League, tested positive for Covid-19, the whole team had to stop practicing, and players had to spend 2 weeks at home, the same situation was a reality for the Juventus U23 team (the second team of Juventus) that played against Pianese that same weekend. This news shocked the most relevant league in Italy: Serie A. During the weekend of March 1st, 4 games were postponed and only four teams had the chance to play. The following week became one of the worst weeks for the institutions of Italian Soccer. As the Covid-19 virus was spreading around Italy, many representatives from the different institutions of soccer started debating on what it would be best to do: stopping the League was one of the proposed ideas, but with the calendar full of games the league realized that it was getting harder and harder to postpone matches as very few days were

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[15] Buffoni, R. (2020, February 29) *Coronavirus: positivi 3 calciatori della Pianese* https://www.ilmessaggero.it/italia/coronavirus_juventus_pianese_positivi_3_calciatori-5081358.html

available to make this possible. On the other hand, playing these matches as if nothing was going on wasn't acceptable either, so at the end of a long week Lega Serie A decided to keep playing with no fans in the stadium.

Consequences of this decision were expected: some clubs asked for the match to be postponed as they didn't want to lose revenue from tickets sales, while others didn't want to play without the support of their fans, some wanted to play, and some supported the stopping the league and even asked for it. This all resulted in massive confusion. On the weekend of March 1st only four games were played with fans and all the other games scheduled behind closed doors were postponed indefinitely as there were no possible or available days to play. Finally, the following week, on March 7th, the Serie A had the chance to play again with all 6 scheduled games from the previous week played behind closed doors: one of these matches was the fascinating "Derby of Italy" one of the most important game of the whole season, this is the game that every Italian soccer supporter awaits, a game that is always sold out, where tickets are impossible to find, and in general ticket prices for this game are incredibly high. Juventus played Inter at home behind closed doors with an incredible victory of 2 – 0. However, the tragedy is that no fans could watch the incredible gesture of Paulo Dybala that scored a screamer inside the Allianz Stadium. This game was broadcasted all over the world with over 500 million viewers. The unexpected and unbelievable image of watching World Class superstars such as Cristiano Ronaldo and Lukaku play an important game without any fans gives us the opportunity to analyze and understand just how important the presence of fans in the stadium is, and more generally just the involvement of fans in the world of sports.

As of April 12, 2020, Italian Soccer is still fighting its battle against the Coivd-19 virus, many security measures are being taken in order to defeat this enemy. One of these potential measures may be the suspension of the Italian Serie A until May 31st. If this were to happen there is a huge chance that not completing the whole season would make the Serie A title of 2019/2020 invalid. Right now, it's not about a game between two teams, but a real challenge between Italy and the rest of the world in this grueling match against Covid-19, we all hope and fight to come out of this pandemic victorious.

INTERVIEWS

Mr. Francesco Antonio Campagna

<u>Protocol Officer President Office at UEFA</u>

Figure iv: Francesco Campagna - Protocol Officer President Office at UEFA

- What does it mean for you the term Fan Experience?

"The fan experience for me means somebody going to the game, enjoying the game and most important respecting the game. Because there are a lot of fans as we know from different countries that make the fan experience not as it should be. Fortunately, there are some places, like the Allianz Stadium in Turin, where fans can finally go to the stadium with their kids without being worried. There are stadium instead where it's very dangerous to go because fans are violent, and the support in "Curva" (the side of the stadium reserved for the "ultras") is still very politicized, one of the most popular example in this case is the Curva from A.S Roma where fans are close to the thoughts of the extreme left meanwhile supporters from Lazio are close to the thoughts of extreme right. See that's not a

fan experience, a fan experience is in the United States, for example in the

Superbowl where the game is on Sunday and from Tuesday is full of events to go

and enjoy the experience, there are so many people that I know that this year

came to Miami and they didn't even go to the game, they just came in Miami to

enjoy the experience of the whole week in preparation of the Superbowl and then

watched the game on tv, that's a Fan Experience!"

- Do Fan Engagement and Fan Experience affect the revenue of an agency
  like Relevent Sports? And as a Protocol Officer President Office at
  UEFA now?

"Relevent Sports for sure because they are not only there for tv rights money or

sponsorship, whatever revenue they can get is good for them, so they're trying

their best to involve fans. But not for Uefa yet, I see before the Superbowl in

United States there are many events to involve fans, for Champions League

games there is barely an official banquet the night before the game, and for the

Champions League Final or even for the Euro 2020 (that will be postponed to

2021 due to Coronavirus crisis) there is nothing around it, but we are working on

some ideas to make the Fan Experience more involving in the days before the

Final, it's important to understand this possible revenue from fans, we need to be

open minded and plan something dedicated to the fans."

- In your opinion, do you think Digital Innovation is important for the
  development of Fan Engagement?

"Sure, it is. I have to say one thing though, and to say it I am going to use an example: if you really look at, the person who spend money is the person that is a certain age, let's say 30's, early 40's to mid 50's. There are at least half of this people that don't want to be slave of cell phone, even me if I don't need the cell phone for work and I can spend some times with my family I don't want to be bothered and be dependent from the phone to get into a stadium, or in a park or for other things. I remember last time I have been at the RedBull Stadium in New Jersey in order to buy a ticket you had to do everything online there was an App for everything, also one to tell you how much line there was to get into the stadium, that was fantastic! However, I have to say if I wanted to invite my father or my friend that are not knowledgeable with those technologies, how can they get into the stadium? For sure they will not download app or fill up digital papers with data, it's becoming too complicated, it's just too much for some people! Even more let's think about very important people, those that can spend a lot of money… do you think they will spend time to fill up data and information in order to buy tickets? Of course not, it's not even about the data that they can give, it's more for the time they should spend to do that… it must be easier, immediate, without further complications. So in conclusion Digital Innovation is very important, some ideas are great and that's the future, but everything needs to me as simple as possible like the Apple Air Pods where you put it into the ears connect and boom it works. Again, keep working in the digitalization, but leave some possibilities for those people that are not using technologies that much, don't forget that real rich people are in the age group between fifty and seventy."

- In your opinion which football clubs best operate in the Fan relation area?

"Without hands down, I have been dealing with top clubs since 1992, the first two club that came in the United States were AC Milan of mister Fabio Capello and Torino FC of mister Mondonico, I have seen tons of club but nobody operates in the same way as Manchester United and Manchester City, now days also Bayern Munich and Tottenham Hotspur are getting closer. Italian clubs are still behind, during their golden ages in the 90's they didn't care about fans, they were the top league, with the top players and that's all they cared. They didn't understand that Fans engagement was important for the long run, and they are paying now for the mistakes they did in the past. Juventus FC, I have to say is now working well with fans and they are trying to reduce the gap, but it won't be easy."

I want in conclusion to end this interview with a personal advice to you: Don't forget to always apply these (5) five ingredients in life which will clear your patch to your success: Love, Communication, Respect, Honesty, Trust.

Mr. Mike Cragg

Athletic Director at St John's Univeristy

Figure v: Mike Cragg, Athletic Director for St John's University

- During an interview released to athleticdirectoru.com you stated[16]: *"As I take over as Director of Athletics at St. John's, I make one promise to both the university and to the college athletics community at large – that Red Storm athletics will once again become synonymous with those awesome images of the greatest city in the world and illicit those very same feelings that once electrified a city and a nation. From the hallowed halls of Carnesecca Arena to the cavernous cathedral of Madison Square Garden, our athletics program will make all our students, fans and supporters prouder than they ever have been"*. So, what's your plan and what can be done to make St John's University Athletic great again?

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[16] Cragg, M. (2018). *A St John's State of Mind* https://athleticdirectoru.com/articles/mike-cragg-a-st-johns-state-of-mind/

"One starting point is that we have an historical brand in St John's especially in the world of college basketball. Being in New York City and play in two venues like Madison Square Garden and Carnesecca Arena make things unique. We need to build starting from this history where we have a passionate fan base. We have though big limits on building infrastructures: 30-35 years ago, SJU was competing at highest level, and frankly the game kept moving along and other schools have invested in the sports so now we are far behind. Part of the success may come from building infrastructures, part of it is having a right coach and building a culture of excellence in the classroom and on the court. We have that in Coach Anderson which I'm excited about, he brought a lot of experience and so we are on the way to achieving those goal in order to be a championship program in all of our sports. First goal is to be competitive in the Big East Championship and once we get there than we can be competitive for National level. So again, we have a great opportunity to improve and this starts from the beginning: students' involvement, culture building, infrastructures and building and taking care of our student-athletes."

- The attention and the attendance of the fans to College sports event in a city like New York is incredibly lower than in smaller realities like Creighton or Butler. How do you explain it?

"We worked hard in the last couple years and for example we had definitely a much better average crowd of supporters for Men's Soccer games, of course in

order to make this happen you need to promote and make events to engage

people, but honestly in New York there are a lot of sports options with many Pro

Teams, meanwhile for Colleges like Creighton in Omaha, they are the hometown

team and this attracts way more people. I think also St John's is a big commuter

school where the vast majority of the students live off campus and commute to

class, meanwhile many Big East Schools like Creighton or Xavier have students

living on Campus, SJU has only three thousand people living on campus. So, our

goal is to do the best to involve all of those three thousand students, this is a very

difficult challenge but if we will be able to do it, we will have a solid core of

supporters for our sports. Same for basketball, it's not easy to maintain that

"connection" for our Alumni because again it's not the same to have students

that lived their college experience off campus compared to the Universities that

have most of their Alumni that lived their college experience on campus."

- SJU has a great tradition in Basketball, but the Johnnies have many other sports where they can be successful as well. How do you operate in order to grow fans attention on those sports?

"We are working to find some solutions, for example with Men's Soccer we were

pretty successful. St John's University does not have a Football Program so for

the Fall semester Men's Soccer is our main sport and main attraction. For this

reason, we worked hard to involve a bigger number of fans organizing tailgates

and promoting the games. We were lucky enough to play most of the home games

on Friday night and Saturday night plus some of them on Sunday afternoon which

is fantastic, and we were winning as well! This is way Belson Stadium registered the highest average attendance over the past 10 years."

- Are you investing in Social Media department to involve St John's Fans?

"Yes, Social Media Department represents a large part of our marketing department budget. What we are trying to do is to build our brand and in today's world where everyone has a phone and news are in real time so there is a need to keep updated the fans. Also, television is another important part of our marketing department. So, we have mainly invested in Social media and Multimedia Television. But can we do more? Yes, we can do more, but we need to be strategic about it. I think our Social Media structure has grown since I have been her, we have a good dedicated team to it, and there has been some ups and downs, I mean it's college level itself, it's not Professional Sport branding but I definitely keep the focus and try to get some revenues thanks to Social Media, that's the key. For me the main goal to look at is to find the best situation for our student-athletes: so, if we determine how to spend our money and promote our sports or give our student-athletes the best way to travel. The focus remains to give the student-athletes the best experience possible."

- Do you have a dedicated Social Media Team only for Basketball or they cover all the sports? (Personally, I was the student-athlete that created a

St John's Men's Soccer Instagram Page and I was the first to update our
results and pictures in there)

*"Things are changed in the last couple years, our Social Media Team got bigger,
we not only have full time employees but also have a Graduate Assistant to help
them out. We have official Instagram, Twitter, a bit of Facebook and now we are
opening a Tik Tok page as well. We are managing all the sports pages now and
we look forward to do better and better every day."*

Dr. Dave Masur

<u>St John's University Men's Soccer Team Head Coach</u>

Figure vi: Dr. Dave Masur - Associate Athletics Director/Men's Soccer Head Coach

- What's your opinion on Fan Engagement in College Soccer?

"Fan engagement is changing with technology, most of the College Soccer Team have created a Team Profile on social media like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to inform student, parents and fans about gameday, game results and other information's related to the team. Another way to involve fans in College Soccer are events like youth tournaments, Summer Soccer Camps, Alumni Day and Alumni friendly matches."

- What was the average attendance at Belson Stadium this year? Which game registered the most attendance?

"This year our season was successful, in the second part of the season we were ranked in the Top 25 teams in the country, and our fans responded very well with a good average attendance (1,100 per game). We sold out in the game against Georgetown this year, when we faced this team in the Big East (Georgetown ended up to be National Champions winning against Virginia in the final) we were ranked 1 they were 2 in the country from RPI. It was a really exciting game even if we lost 0-3, the fans cheered and stayed close to the team the whole game."

- In which year Belson Stadium registered the most attendance? Do you remember the game with the most attendance ever during your career as Head Coach at SJU? Any thoughts/feelings?

"During my 27 years as a Head Coach for St John's we had many successful seasons. Of course, a special year for me was 1996 when we were able to win the NCAA final and bring the trophy home. We also won the Big East Tournament in 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2006, 2009 and 2011. Usually those game registered a sold out at Belson Stadium (in 2011 the average attendance was 1300, a crowd of 2,202 fans saw SJU defeating 5-0 FDU, registering the third biggest crowd since Belson Stadium was built), but not only, also other games against historical rival teams like UConn Wake Forrest, Syracuse etc have sold out over the years."

- Do you have a marketing strategy for your fan engagement? Do the revenues from tickets sale have an impact on your yearly budget?

"There isn't a real marketing strategy for Fan Engagement, revenues from ticket sales do not impact our budget we haven't reach the level of focus and resources to develop a constructed team focused on this. We do have a Seasonal Ticket Offer, and a single match tickets sale, this is managed by St John's Ticket Office that takes care of all team's tickets sale. Regarding an engagement strategy for fans we use Social Media: @stjohnsmensoccer is the official profile on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Those profiles are managed by our GA Assistant Coach."

- Talking about the NYC Soccer Gala, what's the importance of this event? Does this event involve an SJU fan base?

"NYC soccer gala is an event that helps to connect youth experiences to college and pro experiences. It is the fabric to recognize people who have made a difference and show how they reached their level. We organize this event every year, this year it took place on February 25 at the New York Athletic Club to honor Bruce Arena and Bob Ley along with honorees Amir Aly former Columbia M Soccer, Huey Ferguson former St Johns M Soccer, Phil La Spisa former SFBK M soccer and Jim McElderry former player at Fordham M Soccer and it was a wonderful event where we honored the past and present of New York City soccer

while celebrating our great traditions. Highlighting collegiate and professional soccer while also recognizing youth and amateur coaches who have inspired others to succeed".

Figure vii: Official Flyer New York City Soccer Gala 2020

Players Interview: Claudia Cagnina, Margherita Bianchin & Federico

Mussini

<u>Claudia Cagnina (C)</u>

Former student-athlete for St John's University Women Soccer, Pro Player for

Tavagnacco, Italian League Serie A

Figure viii: Claudia Cagnina in action with St John's University

<u>Margherita Bianchin (M)</u>

Former student-athlete for Florida International University Women Beach Volley,

Italian Women Beach Volley National Team

Figure ix: Margherita Bianchin in action with Florida International University

Federico Mussini (F)

(Former student-athlete for St John's University Men Basketball, Pro Player for

Victoria Libertas Pallacanestro Pesaro)

Figure x: Federico Mussini in action with Victoria Libertas

- In your opinion is Fan Engagement important for a club? And for a
  player?

C: *"I think fan engagement is important for a player in some circumstances.
Because you get to hear all the positives, they say about you which can boost your
confidence on the field so much."*

M: *"I believe that fans are crucial when it comes to the sport product. Their
engagement and passion not only are a great source of revenues for sports
marketers but is also an element that helps players to perform well. Many athletes
find themselves playing not only for personal glory but also for representing a
community, their fans. For example, when I play volleyball, I always keep in mind
that I am representing my school (FIU) and its fans. This is because I know that*

my team can hold a powerful place in the heart of fans and consumers. Fan

behavior, however, is getting harder to control and is getting worse due to

alcohol consumption, especially during football games."

F*: "Fan engagement is fundamental for a sport club, fans makes revenues but,*

most important, they support the players in every situation and push them to do

better"

- Have you ever taken competitive advantage from Fans engagement
during a game?

C: *"When the fans cheer for the team and I, it definitely brings more energy into*
any match."

M: *"No, I never did. I don't agree with aggressive behaviors towards my*

opponents even if that could benefit me. I personally enjoy watching sports like

tennis, volleyball, and beach volleyball since the crowd is kept under control and

must be respectful towards the players."

F: *"I take a great advantage from fans. The environment makes me more focused*

on the game and makes me perform better."

- What's the game, that you played, with the most attendance in College? And in your Club? Any feelings about those games?

C: *"The game with the most attendance in college would probably be in my freshman year when we were in the NCAA tournament against Boston University. Again, I think when there is more attendance it brings so much energy into the game."*

M: *"Every year FIU hosts a huge beach volleyball tournament in Ocean Drive, South Beach. That's the biggest tournament of the year and the best colleges (USC, UCLA, FSU, and LSU) come to play us. A lot of tourists stop at the courts to watch the best games of the day and most of them are cheering for the locals, us. The amount of people watching us is almost unbelievable and the beach volleyball facility is perfectly functioning due to our FIU staff."*

F: *"The game against Syracuse University at MSG, that game is the most famous college derby in the State of New York and the Johnnies wait all year for that game, there were 15.000 fans and winning was one of my favorite moments ever in my young career. With my team the most attendance was about 8/9.000 and the feeling was pretty much the same even if nothing beats MSG."*

Do you have any thoughts about Fan Engagement?

C: *"I think it is good but should also be limited to an extent. Honestly no player likes to hear negativity from fans either because then it will take away their confidence in the game."*

M: *"I think that fan engagement is very important because it affects their involvement and identification with the sport product. In other words, their team's success (e.g., winning or losing) has an impact on their self-esteem. This is one of the main reasons why I try to do as best as I can once I step on the court."*

F: *"Fan engagement is the most important thing for the world of sports. At the end of the day, sport is entertainment for people and their engagement is the base of sports."*

- In your opinion what do you think your club can do to engage more fans?

C: *"I think definitely having open practices sometimes would be a cool experience for the fans."*

M: *"I think that sports marketing is growing remarkably. I believe that advertising through social media is a powerful tool to attract more sports fans and to get more revenues through ticket sales. Our university is improving in this aspect due to their engagement with social media activities."*

F: *"A club can promote the team and the events though marketing moves to make the event more interesting."*

- Do you use Social Media in order to engage fans? Do you like to interact with Fans?

C: *"I use social media, but I do not really interact with fans over social media. But I do like to interact with them in person!"*

M: *"I use social media a lot, especially lately. One day, when I will be playing pro (hopefully I will), I will have to use my social media account to promote the products of the companies and corporations that will be willing to sponsor me. Right now, I still have to follow the NCAA regulations, so I am not promoting anything of course. But it's nice to see how pro athletes use their image to get more revenues and to promote values as well. Who knows, maybe one day, when I am done with college, I will be able to pursue that path as well."*

F: "*I always use social media to engage fans. I like to show them the part of me off the court and make them more "loyal" and passionate toward me because they see me from closer.*"

SURVEY – FAN ENGAGEMENT IN SPORTS

For my thesis, I have prepared a survey based on Fan Engagement in Sports. The goal of this survey is to better understand the way fans follow their favorite teams (i.e. stadium visits , fan club engagement, social media following, and television viewing), the influence of social media in the world of Sports, possible areas of improvement for fan management offices (i.e. merchandising, stadium interest, fan clubs) and, with the emergence of the Coronavirus pandemic, if the idea of playing some games behind closed doors without fans can change the level of interest of people watching a game. This survey had a total of 108 responses. I had the chance to ask questions in two languages: English (25% of answers) and Italian (75% of answers). From those who answered in English, 70% were Men and 30% Women. Similarly, the percentage for whom answered in Italian were – 77% men 23% women. Most of the participants who answered are between 18 and 30 years old (96% English, 71% Italian). The majority practiced sports between 1 and 3 times per week (40% English, 45% Italian) or 3 to 5 times per week (37% English, 39% Italian) and they have indicated that soccer is their favorite sport (59% English, 77% Italian).

Listed below all the answers related to the Fan Engagement, both in Italian and English:

Listed below all the answers related to the Fan Engagement, both in Italian and English:

    1) (I) Quanto pensi sia importante l'interazione dei tifosi per un club?

Da 1 a 10: 0% 6, 8% 7, <u>42% 8</u>, 17% 9, 32% 10.

8.7 Average rating

0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	42%	17%	32%
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
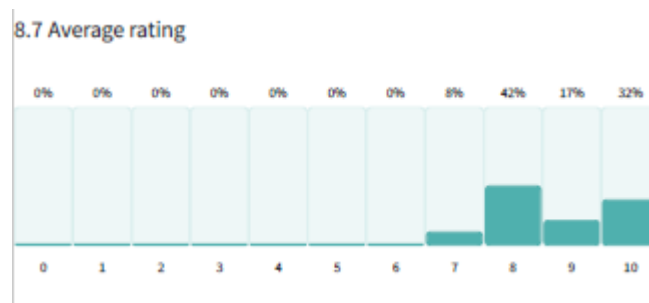
(E) From your point of view, how much do you think fan interaction is important for a club?

From 1 to 10: 3% 4, 3% 5, 3% 6, 3% 7, <u>37% 8</u>, 14% 9, 33% 10.

8.4 Average rating

0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	3%	3%	3%	37%	14%	33%
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
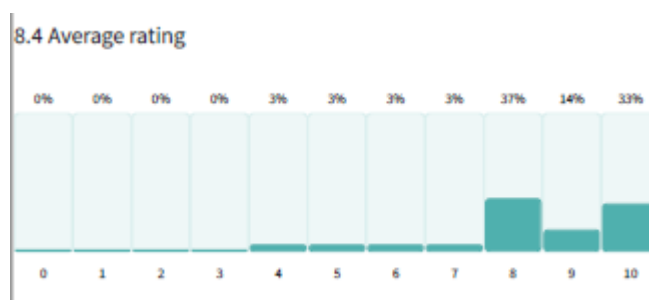
2) (I) Valuta l'importanza dei Social Media per seguire la tua squadra del cuore.

Da 1 a 10: 3% 0, 3% 3, 2% 4, 8% 5, 23% 7, <u>28% 8</u>, 9% 9, 11% 10.
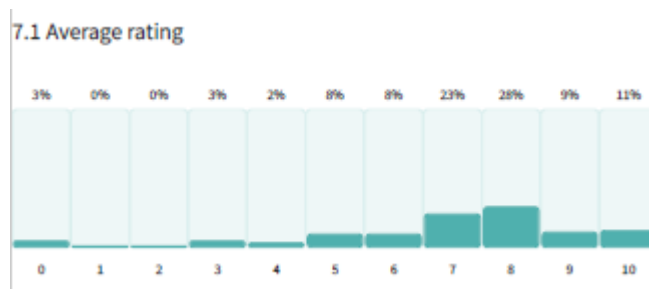
(E) Evaluate the importance of Social Media in the process of following your favorite sport club.

From 1 to 10: 0% 5, 11% 6, 18% 7, <u>40% 8</u>, 7% 9, 22% 10.
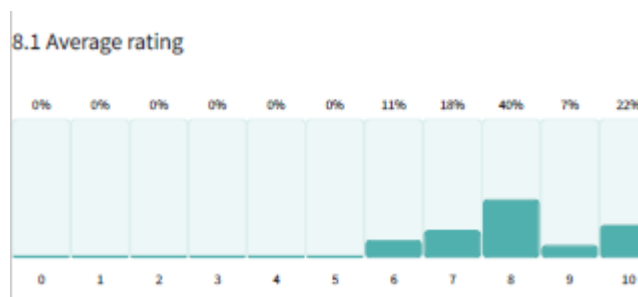
3) (I) Sei un membro di un Official Fan Club?

Risposta SI: 18%

Risposta NO: 82%

(E) Are you an Official Fan Club member?

Answer YES: 33%

Answer NO: 67%

4) (I) Segui sui Social Media la tua squadra del cuore?

Risposta SI: 80%

Risposta NO: 20%

(E) Do you follow your favorite team on Social Media?

Answer YES: 89%

Answer NO: 11%

5) (I) Segui sui Social Media altri Club?

Risposta SI: 45%

Risposta <u>NO: 55%</u>

(E) Do you follow teams practicing other sports?

Answer <u>YES: 78%</u>

Answer NO: 22%

6) (I) Segui i giocatori della tua squadra del cuore sui Social Media?

Risposta <u>SI: 70%</u>

Risposta NO: 30%

(E) Do you follow athletes from your favorite team on Social Media?

Answer YES: 85%

Answer NO: 15%

7) (I) Segui altri atleti professionisti?

Risposta <u>SI: 80%</u>

Risposta NO: 20%

(E) Do you follow other athletes on Social Media?

Answer <u>YES: 88%</u>

Answer NO: 12%

8) (I) Qual è il tuo Social Media preferito?

<u>Instagram 80%</u>, Facebook 12%, Altro 3%, Twitter 3%.

Instagram 80%

Facebook 12%

Altro 3%
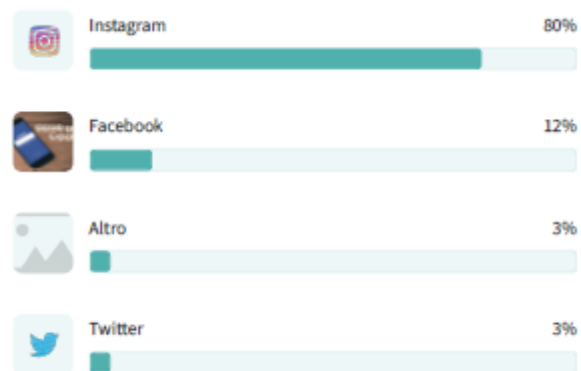
Twitter 3%

(E) What's your favorite Social Media?

Instagram 88%, facebook 3%, Other 3%, Twitter 3%

Instagram 88%

Facebook 3%

Other 3%

Twitter 3%
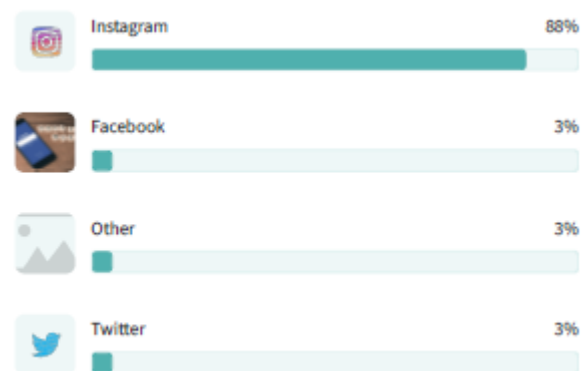
9) (I) Quanto hai speso nell'ultimo anno per la tua squadra del cuore (abbonamento stadio, merchandising, Club Tv subscription, viaggi per seguire la squadra, biglietto per una partita etc…)

Da 0 a 200 euro 70%, da 200 a 500 euro 16%, da 500 a 1000 euro 12%, + di 1000 euro 1%

1	Da 0 a 200 euro		70%
2	Da 200 a 500 euro		16%
3	Da 500 a 1000 euro		12%
4	+ di 1000 euro		1%
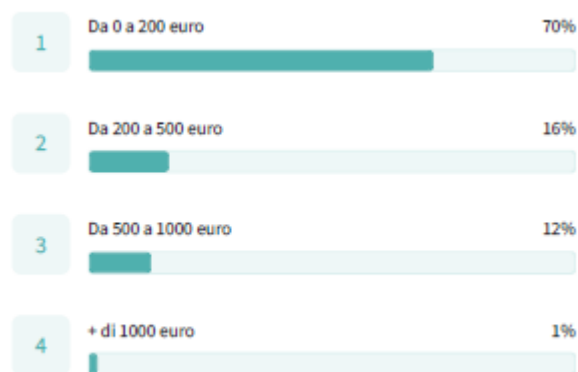
(E) How much did you spend last year on your favorite team? (Season tickets, merchandising, Club TV subscription, single match ticket, away game trips, etc…)

From 0 to 200 euros 59%, From 200 to 500 euros 29%, More than 1000 euros 7%, From 500 to 1000 3%.

1	From 0 to 200 euros	59%
2	From 200 to 500 euros	29%
3	More than 1000 euros	7%
4	From 500 to 1000 euros	3%
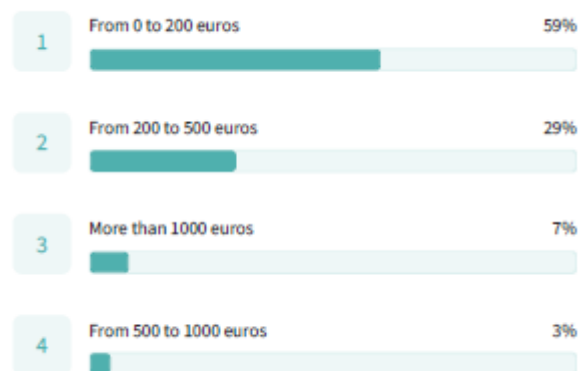
10) (I) Qual è il tuo livello di soddisfazione quando spendi soldi per il tuo club?

Da 1 a 10: 7% 0, 1% 2, 2% 4, 7% 5, 16% 6, 23% 7, 16% 8, 12% 9, 13% 10.

7%	0%	1%	0%	2%	7%	16%	23%	16%	12%	13%
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
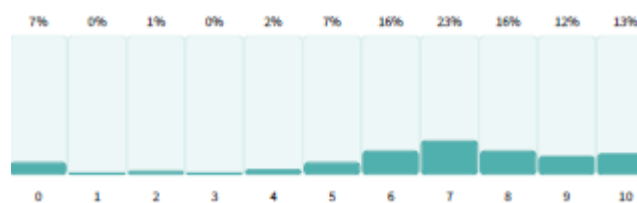
(E) What is your level of satisfaction when you spend money for your favorite sport club?

From 1 to 10: 7% 0, 3% 3, 7% 5, 11% 6, 14% 7, 44% 8, 11%

10.
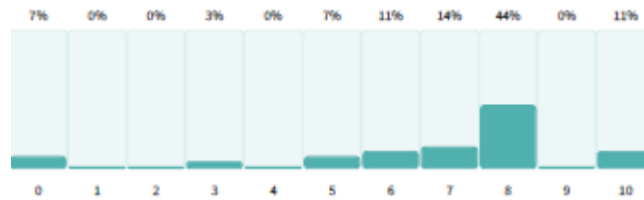
11) (I) Qual è il tuo modo preferito per vivere il "game day" della tua

squadra del cuore?

Guardare la partita in Tv 50%, Andare allo stadio 48%, Seguire i

live sui Social Media 1%.

(E) What is your favorite way to join the "Game Day Experience" of your favorite Club?

<u>Watch the game at the Stadium 59%</u>, Watching the game on Tv 29%, Follow the live contents of the game on Social Media 7%, Watch the game at your Official Fan Club 3%.

1	Watch the game at the Stadium	59%
2	Watch the game on Tv	29%
3	Follow the live contents of the game on Social Media	7%
4	Watch the game at your Official Fan Club	3%

12) (I) Quante volte sei andato allo stadio a vedere la tua squadra del cuore nell'ultimo anno?

<u>Da 1 a 10 54%</u>, 0 28%, da 10 a 20 11%, 20+ 6%.

1	Da 1 a 10	54%
2	0	28%
3	Da 10 a 20	11%
4	20+	6%
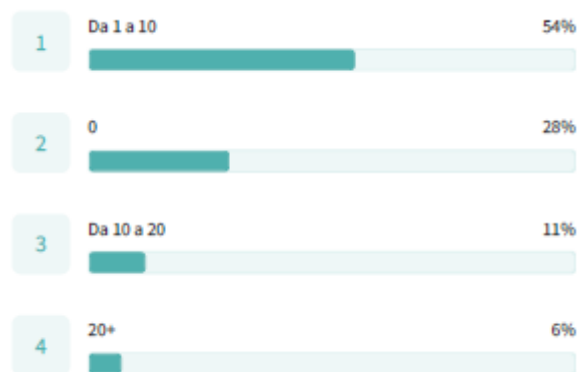
(E) Last year, how many times have you been to the stadium?

<u>**From 1 to 10 66%**</u>**, 0 22%, from 10 to 20 11%.**

1	From 1 to 10	66%
2	0	22%
3	From 10 to 20	11%
4	20+	0%
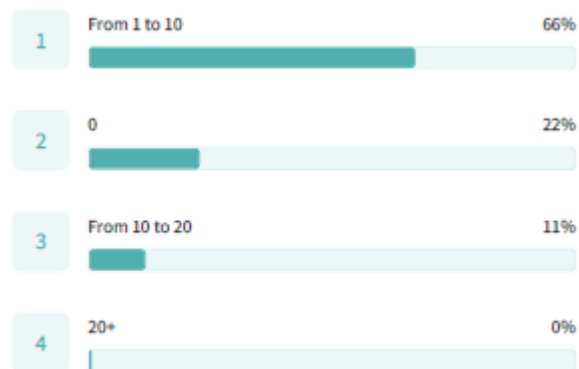
13) (I) Quante volte hai visto la tua squadra del cuore in tv nell'ultimo anno?

<u>20+ 53%</u>, da 10 a 20 22%, da 1 a 10 21%, 0 3%.
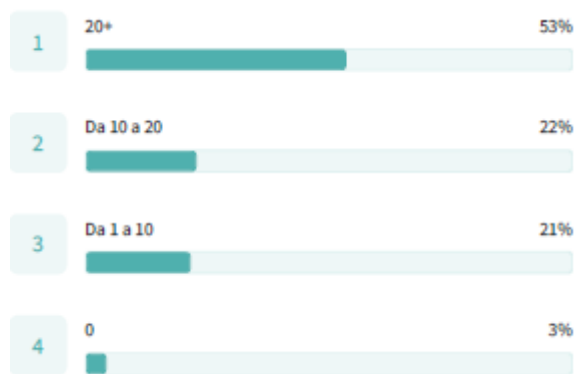
(E) How many times have you seen your favorite team on TV in the last year?

20+ 51%, 1 to 10 25%, 10 to 20 18%, 0 3%
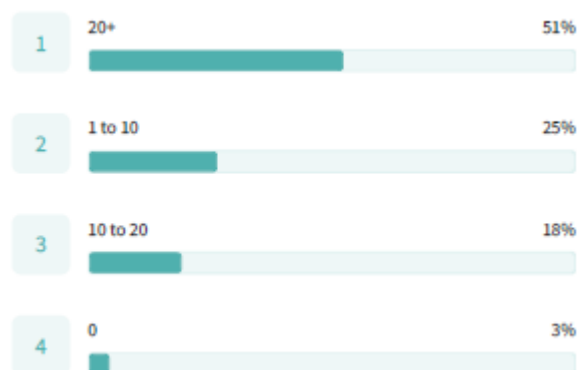
14) (I) Quante volte hai visto la tua squadra del cuore nel tuo Official Fan Club nell'ultimo anno?

0 80%, da 1 a 10 14%, 20+ 2%, da 10 a 20 2%.

1	0	80%
2	Da 1 a 10	14%
3	20+	2%
4	Da 10 a 20	2%
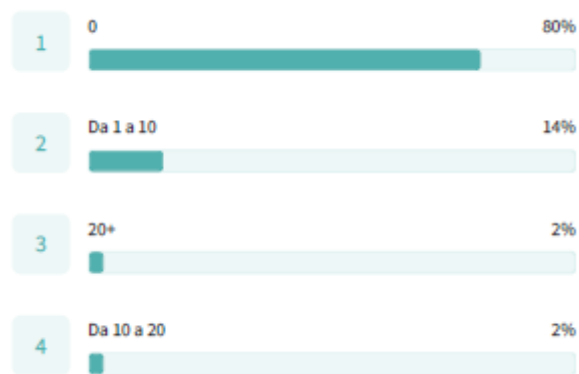
(E) How many times have you seen your favorite team in your Official Fan Club in the last year?

0 85%, 1 to 10 14%

1	0	85%
2	1 to 10	14%
3	10 to 20	0%
4	20+	0%
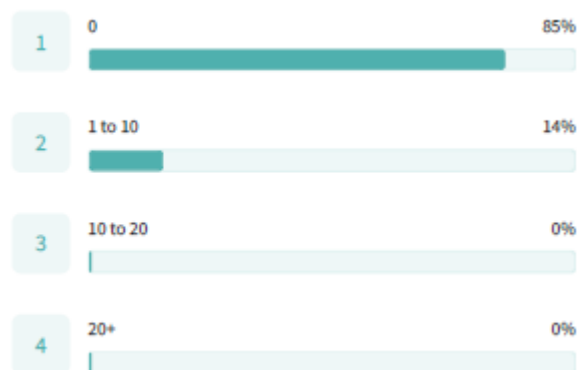
15) (I) Quante volte hai seguito i live content sui Social Media durante una partita della tua squadra del cuore nell'ultimo anno?

<u>0 45%</u>, da 1 a 10 33%, 20+ 11%, da 10 a 20 9%.
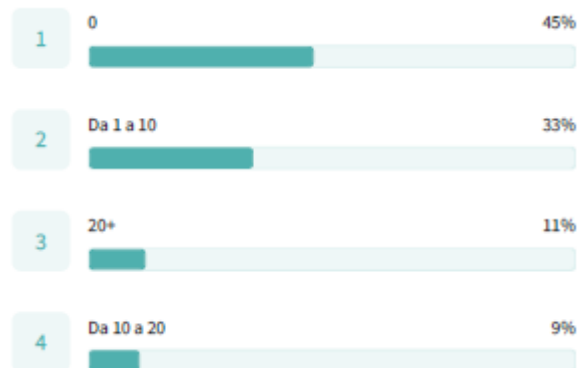
(E) How many times have you followed live content on Social Media during a game of your favorite team in the last year?

<u>1 to 10 37%</u>**, 0 33%, 20+ 18%, 10 to 20 11%.**
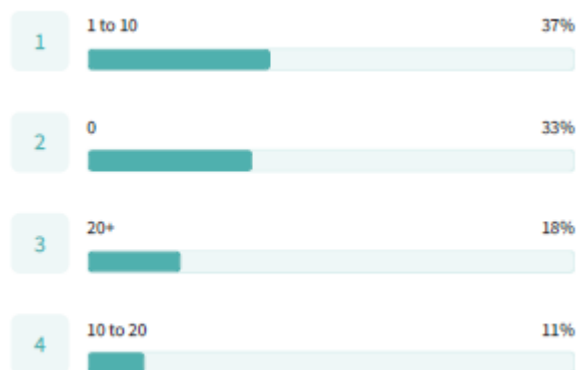
16) (I) Quanto ritieni utili i live content sui Social Media?

3% 0, 3% 1, 1% 2, 3% 3, 2% 4, 12% 5, 11% 6, 19% 7, <u>25% 8</u>, 6% 9, 9% 10.
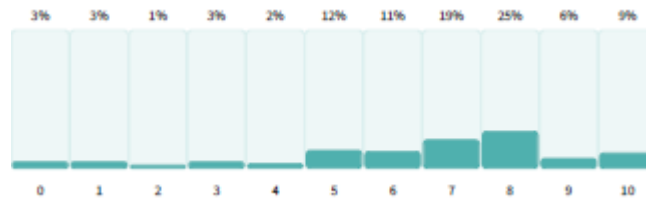
(E) During the game, how useful do you find live contents on Social Media?

7% 0, 7% 1, 3 3%, 3% 4, 14% 5, 3% 6, 18% 7, 11% 8, 3% 9, <u>25% 10.</u>
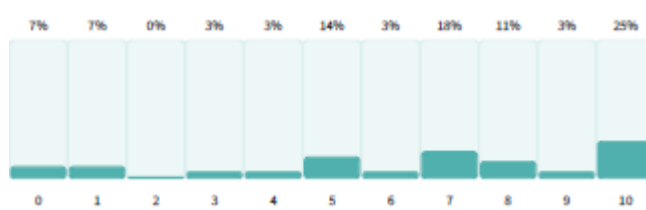
17) (I) Nell'ultimo anno hai acquistato Official Merchandising della tua squadra del cuore?

Risposta SI: 25%

Risposta NO: 75%

(E) Have you purchased official merchandising of your favorite team in the last year?

Answer YES: 37%

Answer NO: 63%

18) (I) Ti piace ricevere mail & newsletter dalla tua squadra del cuore?

Risposta SI: 40%

Risposta NO: 60%

(E) Do you like to receive mail and newsletters from your favorite sports club?

Answer YES: 33%

Answer <u>NO: 67%</u>

19) (I) Sei d'accordo che il tuo club preferito possa avere i tuoi dati personali per finalità promozionali?

Risposta <u>SI: 53%</u>

Risposta NO: 47%

(E) Do you agree with the fact that your favorite sport team can manage your personal data for promotional purpose?

Answer <u>YES: 51%</u>

Answer NO: 49%

20) (I) Come valuti il lavoro di Fan Engagement del tuo club preferito?

3% 0, 1% 2, 2% 3, 4% 4, 8% 5, 11% 6, 21% 7, <u>22% 8</u>, 14% 9, 9% 10.
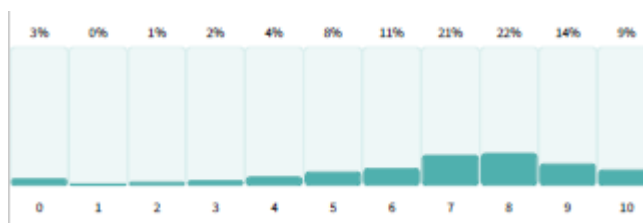
(E) How do you rate the Fan Engagement work of your favorite sport club?

7% 5, 14% 6, 22% 7, <u>37% 8</u>, 11% 9, 7% 10.
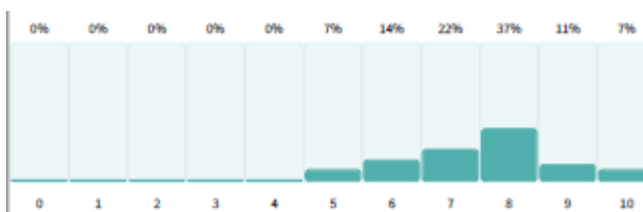
21) (I) Ti piacerebbe se i giocatori del tuo club preferito interagissero di più sui Social con i tifosi?

Risposta <u>SI: 90%</u>

Risposta NO: 10%

(E) Would you like to see higher interactions of players, coach and staff with Fans on Social Media of your favorite Sport team?

Answer <u>YES: 88%</u>

Answer NO: 12%

22) (I) Valuta il tuo livello d'interesse di una partita con gli spettatori presenti allo stadio.

2% 6, 12% 7, 23% 8, 18% 9, <u>42% 10</u>.
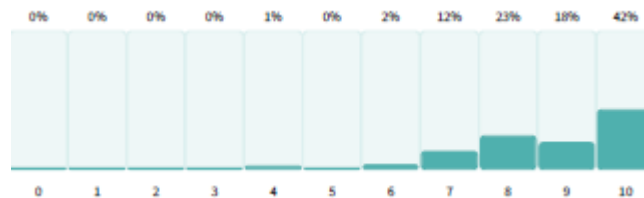
(E) Evaluate your level of interest of a game with supporters at the stadium

3% 0, 3% 5, 7% 6, 14% 7, 18% 8, 11% 9, <u>40% 10</u>.

3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	7%	14%	18%	11%	40%
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
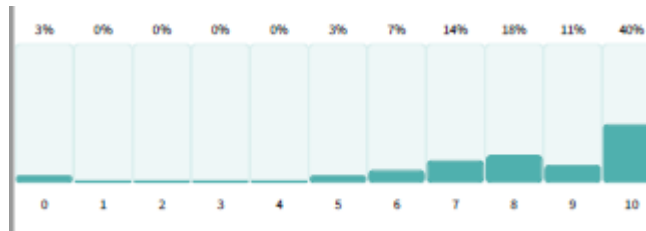
23) (I) Valuta il tuo livello d'interesse di una partita senza spettatori presenti allo stadio

11% 0, 7% 1, 2% 2, 6% 3, 14% 4, 12% 5, <u>17% 6</u>, 12% 7, 11% 8, 3% 9, 1% 10.

11%	7%	2%	6%	14%	12%	17%	12%	11%	3%	1%
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
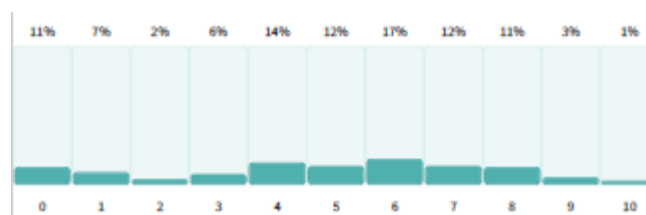
(E) Evaluate your level of interest of a game without supporters at the stadium.

11% 0, 7% 1, 14% 2, 7% 3, 11% 4, 11% 5, <u>18% 6</u>, 3% 7, 14% 8.
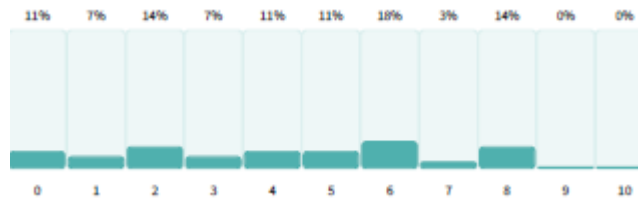
Findings

The survey results show that the participants believe fan interaction is very important for a club. Almost all participants answered from 7 to 10 with the peak of 42% voting 8. When asked whether social media was important in order to follow their favorite club, those who answered in English thought it was important from 6 to 10, with the majority of the answer (40%) responded 8 out of 10, people who answered in Italian rather, have a difference of opinion and vary from 3% saying 0, 8% saying 5, 23% saying 7, 28% saying 9 and 11% saying 10. The data is compelling when participants were asked whether they follow their favorite sports team on social media: an average of 85% do follow their favorite team on social media (especially on Instagram, that is considered the favorite amongst social media platforms with more than 80% of the voters, Facebook received 12%). Similarly, the data shows that participants follow athletes that play for their favorite team. The relationship is strong between people those who follow their favorite team and the players that play that particular team. Furthermore, less of the participants followed other clubs: only 45% follow other

teams, but the percentage of people that follow other athletes: 78% is much higher. This is understandable if you believe that people may follow different sports and have different favorite athletes.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, I wanted to add a couple of questions to my survey regarding the idea of playing behind closed doors (this may be the only way to end the National and International Leagues and Competitions for many sports). In Italy, fans had the chance to watch one of the most important games of the league this year: Juventus FC vs. Internazionale Milano behind closed doors because of the Coronavirus pandemic. That was the only way the game could be played as the virus was spreading all throughout Italy, and the Italian government was taking drastic measures to contain the virus. After that game, the Italian Soccer League was suspended. It is now a real possibility that there will be no declared winner for the 2019/2020 season. Voters said that the level of interest of a game with Fans at the stadium vary between 6 to 10 with 42% of Italian voters and 40% of English voters saying 10. There is a noticeable difference in results for the level of interest in games without fans at the stadium: 11% of Italian voters said 0, most voters (17%) said 6 and 11% said 8. For English voters, the results are similar 11% said 0, most voters (18%) said 6 and 14% said 8.

Another possible revenue generator for clubs can come from the Official Fan Club. Our survey revealed that 33% of people who are English are part of an Official Fan Club, whereas it is only 18% for people who answered in Italian, what is surprising is that 0% of people answering in Italian and only 3% from who answered in English indicated that the Official Fan Club was their favorite

way to watch a game. Most participants preferred to watch the game at the stadium (48% Italian, 58% English) or television (50% Italian 29% English). Significantly, the numbers of times fans watched the game at the stadium this year: 54% Italian and 66% English said between 1 and 10, meanwhile 28% (I) and 22% (E) said they have never been at the stadium this year. Television seems the easiest way to watch sports: 53% Italian and 51% English said they have watched more than 20 games this year through television. The percentages are low for people watching the game through an Official Fan Club: 85% say 0, meanwhile 37% of English and 33% of Italian said that they followed between 1 and 10 times this year live content on social media during a game, a tool that is getting important for fans in order to be updated on the results of their team. Regarding this, 25% of Italians said this tool is important - 8 from 1 to 10, meanwhile 28% of English voters said 10. Also, regarding social media, almost the totality of voters would like to see more players interacting with fans through Social media pages of their club, nowadays social media is the main resource of interaction between players and fans.

What we can see from this survey is the amount of money spent from an individual every year for their favorite sports team. More than 70% of people answering in Italian only spent between 0 and 200 euros per year (58% of people who answered in English). This data is important for people working in the sports industry. Also, the data of people spending more than 1000 euros per year: 7% of people answering in English and only 1% of people answering in Italian. 75% of Italian voters said they did not spend money on merchandising for their favorite team this year and only 27% rate 8 for the level of satisfaction of the job that fan

management and the relations department are performing. Meanwhile, 33% of English voters spent money for merchandising and 37% of them said the level of satisfaction from the fan management and relations department of their club is 8, 11% said 9, and 7% said 10. This data reflects what Frankie Campagna said during an interview I had with him. American fans spend more money for their club than what Italian fans do.

DIGITAL STRATEGY AND TECHNOLOGY

Technologies are essential for developing an efficient and effective digital strategy addressed to fans. So, I am going to present, all the possible technologies available

 to create an advanced Fan Experience for sports organizations. So, I am going to present, all the possible technologies available the to create an advanced Fan Experience for sports organizations.

Let's divide the technologies in three categories based on their functionalities, which represent the steps between the acquisition of fans' data and the launch of a communication or marketing campaign:

 • <u>Data Collection and Integration</u>: technologies dedicated to the acquisition of fans' data from different sources, to the integration of them and generally to their management.

• <u>Analysis</u>: technologies that allow sports organization to cross information available in order to cluster the customers and create insights on data, as a basis for the execution.

• <u>Execution</u>: technologies useful for a marketing launch and communication campaigns, to create content that fits the fans, and to directly involve the supporters.

Data Collection and Integration

The goal in this phase is to collect information to establish a strong relationship between the club and the fan. This is done by building a solid fan database.

First, data related to fans have to be found. The sources can be divided in: Internal, External and Third Parties.

A sports organization can collect its data from many different internal sources, including its website, where fans sign up for online accounts to purchase tickets or to the Shop store where fans sign up to receive commercial advertising or newsletter. Internal sources are, for instance, ticket purchase, merchandising and digital subscription.

To expand its fan database beyond what it collects from the internal, the club should organize promotions and sweepstakes with its partners. These activities involve getting fans to register for events or even to initiate grassroots activities. So, fan sweepstakes lotteries so fan lotteries and co-promotion are examples of external sources of data.

After collecting data from internal sources and partnership programs, data must be sent through a cleansing process. This is a very important step since it increases record accuracy, eliminates redundant and incorrect data, and merges fragmented profiles. The next step is filling in the blanks; that is, adding additional (external) information to existing records so the information on each fan is more complete. Generally, this additional data comes from third-party sources. It might include household income, age, occupation, education levels,

presence of children and other lifestyle characteristics, so demographic and behavioral characteristics of the fan. These two important phases are called Data hygiene and Data Appending/Matching.

"A variety of information allows us to analyze and better understand our customers, so we can target our communications more accurately," said Shin, Vice President Strategy & Analytics, Major League Soccer. "A lot of information exists within organizations that is not integrated, and that people may not even be aware of.", he added.

In order to accomplish this phase, it is important to have a strong data base that allows to collect a large amount of data. To reach this objective some tools are needed, like data warehouse, data lake and CRM systems. Listed in the following sections a detailed description of these technologies.

Data Warehouse

A Data Warehousing (DW) process for collecting and managing data from varied sources to provide meaningful business insights. A DW is typically used to connect and analyze business data from heterogeneous sources. The data warehouse is the core of the Business Intelligence system which is built for data analysis and reporting[17].

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[17] (n.a.) (2020) *What is Data Warehouse* http://www.parlandodisport.it/2017/01/05/sassuolo-giovanni-carnevali-abbiamo-rifiutato-le-richieste-ricevute-per-pellegrini-defrel-e-acerbi/

It is a blend of technologies and components which aids the strategic use of data. It is electronic storage of a large amount of information by a business which is designed for query and analysis instead of transaction processing. It is a process of transforming data into information and making it available to users in a timely manner to make a difference.

The term data warehouse was coined by William H. Inmon, who is known as the Father of Data Warehousing. Inmon described a data warehouse as being a subject-oriented, integrated, time-variant and nonvolatile collection of data that supports management's decision-making process. Clarifying the definition:

 -Subject-Oriented: a data warehouse can be used to analyze a subject area. For example, specific department of the enterprise can be a particular subject.

-Integrated: a data warehouse integrates data from multiple data sources. For example, source A and source B may have different ways of identifying a product, but in a data warehouse, there will be only a single way of identifying a product.

-Time Variant: historical data is kept in a data warehouse. For example, one can retrieve data from 3 months, 6 months, 12 months, or even older data from a data warehouse, differently, for instance, from a transaction system that can treat only recent data. For example, a transaction system may hold the most recent address of a customer, where a data warehouse can hold all addresses associated with a customer.

-Non-volatile: once data is in the data warehouse; it will not change. So, historical data in a data warehouse should never be altered.

Upon successful implementation of a data warehouse or data mart, business will realize numerous improvements and positive gains. Some of them are:

-Improved Business Intelligence: managers and executives can take their decision basing on credible facts and actual data; decision makers are better informed as they are able to query actual data. Data warehouses and related business intelligence can be used to can be applied directly to business processes including marketing segmentation, inventory management, financial management, and sales.

-Increased Query and System Performance: data warehouse allows to store a very large volume of data and rapidly query this data.

-Data from multiple sources: for many of the enterprises the information come from multiple sources. With the warehouse firms have the possibility to merge this data and having them available in one place. Consolidating enterprise data into a single data repository alleviates the burden of duplicating data gathering efforts and enables the extraction of information that would otherwise be impossible.

-Quality and Consistency of data: the data warehouses convert the data coming from the different sources and transform the different file into a common format. Furthermore, business units and departments take data from a unique repository in

which all data are standardized, and so produce results that are consistent with all the other units within the organization.

-Timely access to data: data warehouses allow to users to have the data they need when they request for them, spending little time for searching them, thanks to ETL systems. Business user can access to data from one interface and make query with less informational support.

-Historical Intelligence: data warehouses store data from the different periods, in this way business users can base their actions also considering past events.

-High Return on Investment (ROI): ROI represent an index that calculate the earnings that a business is able to make from an investment (e.g. a project). Data warehouses and business intelligence have enabled business to generate a very high amount of revenues, and also save a lot in terms of costs.

Data Lake

A data lake is a storage repository that holds a vast amount of raw data in its native format until it is needed. While a hierarchical data warehouse stores data in files or folders, a data lake uses a flat architecture to store data. Each data element in a lake is assigned a unique identifier and tagged with a set of extended metadata tags[18]. When a business question arises, the data lake can be queried for relevant data, and that smaller set of data can then be analyzed to help answer the question.

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[18] (n.a.) (2020, January). *Data Lake* https://searchaws.techtarget.com/definition/data-lake

The term "*data lake*" is often associated with Hadoop-oriented object storage. In such a scenario, an organization's data is first loaded into the Hadoop platform, and then business analytics and data mining tools are applied to the data where it resides on Hadoop's cluster nodes of commodity computers.

Like big data, the term *data lake* is sometimes disparaged as being simply a marketing label for a product that supports Hadoop. Increasingly, however, the term is being used to describe any large data pool in which the schema and data requirements are not defined until the data is queried.

The term describes a data storage strategy, not a specific technology, although it is frequently used in conjunction with a specific technology (Hadoop). The same can be said of the term *data warehouse*, which despite often referring to a specific technology (relational database), describes a broad data management strategy.

The data lake serves as a cost-effective place to conduct preliminary analysis of data, while flexible and task-oriented data structuring is implemented only where and for what it is necessary (Stein, 2014).[19] The data lake outflow is the analyzed data and it forms a key component of the extended analytical ecosystem. The next step after *Data Lake* is *Data Hub*. A Data hub is a database which is populated with data from one or more sources and from which data is taken to one or more destinations. It is a hub-and-spoke approach to data integration, where data is physically moved and re-indexed into a new system. The difference with data

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[19] Stein, B., Morrison, A. (2014). *The enterprise data lake: Better integration and deeper analytics.*
http://www.pwc.com/us/en/technology-forecast/2014/cloudcomputing/assets/pdf/pwc-technology-forecast-data-lakes.pdf

lakes is that data runs the same process, but it must always keep the source format. Data is ingested in as close to the raw form as possible without enforcing any restrictive schema.

The main characteristic of a Data Hub is that the system must support discovery, indexing and analytics. This is a step forward Data Lake, that cannot index or harmonize because of the incompatible forms that be hold. The prime objective of a Data Hub is to provide a centralized and unified data source for diverse business needs. These systems are designed to address the challenge of data that is expanding in terms of variety, volume and velocity.

CRM (Customer Relationship Management)

Customer relationship management (CRM) is a technology for managing all your company's relationships and interactions with customers and potential customers. The goal is simple: Improve business relationships. A CRM system helps companies stay connected to customers, streamline processes, and improve profitability[20].

When people talk about CRM, they are usually referring to a CRM system, a tool that helps with contact management, sales management, productivity, and more. A CRM solution helps you focus on your organization's relationships with individual people — including customers, service users, colleagues, or suppliers — throughout your lifecycle with them, including finding new customers,

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[20] (n.a.). (2020). *What is CRM?* https://www.salesforce.com/crm/what-is-crm/

winning their business, and providing support and additional services throughout the relationship. A CRM framework gives everybody — from deals, client care, business advancement, selecting, advertising, or some other line of business — a superior method to deal with the outer communications and connections that drive achievement. A CRM device lets you store client and prospect contact data, distinguish deals openings, record administration issues, and oversee promoting efforts, across the board focal area — and make data about each client communication accessible to anybody at your organization who may require it. With perceivability and simple access to information, it's simpler to team up and increment efficiency. Everybody in your organization can perceive how clients have been spoken with, what they've purchased, when they last bought, what they paid, thus significantly more. CRM can help organizations of all sizes drive business development, and it very well may be particularly gainful to an independent company, where groups frequently need to discover approaches to accomplish more with less. A CRM framework can give an away from of the clients. It's conceivable to see everything in one spot — a basic, adaptable dashboard that can tell a client's history, the status of their requests, any exceptional client care issues, and the sky is the limit from there. Advertisers can utilize a CRM answer for better comprehend the pipeline of offers or prospects coming in, making estimating less complex and progressively precise. It'll have away from of each chance or lead, indicating a make way from requests to deals. Probably the greatest gains in efficiency can emerge out of moving past CRM as a deals and advertising apparatus and inserting it in a business – from HR to client administrations and inventory network the executives. CRM frameworks have

customarily been utilized as deals and promoting instruments, client assistance

groups are seeing incredible advantages in utilizing them. The present client may

bring an issue up in one station and afterward change to email or phone to

determine it in private. A CRM stage lets you deal with the request across

channels without losing track, and gives deals, administration, and promoting a

solitary perspective on the client.

How a CRM system can help a business today:

1) Make improvements to your bottom line.

Introducing a CRM platform has been shown to produce real results – including

direct improvements to the bottom line.

2) Identify and categorize leads.

A CRM system can help you identify and add new leads easily and quickly and

categorize them accurately. By focusing on the right leads, sales can prioritize the

opportunities that will close deals, and marketing can identify leads that need

more nurturing and prime them to become quality leads. With complete, accurate,

centrally held information about clients and prospects, sales and marketing can

focus their attention and energy on the right clients.

3) Increase referrals from existing customers.

By understanding your customers better, cross-selling and upselling opportunities

become clear — giving you the chance to win new business from existing

customers. With better visibility, you'll also be able to keep your customers

happy with better service. Happy customers are likely to become repeat

customers, and repeat customers spend more — up to 33% more according to some studies.

4) Offer better customer support.

Today's customers expect fast, personalized support, at any time of day or night. A CRM system can help you provide the high-quality service that customers are looking for. Your agents can quickly see what products customers have ordered, and they can get a record of every interaction so they can give customers the answers they need, fast.

5) Improve products and services.

A good CRM system will gather information from a huge variety of sources across your business and beyond. This gives you unprecedented insights into how your customers feel and what they are saying about your organization — so you can improve what you offer, spot problems early, and identify gaps.

Analysis

The aim of the second phase is to analyze fans data acquired in the first phase for creating relevant insights as basis for the launch of the communication campaigns to fan of the sports organization. Data Analysis is the process of evaluating data using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data

provided. Data from various sources is gathered, reviewed, and then analyzed to form some sort of finding or conclusion[21].

In this phase fans' data are filtered, crossed and analyzed in order to segment the fan audience in target clusters and in. So, we have created some relevant insights for the last phase: the execution phase is generated.

There are a variety of specific data analysis method, the most of which belongs to Business Intelligence techniques. Here below a simple definition of Business Intelligence:

Data mining activities consist in an iterative process aimed at the analysis of big databases, with the purpose of getting information and knowledge that may prove accurate and possible useful for knowledge workers engaged in decision making and problem solving. With data mining the overall process made by data gathering and analysis, development of inductive learning models and decision-making activities and related actions based on the knowledge acquired through the process. The process is made on inductive learning methods because the main purpose is to draw conclusions starting from a set of past observations collected in one or more databases and then generalize the results obtained to the entire population. The model achieved in this manner may have different form, like, clusters and tree. Data mining activities can be separated into two main streams, according to the objective of the analysis: interpretation and prediction.

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[21] (n.a.) http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/data-analysis.html

"Business intelligence may be defined as a set of mathematical models and analysis methodologies that systematically exploit the available data to retrieve information and knowledge useful in supporting complex decision-making processes."[22] (Carlo Vercellis, 2009)

Data Analytics is totally changing the Fan Experience, now the fans can exploit data analytics and through it make their experience more involving and exciting. Let's take as an example the National Hockey League (NHL) dates to 1920. The NHL has taken every statistic from its 100-year history and made them easily comprehensible for every fan even the casual one. The user-friendly interface of the new NHL statistics site allows fans to find very easily the information that they're looking for, like comparing their favorite players from the past and present or simply checking for the seasonal stats on a home team, whatever information a fan needs, is in an easy-to-read format. This means that hockey fans can compare years of data and stats in a very easy way. The fan experience is like never before. Everyone benefits from sports data analytics, with the insertion of statistics section in the website NHL.com, as a result engagement and time on the NHL website has increased by more than 45%. Just like in any other company or organization, more engagement means higher profits for the company. Thanks to new technology that improves the fan experience, the sport of hockey seems poised to only increase in popularity, and more important than that, the real winners of this new technologies are the fans.

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[22] Carlo Vercellis, Business Intelligence: Data Mining and Optimization for Decision Making, 2009

In the following sections I will portray a portion of these systems so as to treat information and get a knowledge of the practices of the fans: from the most essential ones (Data Mining, Classification Trees and Clustering) to the most exceptional ones (Real-Time Analytics, Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence).

<u>Data mining</u>

Information mining exercises establish an iterative procedure focused on the investigation of huge databases, to extricate data and information that may demonstrate exact and conceivably helpful for information laborers occupied with dynamic and critical thinking. With data mining is intended the overall process made by data gathering and analysis, development of inductive learning models and decision-making activities and related actions based on the knowledge acquired through the process[23].

The process is based on inductive learning methods cause the main purpose is to draw conclusions starting from a set of past observations collected in one or more databases and then generalize the conclusion obtained to the entire population. The model achieved in this way may have different form, like for example, clusters and tree.

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[23] Greyner, L. (2011, January 7) *What is Data Analysis and Data Mining?*
http://www.dbta.com/Editorial/Trends-and-Applications/What-is-Data-Analysis-and-Data-Mining-73503.aspx

Data mining activities can be divided into two main streams, according to the objective of the analysis: interpretation and prediction.

• Interpretation: the purpose of the stream is to define regular patterns in the data in order to express them using rules and criteria that are easily comprehensible for the experts in the application domain.

• Prediction: the aim of prediction is to anticipate the value that a variable will assume in the future or to estimate the probability that an event will happen in the future.

As already said above, data mining is a process composed by a series of subsequent steps, as it is represented in the figure below.
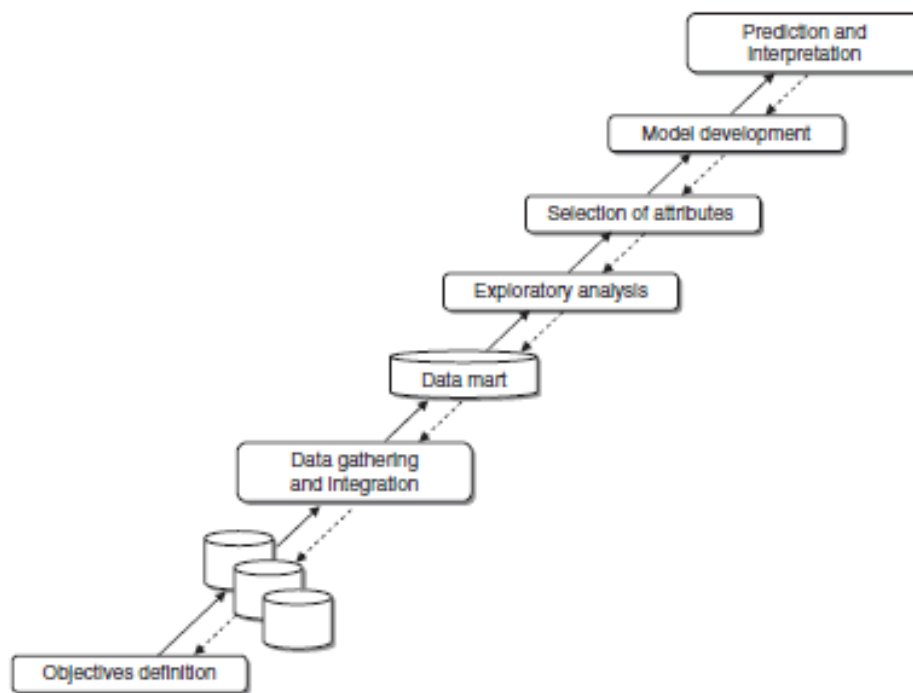
Figure xi: Data Mining Process

The initial step is the goals definition. This stage is significant, in light of the fact that the examination with information mining strategies are completed in explicit area and ought to give the proper information to chiefs. The specialists ought to have the option to detail characterized and explicit examination targets. If the destinations are not satisfactorily characterized the hazard is to undermine future exertion in information mining exercises.

Data gathering and integration is the second phase. When characterized the target, it is conceivable to begin with the social event of information. However, information may originate from various sources and they may most likely need an incorporation, might be to improve them with new distinct measurement that are absent in the association data framework.

Exploratory analysis is the third step of the procedure. The goal is to lead a starter examination of the information, to comprehend further the accessible data and doing information purging, expelling the current irregularities and distinguishing the exceptions.

The following stage is the attribute selection, where in it is built up the significance of the various characteristics regard the objectives of the investigation. The attribution that are considered not helpful are expelled, to clean the unessential data from the dataset. Besides, new qualities originating from the first factors through fitting change are remembered for the arrangement of information. This stage with the exploratory investigation is basic and may impact the achievement of the progressive stages.

Model development and validation comes after assembled the dataset with the right attributes. During this phase there is the recognition of patterns and the development of predictive models. The dataset is divided in two subsets: the training set, used to identify a specific learning model, and the test set, used to assess the accuracy of the models generated during the training.

The last phase is the prediction and interpretation, in which the model chosen among those generated in the development phase should be implemented and used to reach the objectives defined in the first phase.

Data mining allows to marketers to figure out how to target and deliver the best experience possible to their customers and in sports industry is the same. By gathering data on how sports fans are interacting with their favorite teams, talking about games and analyzing coverage, marketers can ensure that they're correctly

tailoring new products and services to them. The power of connectivity in sports is fundamental, Fans turn to their phones, TVs, computers and any internet-connected device when they want to take in sports-centric dialogue. The fan experience happens online, all the time.

According to writer Eric Adams and the National Football League, more than 10 terabytes of data was transferred over the Wi-Fi network at this year's Super Bowl. The average photo is 1 MB, which means that 10 million photos could have theoretically been sent over the Wi-Fi. Even though the most exciting game of the year was going on around them, fans still felt inclined to be on their phones, generating data. In order to exploit data mining power, it is necessary to pay attention to three main points:

- Monitor social media: by looking at who's tweeting, commenting, liking, Instagramming and sending Snapchats, marketers can determine who is engaged with sports

- Look at viewing habits: marketers can collect data on fans that watch sports content from their internet-connected TVs

- Track website clicks: Each time somebody signs onto a games themed site, their snaps ought to be followed. Advertisers need to see which pages are the most mainstream, which substance is being opened and how frequently guests are setting off to the e-store to buy sports stock

It results evident that exploiting the power of data mining techniques allows the clubs to deliver the best possible Fan experience to their supporters.

Advanced Technologies Real-Time Analytics

Real-Time analytics is an exceptional sort of Big Data investigation wherein information components are required to be handled and broke down as they land progressively[24]. It is significant in circumstances where continuous handling and examination can convey significant bits of knowledge and yield business esteem. Instances of constant examination would be any persistently refreshed or invigorated outcomes about client occasions by client, for example, site visits, site route, shopping basket use, or some other sort of on the web or digital activities.

Machine Learning

Machine Learning is a type of artificial intelligence that afford to software to predict, in a more effective way, outcomes without being explicitly programmed. The premise of this technique are the algorithms, since to take care of a PC issue we need an algorithm. With propels in PC innovation, we as of now can store and process a lot of information, just as to get to it from truly inaccessible areas over a PC organize. Most information securing gadgets are advanced now and record dependable information[25].

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[24] (n.a.) (2020) *What is Real Time Analytics?* https://www.omnisci.com/technical-glossary/real-time-analytics

[25] Govoni, L. (2020) *Machine Learning e principio di funzionamento* https://lorenzogovoni.com/machine-learning-e-funzionamento/

Think, for example, of a supermarket chain that has hundreds of stores all over a country selling thousands of goods to millions of customers. The point of sale terminals records the details of each transaction, collecting gigabytes of data every day. What the supermarket chain wants is to be able to predict who are the likely customers for a product. The algorithm for this is not evident; it changes in time and by geographic location. The stored data becomes useful only when it is analyzed and turned into information that we can make use of, for example, to make predictions. We do believe that there is a process that explains the data we observe. We will be unable to recognize the procedure totally; we can even now distinguish certain examples or regularities. This is the specialty of machine learning. Such patterns may help us understand the process, or we can use those patterns to make predictions: Assuming that the future, at least the near future, will not be much different from the past when the sample data was collected, the future predictions can also be expected to be correct. But machine learning, as said before, is part of artificial intelligence, and to be clever, a system if it is in a dynamic environment should have the ability to learn. These kinds of technologies could be very useful also in the sports field. Since machine learning allows to the computers to learn and recognize patterns and create insights, it could be used to improve the Fan Experience. In fact, it is a very useful tool in the marketing campaign for sports societies, that could use to implement only ad hoc marketing campaigned with targeted offers learning from the consumer habits of the fans.

What's more, similarly, it could be helpful additionally for grouping strategies of fans. AI is additionally utilized on the pitch. Indeed, through certain frameworks,

as Ghosting executed by details, groups can improve their exhibitions. These frameworks gain from past activities (using cameras, sensors, and so on.) and foresee the potential developments and improvement of future matches. Guessing to outfit a portion of this data to fans, it speaks to a further method to improve their experience and their association in the group.

- Measurement and Tracking

In order to execute marketing campaigns successfully, a club needs to measure and track their success. So, it's necessary to be able in doing that. Clubs should align each phase with KPIs for measuring its success. In data acquisition, clubs could measure the growth and overall size of their databases, looking also at where the data is coming from (internal or external source). Associations ought to likewise take a gander at the accomplice battle they held, to measure the number new information procurement through this channel thus confirm its prosperity.

Regarding engagement, the club could aim to grow its newsletter subscriptions and make sure fans are signing up. It would be better if people would sign up for a variety of newsletters, not just one. When it comes to monetization, the goal is to measure overall gross sales, the frequency at which customers are purchasing products, and conversion rates in order to evaluate the successfulness of the marketing campaigns. In terms of loyalty, a club should measure club affinity. This information gives the clubs the ability to communicate with those fans and build engagements. "An increase in engagements leads to an increase in monetization and loyalties, and ultimately, an increase in lifetime value", said Shin.

- Execution

After collecting, compiling and pulling together all fan data to make them more meaningful, the organization can begin engaging with its fans. Three aspects are very important in customer engagement: newsletters, personalization and contact strategy. Clubs send out several newsletters to their fans via email. Email is considered the number one preferred method of communication by fans in MLS. And so, in America and Canada it is the main method for how teams engage with them.

Newsletters can be personalized as much as possible through profile targeting, fan recognition and behavior targeting. "*Everything is personalized, and all our newsletters are dynamic, based on fan profiles*," said Shin regarding MLS personalization. "*We have seen measurable success through those efforts*."[26] The company checks the success of its personalization efforts through data. Personalized emails are based on fan's club affinity and Geolocation. Depending on his club affinity, the fan sees different images along the top of the email highlighting his teams. In addition, the personalized email contains tune-in information for national and local broadcasting. Referring always to the implementation in MLS, based on email response data, the personalized email saw a 39 percent increase in unique click rate versus a non-personalized version of it. A company should also have a correct strategy to contact people. The type of email that a fan receives depends on two factors:

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[26] Shin, C. (2019) *Marketing Automation drives Sports Fan Engagement* http://cesarfraile.es/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/SAS-para-MLS-sports-fans-engagement-106832_2gKV.pdf

- How a fan's information was acquired (for example, whether it was via a sweepstakes, Web registration or another method).

- How a fan responds to an email.

Three important tools for the achievement of this phase are presented and explained in detail below: Marketing Automation, which is particularly focused on the aspect of Personalization.

Dynamic Content Marketing mainly devoted to newsletter and mail management. Digital Asset Management, which harmonize and handle the content in a clever way. Later, I show the digital technologies made available to fans by sports organization such as team mobile app, platform, stadium wi-fi etc. We will call them "Fan Technologies". These are tools through which the clubs try to engage the fan.

Marketing Automation

John D.C. Little introduced the term ''Marketing automation'' in his presentation at the 5th Invitational Choice Symposium UC Berkeley in 2001 and refers to the automated marketing decision support on the Internet (Little 2001)[27].

Why is Marketing automation necessary? Marketing automation can be defined as a technology that manages marketing processes and multifunctional campaigns,

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[27] Little, John D.C. (2001). "Marketing Automation on the Internet," Presentation at the UCBerkeley Fifth Invitational Choice Symposium, Monterey, CA.
www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/alm3/presentations/choicesymposium2001/lattin.pdf

across multiple channels, automatically[28]. With marketing automation, businesses can target customers with automated messages across email, web, social, and text. Messages are sent automatically, according to sets of instructions called workflows. Workflows may be defined by templates, custom-built from scratch, or modified mid-campaign to achieve better results. The motivation of its introduction in 2001 was just the same as today: the lack of appropriate models while facing huge amounts of data automatically collected by online companies. Obviously today, the reason is even more evident, due to the presence of an "infinite" number of data available for the companies. Little in 2001 proposed five levels of system operation:

(1) Data inputs

(2) Real time decision rules

(3) Updates of the decision rules

(4) Feedback to site management

(5) Strategy choice.

This framework suggests deploying real-time decision rules which are calibrated using historical data and updated by conducting adaptive experimentation (Little 2001; Bucklin et al. 2002). The developed systems are expected to give feedback to site management and to provide directions to adapt retailers' strategies.

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[28] (n.a.) (2019) *Overview: What is Marketing Automation?*
https://www.salesforce.com/products/marketing-cloud/what-is-marketing-automation/

Marketing automation is often associated with Customer Relationship Management Systems (CRM systems). The core function of marketing automation is an automatic ''customization'' or ''personalization'' of marketing mix activities. It was born in the business-to-business (B2B) area, but then it has been developed also for B2C area. Applying marketing automation transfers key qualities of the B2B model to the B2C area by addressing customers with personalized content and customized offers. As a result, customers are assumed to show increased involvement and pay more attention to the brand's communication due to the enhanced relevance of the provided information. Consequently, companies using marketing automation may enhance their conversion rate, cross- and up-selling, and retention rate. In the final part of the paragraph, we will show the main benefits generated by Marketing Automation in the sports industry.

Marketing automation is based on data, that need to be collected and analyzed. The data sources are multiple and Marketing automation intends to exploit all of them in order to reach also unknown users and design the communication in real time for all kind of touch points (e.g., website, smartphone app, email, etc.). Data are an important element beyond the analysis, since all automated marketing actions are a direct response to existing, incoming or changing customer/user information.

Marketing automation actions are linked to the information by simple rules: if a customer shows a certain behavior, then a predefined marketing action is initiated (Level 2). The main advantage of this tool lies in the automated execution of

these actions for thousands of events once a rule is determined. managers should exploit historical customer data, which are then used, for example, to create customer segments based on interests (observable through purchase behavior or click-paths on the website), response to direct communication (e.g., newsletter) or demographics (e.g., age). Managers draw insights from these segments (e.g., segment X is interested in category Y) and schedule rules for future marketing actions (e.g., send customized offers every month) dependent on the pursued objective (e.g., increase sales). However, even the learning process itself can be automated to some extent (Level 3). Marketing automation software is able to apply the available options randomly and successively can favor the objective maximizing alternative. This optimization process and the performance of the above-mentioned rules can be monitored and adjusted by the manager at any time, since they receive direct feedbacks from the system (Level 4).
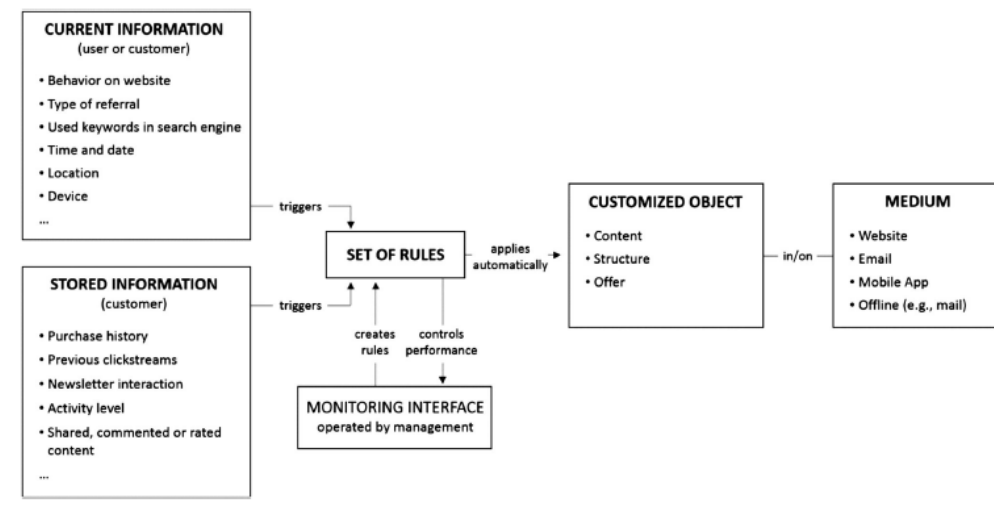
Figure xii: Marketing Automation Process

Dynamic Content Management

Dynamic content is the term used to describe site content that automatically adapts to various pre-defined conditions, such as particular user signals. The content featured on the website will adjust dynamically, or under the control of <u>CMS</u>, so different users see different content.

With the rise of low-cost computing and faster Internet speeds, developers created server-side platforms and architectures that could generate user-specific content on the fly. Some of the world's largest websites are mainly driven by dynamic content. For instance, search engines, social media networks, wikis, even some blogs, rely on dynamic content to deliver pages to users. Without dynamic content, these websites would need to pre-generate almost all of their unique content.

Advantages of Dynamic Content:

Unlike static content, dynamic content can respond to the individual needs of the current user. So, it can be more useful, interesting and entertaining for website visitors than static content displayed in the same way to each user. By utilizing browsing history, a visitor can, for example, be shown matching or additional products or be provided with the shortest route through a web page form. As a result, the user will be less likely to jump or leave a page, and he or she can also save time and avoid being overwhelmed or frustrated.

Dynamic content presented to the user can take on many different forms, depending on the Webmaster's intentions.

Newsletter/Email: Emails and newsletters are classic forms of communication that use dynamic elements. For example, the form of address used in the email, which is generated via a database or individually compiled from the content, will depend on the user's interests. A user's customer journey can also include customized email advice or instructions.

Landing Pages: In an ideal scenario, a landing page exactly matches the type of query or user profile. Therefore, a good landing page can output targeted content depending on whether the user is looking for a green bicycle or a yellow car. One can also, for example, produce an accurate graphic response based on whether the visitor comes from the medical or craft sectors.

Article: Article content, for example, can be dynamically designed for the devise being used. If a Smartphone user accesses the site, he or she sees mobile-optimized text whereas desktop visitors to the site will see content differently. And if a visitor has already read the articles or has other personal interests, more articles can be recommended.

Forms and processes: Site owners can create a form that dynamically responds according to which options users choose within an order form or process. This makes these materials responsive to each user's goals, existing experience and personal features.

Product pages: Online stores use dynamic content for cross-selling purposes when trying to sell other products to their customers. Dynamic content is commonly used to make special recommendations based on purchases or on the views of other customers.

Ads: From the outset, Google Ads offers a way to dynamically respond to user requests. Advertisers can set Google Ads to offer a display response based on a user's keyword searches. But a user who googles "*dog food"* will see similar ads as a user who googles "*cat food."*

Others: Different providers use the dynamic content principle for music, movies, books or photos. So, there are music- or video-streaming services that recommend new matching content based on the user's profile and previously auditioned tracks.

So, as a result, we can say that dynamic content is:

• *Personalizable*: since every single response can be created based on the user's request or previous visits to the site.

• *Extensible*: the scripting languages that power dynamic content can tap into a variety of external resources including the local file system, databases, or other servers.

• *Interactive*: dynamic websites are a two-way street: they provide content to users, and they allow users to submit information back to the server.

• *Seamless*: by combining server-side scripts with scripts that run in the browser, websites can load dynamic content over an already-loaded web page without the user being aware of it.

The current generation of web technology is built around dynamic content. With dynamic content, developers and content creators can easily create user-driven websites, web applications, and web platforms, exactly what people expect. Implementing a dynamic-content strategy is easy and allows marketing departments to make the most of their resources and all that customer data they're collecting, using them in every way to customize content: there is no limit to how a marketer can use customer's data to personalize content. The more personalized the content, the more effective the message.

In order to manage in a simple and precise way the dynamic content the solution is the Dynamic Content Management System (DCMS). DCMS is an evolutionary application of static Content Management System, which also offers the possibility of generating and reusing a whole document flow, thus enabling a single application program to create document-type, manual, lists and everything that is composed of pictures, tables and texts. The founder of this evolution is an Italian project called Structured Knowledge Software (SKS).

Dynamic content management radically simplifies the Web publishing process. It automatically and instantly combines templates with the written content when the user hits the publish button. Any visitor to the site will instantly see the newly published content. There isn't any need to wait for the weekly site builds. It also

allows to edit the site using a browser, so a Digital Content Management System should have the following features:

- *Multilingual content management tool*
- *Multilingual content management tool*
- *Energized content creation*
- *High-speed content distribution*
- *User-friendly interface*
- *Customizable cross-platform solution*
- *Streamlined publishing process*
- *Long-term solution*

Finally let's analyze some examples of how dynamic content can help sports teams in order to harness the power of contextual marketing, in email, to boost fan engagement and sales.

- *Personalize images*: fans can feel like they're part of the team during all the stages of a match: before, during and after. Email marketers can provide contextual content and leverage fan psychology with personalized images, like showing the fan's last name on the back of a team jersey or similar personalized merchandise.

- *Create anticipation*: nothing is like the excitement of leading up to a big game. With dynamic content, marketers can make some anticipation for the day of the game with for example a countdown clock, in order to

remind their own fans during the days before the game exactly when their hometown team takes to the field.

- *Easier ticket purchasing methods*: marketers with sports teams can use dynamic content to make finding and buying in a very easy and fast way tickets right from an email. Using Application Programming Interface integrations, marketers can pull live seating charts and availability right into an email, allowing fans to browse and buy without having to start a new web search. Using geo-targeting, marketing specialists can also detect a fan's location and if they're close to where the game is, show them ticketing options through a ticketing API.

- *Recommend products right from club's site*: with live web cropping, marketers can pull merchandise from their e-commerce site directly into an email and personalize on the basis of location and past purchases.

- *Let fans remember best moments*: fans like very much instant replays and highlights. Clips of monster dunks, incredible goals, a decisive smash, decisive touchdowns and game-winning gestures enable fans to revive epic moments over and over. Integrating video into email is a proven way to boost engagement, and email marketers can keep fans enthusiastic by including videos of key plays from previous games.

- *Gamify the game*: one of the best ways to keep fans engaged is to offer them something to do and let them express their thoughts, even if just for fun. Email marketers can provide live voting or polling, for example, allowing fans to vote on a game's MVP or participating in a pool to express an opinion.

- *Stay social*: integrating social content into email is proven to boost engagement. If for instance live Twitter feeds are sent in email, fans can keep up with the latest buzz, everything easily accessible. Moreover, live Instagram feeds in email can show user-generated content from the game, which shares the experience with fans around the world.

Innovations like streaming media, video-friendly social networks, have created a huge market for content in alternative formats in sports industry. So, sports success content brands are exploiting these ways to get fans access to the content experiences they desire most. Creating immersive content can also bring brand benefits that go beyond the views and social "likes" the club assets earn: it can incentivize fans to subscribe to the brand and provide valuable personal data in exchange for the entertainment value the club offers. Enabling audiences to personalize the content experience is another way sports organization can motivate fans to provide the brand with personal information, which club can then merge with other insights to perfect content for deeper engagement.

Digital Asset Management

Digital content represents the true heritage of every business. Digital Asset Management (DAM) is a centralized archive that companies can leverage to archive and manage their content, that is made of images, documents, audio, video and any kind of files. New generation DAMs could share the digital resources they host on any channel without losing control. What does it mean to not lose control? Essentially one thing: avoid duplication, that is, make sure that the same used content is utilized for the different channels guarded by the company. With a new generation Digital Asset Management, you can organize and categorize the entire digital content library.

In addition to providing operational efficiencies, this aspect allows to collect more consistent information about the use of these content by users (which can be of any kind: B2C end-customers or a B2B dealer). In recent years, the volume of digital content has grown exponentially and, according to some research, over 30% of the content a person has to handle on his workday is made up of multimedia assets. For this reason, a system capable of efficiently managing digital assets can lead to a better use of time in the enterprise and consequently to an overall increase of productivity. In detail, DAM allows to:

- Reduce time searching for assets: quickly and easily find the right assets, in the right format.
- Guarantee the access to collection of assets that are pre-packaged for campaigns, sales enablement etc. in a consistent and complete way.

- Benefit of others' experiences (what works, what doesn't) automatically through rating and comments.

- Allocate better the resources (both time and labor).

- Support marketing, sales, channel management.

- Support manufacturing, production, distribution and benefit on other departments.

According to an IDC research mad by Nuxeo management, DAM let the organization to improve team productivity of 34%. Furthermore, the ability to track all the changes made to the content, having also visibility on the author of these changes, enables more streamlined and efficient workflows.

If Digital Asset Management represents the foundation for building the entire strategy, it is essential that DAM can be easily integrated with other systems and applications, speeding up and automating workflows, and creating a more consistent ecosystem with respect to the data and the information that it manages.

Now, it's time to understand why DAM is useful also for sports organization and which are the benefits generated by it in this context. After that we will present some examples of how some sports teams use Digital Asset Management.

Sports fans have an insatiable demand for content. They want to know everything about their favorite teams, from score updates during the game to behind the scenes stories about the players. Teams are constantly creating new photos, videos, GIFs, graphics and more to engage their fans. But the problem is that

storing, organizing and sharing visual content isn't easy. Teams struggle to get their best assets out to their fans in real time. Once the game is over, for example, photographers must mail, or hand deliver hard drives of photos. Connecting with media, fostering marketing opportunities and growing revenue have become critical tasks for any sports team or league. So, also sports organizations need a centralized location to create, collect, manage, share, archive and analyze assets. Trends with sports teams and leagues driving the need for a DAM system for several reasons:

- Because of mobile devices, sports fans expect to be connected to their teams anytime, anywhere.
- Big data is changing the game of sports in general, including how it's played.
- Sales opportunities driven by sponsorship, social media and die-hard fans.
- The globalization of hometown teams into new markets, stimulated by mobile and social media.

A digital asset management (DAM) system can eliminate common roadblocks and get content out to their audiences faster. As already said, DAM system gives an organization exceptional control over digital assets and ensures the right assets are available to the right people in the right formats at any time. Assets of Sports organization are for example multiple brands and teams, product and service launch and content capture and distribution from live events.

Before we have seen the general benefits achieved by introducing the DAM system, now we propose a list with strong benefits delivered to sports teams and leagues by DAM, some of them supported by a real example:

- Upload share, and distribute game-day photos in real time: for example, the Colorado Rockies, American professional baseball team that compete in Major League Baseball (MLB), use FTP (File Transfer Protocol) to send photos from the team photographer's camera straight into their cloud-based media library. In seconds, the digital media team can access the photos and send them to social media. Fans get to see and share the best quality images from the game as soon as they happen.

- Easily access and share files in the best format for print, web and social: if an organization has easy access to all its creative assets, it can use them to their full potential. In this way, a club can reduce the risk of wasting, forgetting about, and even recreating valuable assets. For example, before using a DAM system, the Sacramento Kings struggled with file sharing. Photographers hand delivered cards or sent them to the team using Dropbox or a zip file. The Kings were constantly running out of server space, and they didn't have a centralized location for all their assets. Now, they can easily browse and search all their photos, share them quickly, and incorporate them into their storytelling.

- Save time finding and sharing files: for instance, the United Soccer League (USL) invested in DAM for saving time finding and sharing photos. Before, the league's collection of thousands of photos was housed in a basic file structure on a server, which made searching for assets time

consuming and tedious. Now, everything is centralized in one easy-access media library. The images are tagged with robust metadata, so anyone looking for an image can run a quick keyword search to find exactly what they need in seconds.

- 24/7 access to your content via cloud-based DAM software-as-a-service (SaaS).

- Leverage assets across multiple channels for better ROI (Return on Investments).

- Provide access to new online channels in a more efficient and effective way.

- Report and track usage and activity for future budgeting and resource allocation.

- Allow authorized partners, sponsors, press and media access to the assets they need: for example, the entire archive of Baltimore Ravens, an American professional football team that plays in NFL (National Football League)[29], now is stored on Libris, a DAM provider, so their management can dig into their collection by running one quick search. Every week, the team shares sponsored images, like a Throwback Thursday photo and a Photo of the Week. These popular social media posts are a great way to engage fans and generate revenue through sponsorship.

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[29] Shuck, B. (2018, December 28). https://www.dawgsbynature.com/2018/12/28/18158002/history-of-pro-football-in-baltimore-background-on-the-browns-week-17-opponent

- Preserve brand's history: it's important to have a way to protect visual assets and make sure they're available for years to come. On top of all of the benefits listed above, digital asset management allows teams to keep an archive of all of the most important moments in their history. Erin Herbert, Digital Media Manager of Baltimore Ravens, about this point, said[30]: "I think it's important to get photos of these important experiences to keep on file, so we can go back and use them for content later in the future, and to also keep a record of it. It's really neat to see a team huddle from ten years ago that was led by Ray Lewis and then one from today that's led by Terrell Suggs, and you still see the team camaraderie."

Digital asset management has become a must-have for sports teams and leagues because it can easily store, manage, share, track and analyze thousands of digital assets from one central, well-organized place.

Fan Technologies

After different readings here listed and described the main technologies that are or are going to be utilized in order to allow fans to enjoy their sports experience and make more loyal, not only during the events but also pre and post it. The technologies are:

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[30] **Twiford, K. (2020)** *How Super Bowl XLVII Made the Baltimore Ravens' Visual Storytelling Workflow More Efficient* *https://librisblog.photoshelter.com/video-case-study-pro-sports-digital-asset-management/*

Internet of Things

Internet of Things (from now on reported with the acronym IoT) is the internetworking of physical devices, vehicles (also referred to as "connected devices" and "smart devices"), buildings and other items embedded with electronics, software, sensors, actuators and network connectivity that enable these objects to collect and exchange data.

Sports could be a very interest domain for the development of this field and provide lots of opportunities. For what concern the Fan Experience a very high number of different technologies are bringing fans much closer to the sports event. Fans want to be more connected to the events, they want be part of them and not only spectators. With the use of technology as the IoT, it is possible to make the fan feeling more engaged during the live events.

The use of this technology is various. The use of different cameras that show the match from different perspective and allow to the fans to watch a particular action from different angles, check them thanks to replay. But also allows to get in some places that are never explored before, for example the dressing rooms, before and during the events.

Another technology that is used are the sensors. These relate to the athletes and allow to have live statistics on them, how they are playing, etc.

The use of these technologies permits to collect a great amount of data that can be treated and provided to the fans, that feel to be part of the event, really enjoying their experience.

Wi-Fi service

Nowadays, having a wireless connection is considered fundamental. Everybody wants to be always connected with their smartphone, sharing with friends what they are doing and where they are. This desire to be connected increase even more when people are at events like sports matches. For this reason, in always more stadiums and arenas, sports club provide to their fans a wireless connection, in this way are born the so called "Connected Stadiums". Basically, this typology of stadium gives the possibility to the fans to be always connected with their smartphones, sharing what they are seeing and what they are feeling. This technology is strictly related to the use of social networks and other mobile apps, each fan during a sporting events can exchange a great amount of data, sharing them with other fans, publishing them on the social networks. But the wireless connection is not used only with social purpose, but also with other objectives, for example giving information about the match or about the facilities that are present in the stadium, using specific apps. For example, a fan can check where it is the closest bathroom or see in which bar there is less waiting time. There are many examples of this technology: the Barclays Center in New York, that is one of the most advanced arenas in terms of wireless capacity and connectivity, their free Wi-Fi service is one of the best in the industry, with two 1-GB circuits; another example is the Levi's stadium in San Francisco, it has more than 1200 access points and it has a specific app that give to all the people connected information about the stadium and what is happening around it.

Virtual and Augmented Reality

Virtual reality technology facilitates the creation of real-life simulations and creates an immersive experience for any user that makes them feel as if they are interacting with their digital environment. Augmented reality, on the other hand, layers digital enhancements geared to enrich an existing real life setting by appealing to the senses. The Virtual Reality market is born in the 90's and then it is spread during the last decades, with also the introduction of the Augmented Reality. Then in the last years with the introduction of some innovations like Samsung Gear VR, Oculus Rift or Google Cardboard and the intensive use of Augmented reality mainly due to the spread of Pokémon Go, a new trend raised: the Mixed Reality, defined by analysts as the combination of Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality (VR/AR) for creating new environments and visualizations where digital and physical objects coexist and interact in real-time. Sport is one of the areas where Mixed Reality technology will be used effectively and aggressively because athletes, sports companies, fans, enthusiasts and supporters are already accustomed to the use of VR and AR technologies, because of, for example, training simulators for F1, cycling, football, etc. According to Deloitte, in sports industry, investments in virtual and augmented reality are increasing. Teams and leagues believe that these technologies may be the solution to increasing the "casual" enthusiast's experience and will make fans feel from other parts of the world as if they were seated on the side-lines. In particular, the augmented reality can give a great impulse to the fan experience at stadiums, with the use of apps that provide information to fans like real time statistics of athletes or customize the seats of every fan. An example of this kind of technology is the one provided by Sky and Fox sports, that provide displays with info related to the

player, and by using sensor, IoT and micro-cameras that allow fans to see and hear what players are hearing and seeing on the pitch. Mixed Reality will revolutionize Sport starting this year both in the field of entertainment and in improving the experience of fans and supporters through the enjoyment of interactive content and information on both home TV displays and smartphones/tablets or even with devices and screens that increase reality by offering new services to fans who are already at the stadium, at the arena, at the pool, or at any other sportsground or facility.

Social Media

Clubs and Leagues must have a solid fan base to have success, and the performance on the field are no more enough, it is necessary to build a clear and consistent brand identity. One way to do this is leveraging the social media. Social media are a perfect tool that allow to the club to keep the fans within their ecosystems and to have another revenue stream. Each professional club has at least one account on social networks (Facebook page, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), and exploiting these tools they share information, contents and every kind of information with their fans. In this way fans feel to be more involved in the clubs, they play an active role in the society, because also fans can generate contents that can share with the society and other fans, create a sense of community. Furthermore, through the social network, clubs can have another source of income, both from sponsorship and marketing content that they can share on their pages, but also gathering information of the fans, that share and publish contents. It results evident that social media needs to be part of an integrated brand strategy

that creates a seamless fan experience across a club's various media channels. Integration of social media into a club's own digital environment makes the club's online presence more visible and captivating. Fan communities will become more segmented, thus making social media platforms a valuable tool for addressing specific fan groups. Having a great social media strategy so results fundamental for clubs, because they make the fans feel part of the team and get them involved not only during the live match, but also during all the week, for example through the sharing of photos and videos of trainings, or of other non-sports event of the club. Social media is the best way of fulfilling the desire of affiliation the fans with their favorite clubs.

Platform & Applications

The direct interaction between users' world and digital world of data happens through platforms and apps. With evolution of the world, the sports societies must go mobile in order to meet the need of the fans and their desire to be always connected. These technologies can be used to process the huge amount of data provided by IoT devices, cameras and sensors, gained from databases or from a wide number of sources, but also support other technologies such as VR and AR. They can also be the point of meeting for virtual profiles of people, as it happens for community or social networks, provide management solutions and a lot of other different functionalities. The field of application of these technologies could be considered infinite. The use of these technologies contributes to make the fan feeling engaged with the clubs, enhancing their experience. Furthermore, platform and apps are used to offer some services like the possibility to purchase ticket

online or to buy merchandising of the team directly using them, providing the fans with more service and functionalities.

Smart Arena

Even if we have described these technologies as separated results evident that their application could not be seen separately, but they are all strictly related. There is an environment that represent the perfect combination of these technologies applied in sports: Smart Arenas. This typology of stadiums represents the future, the objective that every sports society should reach. They represent a big improvement towards the full exploitation of the fan experience. With these smart stadiums the fan interactivity is significantly increase with new technologies, new capabilities such as augmented reality, interactive seats, and big screens go well beyond what is possible at home. Fans can also have real-time access to player profiles, statistical data, and fantasy performances of teams and players on their smartphones, stadium and stadium kiosks.

A smart stadium integrates many sensors, cameras, and digital signs that connect to wired and wireless networks and servers. Sensors provide up-to-date information on empty parking spots, waiting lines, hot dogs available, other stadium data. Tech companies are reshaping the sports and entertainment experience for fans and sponsors by introducing new tools and mobile platforms. Wi-fi and Lte networks inside the stadium give fans access to the information they desire. Stadium Networks and apps enable the marketing staff to connect with fans on a whole new level, building important bridges with their customer base. In general, smart arenas provide:

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Valuable information for fans: points of interests; news about the event; parking information; don't miss any actions thanks to the monitors, etc.

- Convenience: allow fans to order items directly from their seats; enable cash payment via apps or mobile phones, etc.

- More Fun: sensors to detect cheering fans and show them on monitors throughout the stadium; wireless networks that allow fans to post on social media during the event; etc.

- Security: the great number of cameras and sensors increase the security of fans at the stadium.

Summary of the Technologies

Technologies	Functionality	Objective
Data Warehouse	Data Collection and Integration	Collect in a central repository the fans' data, facilitating the analysis
Data Lake	Data Collection and Integration	Repository that holds a vast amount of raw data, to conduct preliminary analysis
CRM	Data Collection and Integration	Collect all the fans' data coming from different sources in a unique central repository that allow the data integration
Data Mining	Analysis	Gather fans' data and understand how they interact each other, extrapolating insights
Classification Trees	Analysis	Predict the classification of the fans basing on the available data
Clustering	Analysis	Divide the fan base in segments according to some characteristics to address better the communication
Real Time Analytics	Analysis	Analyze rapidly and in real time the data that arrive, providing them also to fans, enhancing their experience
Machine Learning	Analysis	Predict in a more effective way fans' behaviors, recognize patterns and learn

			insights from past data
U.S.	**Marketing Automation**	Execution	Automatize the marketing processes to personalize as much as possible the offer
	Dynamic Content Management	Execution	Manage rapidly and in a more effective way the digital content of the club
	Digital Asset Management	Execution	Manage and harmonize the content in an intelligent way
	Fan Technologies	Execution	Allow to interact directly with the fans and maintain the engagement with them

SASSUOLO CASE: FAN ENGAGEMENT'S STRATEGIES

In this historical moment of structural changes of many Serie A clubs such as Internazionale FC, AC Milan, AS Roma and ACF Fiorentina that have started a company refoundation with new owners and new management, there are only two clubs that run on large Italian companies and have very clear ideas and a program with attention to the smallest details: Juventus FC and U.S. Sassuolo. The first, you know, is the "Old Lady" of Italian football and it has always been a model to follow thanks to its proximity to Fiat. The second one, on the other hand, is a relatively new reality in our football since only in the 2012/2013 season did it manage to win the Serie B championship and for the first time played in Serie A. We need to understand how a company in a province with just 40,000 inhabitants managed to establish itself in Italian football in less than five years, becoming a true example to follow for all the other Italian clubs, small or large. U.S. Sassuolo is playing its sixth season in the major league and, if before it was a surprise, now it is a certainty, a beautiful reality.

Much of the credit surely goes to his patron Giorgio Squinzi (passed away on October 2nd 2019) who, given his entrepreneurial spirit, was described as a very ambitious type who had no limits, who dreamt of being able to get in the short term to be able to compete first with the great powers of football Italian also due to its economic availability.

U.S. Sassuolo started an important football project in the summer of 2012, when coach Eusebio Di Francesco started his adventure on the black & green bench.

Just twelve months later, he led the black & green club to the victory of the cadet series, obtaining the first, historical promotion in the major series.

After a season of settling among the great players, U.S. Sassuolo began its overwhelming climb towards the top of Italian football, arriving at the end of season 2015/2016 in the sixth place of Serie A standings which earned him the qualification for Europa League foreplay. U.S. Sassuolo managed to reach the first participation in a European competition in its history by beating in double confrontation first Lucerne, then the Red Star of Belgrade.

For none of the experts, however, the achievement of this goal was the result of randomness. According to the CEO Carnevali, the success and positive feedback that the black & green club is having is far away from being casual, given the hard work and commitment with which they work continuously inside the club.

The CEO expressed is thoughts on U.S. Sassuolo regard in an interview to the TuttoSport, a national newspaper (January 5th,2017)[31]: "Programming, strategy and clear objectives are the key concepts of U.S. Sassuolo. Programming is a duty having to do with one of the greatest Italian industrialists like Squinzi: he is passionate about sports and football, but U.S. Sassuolo is one of his companies, so it must be managed as such. At the beginning of each season, you have to plan everything, never improvise ".

Let's see what the CEO means when he talks about U.S. Sassuolo's strategy and clear objectives. To define a marketing strategy is mandatory to identify: the

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[31] (n.a.). (2017, January 4). *Intervista a Giovanni Carnevali* https://www.tuttosport.com/

objectives to be achieved and the segment of the demand on which to leverage to achieve them. Starting from the goals, we must specify how the club, being born as a provincial society, symbol of a small Emilian town, had the sole purpose of providing a reference and meeting point for the Sassuolo community. Given the modest results that the club has managed to achieve since the born until 2010, no one would have expected that it would have been able to attract the attention of the entire Italian, and partly European, football scene. The original goal of U.S. Sassuolo, that is the purpose for which the club was born, was not to become one of the first economic and sporting forces of the Serie A but, with the advent of the patron Squinzi and with the support of Mapei, the goals have changed radically.

Furthermore, everyone knows how the existence of a club is subordinated to the support of the fans and the catchment area that this manages to involve. As for fans, however, it cannot be said that the numbers are on the U.S. Sassuolo side; provided that this is operating in an optimal way and is attracting the attention of the experts, Sassuolo is a small town and, as such, the team cannot be expected to have a fan base like the one of clubs representing large cities. In addition, the club has played for a long time in the minor leagues to bring fans of this to support other teams (Bologna, Parma and Juventus above all). So, one of the main goals of U.S. Sassuolo, being in a moment of total growth, is that the number of its fans also grows and, to obtain this result, there is the need to implement the club's offer with highly innovative services.

The growth of the black & green club, also, must necessarily go through a continuous process of improvement of the skills and satisfaction of professionals, characteristic aspects of Squinzi's companies.

As can be seen from the 2016 Workshop, the company pays attention to all employees and all stakeholders who in some way contribute to the growth of Sassuolo. Just on that occasion, U.S. Sassulo's CEO Carnevali stressed the importance of all those people who work for the growth of the club; starting from the employees who work behind the scenes, up to the owner Squinzi, the goal must be unique: to improve the club in all its aspects. At the end of the 2016 Workshop, Giorgio Squinzi himself also intervened, explaining how employee satisfaction is a very important element both for the internal environment (society), and to make fans understand how we work within the organization. As he himself says, a lot of attention has always been paid to his employees; "Mapei has never taken a step back in turnover, it has never done anything about layoffs, it has never reduced staff". Furthermore, within U.S. Sassuolo, we work with a projection towards the future, trying to create the conditions in advance to grow and improve. And in the near future of the company there is certainly the will to grow as a company and a team and, to do this, it must grow in terms of fans. It is true that the town of U.S. Sassuolo has just over 40,000 inhabitants[32], but it is also true that in the 2018/2019 season, the club recorded an average of 12,589 spectators in home games (the second worst average in Serie A), too little for a company that dreams big. The company is undertaking an important growth

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[32] (n.a.) (2018, December 31) https://www.tuttitalia.it/emilia-romagna/90-sassuolo/statistiche/popolazione-andamento-demografico/

process, and to achieve the desired objectives, strategies must be put in place that foresees the involvement of fans in corporate life. In fact, after years of settling in the football of adults, characterized by the commitment of the property to build a squad at the height of the largest Italian stages, this is now operating with a view to Fan Relationship Management.

If a club wants to attract as many fans as possible, it needs a total knowledge of the preferences of each of them so that they can go and get them with personalized strategies. U.S. Sassuolo knows that to do this you need to have great information tools available.

In an interview with www.digitalcoach.it[33], Chiara Bellori, Web and Social media manager of U.S. Sassuolo Calcio, has made the company's digital strategy public.

Until 2011, the club had only one virtual tool: the website, which provided users with a small space for collecting information and data. In 2012, in line with the other Italian companies and in agreement with the League, Chiara Bellori made sure that Sassuolo Calcio landed on social networks through: the creation of a Facebook page, the opening of a Youtube channel and, remotely of a few months, a Twitter profile. The goals stated by Bellori at the time of the opening of these communication channels were essentially three:

- improve brand awareness

- implement fan engagement strategies

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[33] Foti, M. (2016, April 26). *Sassuolo Calcio: la strategia digitale di un team* https://www.digital-coach.it/blog/case-histories/sassuolo-calcio-strategia-digitale/

- increase the collection of user data

For a small and moderately unknown company such as Sassuolo at the time, it was not easy to obtain visibility through traditional channels, so a zero-cost investment in channels was preferred in which it was possible to deal directly with their fans.

Following the promotion to Serie A, the club had set itself another goal in terms of communication: to create a positive sentiment even towards those who were initially not passionate about U.S. Sassuolo. In this sense, they have gone beyond the wildest expectations, managing to reach over 200,000 fans on Facebook and 140,000 followers on Twitter in a very short time, impressive numbers if you consider the Sassuolo user base. (Today's number are even bigger with 258,000 fans on Facebook, 270,000 followers on Twitter and 207,000 followers on Instagram).

In order to get closer to its fans and strengthened by recent sports results, in 2014 the website was renewed through the introduction of a membership service that gives the possibility to create marketing strategies aimed at users who register and own a smartphone.

By registering, the user is recognized as an integral part of the black and green community, and an e-card is issued with which it is possible to enjoy and discounts on purchases made with some official U.S. Sassuolo stores. Through these purchases it is possible to accumulate points necessary to reach prizes that can range from the simple game shirt, to obtaining an invitation for two people in the VIP stand with a tour of the stadium. This system allows the company to get

to know all the preferences and all the purchasing behaviors of the fan, allowing

him to formulate one-to-one strategies, the true goal of the FRM.

Another fundamental measure introduced by U.S. Sassuolo to better manage

relationships with fans and to try to have a direct and correct conversation with

their representatives is the Supporter Liaison Officer.

Figure xiii: Sassuolo's supporters celebrating the Team's promotion in Serie A

According to the UEFA provisions, from the 2012/2013 season each club should

have introduced the figure of the SLO in order to guarantee a direct and correct

relationship between the club and its fans; Sassuolo, being a serious and planned

club, was not unprepared, appointing Remo Morini as SLO since 2012 (He's the

actual SLO of the club). Morini is a fundamental figure for Sassuolo Calcio since

he has held numerous corporate positions (manager, team manager, vice

president) and knows the environment better than anyone else. The strengths of

the club, according to its SLO in an interview of 2017[34], are the continuous search for perfection, the determination, and the commitment that each member of the organization places in the accomplishment of its tasks. When commenting on the successes, all you do is mention the squad, the coach, the patterns, leaving out the fact that if there is no solid group, a peaceful locker room and a serious company, it is difficult to achieve any type of goal . Being a veteran of the black and green environment and being a native of Sassuolo, he has an excellent relationship with players, staff and squares, which is why the company has seen in him the perfect profile to ensure a lasting club-fans relationship. Given the modest size of the City of Sassuolo, Morini knows most of the Sassuolo's supporters almost personally, so much so that when problems arise, they do not hesitate to contact him directly and vice versa. What makes him most proud, continues in the interview, is to see fans who despite the economic crisis and unemployment, do everything to follow U.S. Sassuolo both at home and away, demonstrating the fact that the link between society and territory is very strong.

Among the tasks of the SLO, there is that of organizing periodic meetings with supporters, in order to perceive their intentions and know their point of view and then bring it back to the club. Morini, deemed it necessary to organize a meeting with the historic Sassuolo supporters at the beginning of the first, historic season in Serie A, to underline the humility, sportiness and loyalty that has always

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[34] Berardi, G. (2017, February 17). Le strategie di fan engagement dell'U.S. Sassuolo
https://www.sportbusinessmanagement.it/2017/02/le-strategie-di-fan-engagemet.html

distinguished the black and green supporters, expressing themselves in this regard: "that the ethical and moral correctness that has always distinguished U.S. Sassuolo and its fans is guaranteed. A wrong word on the banner is enough to make fines of thousands of euros for the company. Let's avoid this from happening. I trust you all, we run together with humility towards this extraordinary adventure in Serie A which until some time ago seemed unthinkable ". As you can read on the official website of the team, the dedication and attention with which Morini is carrying out his work was also recognized by the National Observatory on Sports Events, which in May 2017 awarded U.S. Sassuolo the first "Certificate of Virtuoso supporters " for Serie A, as a prize "for the virtuous path undertaken with the redevelopment of the Mapei Stadium and with the renewed and positive atmosphere that reigns in it which also allows guest fans from all over Italy to enjoy a peaceful and positive football experience".

A decisive manager, therefore, who is contributing significantly to the achievement of Sassuolo's ultimate goal, namely fan engagement. Another aspect that has not escaped the careful management of Sassuolo Calcio is certainly to make the matches an event within the reach of all fans, including families and children. The black and green society, in common agreement with the Police Headquarters, with the Municipality of Reggio Emilia and with the National Observatory on Sport Events, has launched a project entitled "stadium without borders" which has as main objective to reduce the number to a minimum police agents employed during sports events, assigning them to other services.

The implementation of this project was possible thanks to the Emilian company Spark, whose managing director, Andrea Bigliardi, commented on the new system on the presentation of the project: *"revised and enhanced compared to that of 2008. The images will now be available in digital format from 31 fixed full HD cameras plus 8 full HD pan / tilt cameras, 6 Nitida UHD cameras, 3 monitoring and storage control devices, 2 external radio links. In the control room, in the stadium, you will have 4 monitors to follow each what thanks to a 4 gigabit ethernet. The camera record in the curves has been enhanced by 60 pixels per meter and 250 pixels per meter, useful for having a clear image of each person within the structure "61. In a nutshell, the number of agents decreases but the control given increases that it is possible to identify any vandalism in real time"*.

The security system was tested for the first time on May 2, 2015, on the occasion of the U.S. Sassuolo-Palermo match, in which no disorder was recorded despite the fact that it was used compared to the usual, 60% less than the agents, as reported by the National Observatory. The experiment was then repeated several times in the 2015/2016 season, leading to more than satisfactory results to represent today the definitive security system of the Juventus Stadium.

U.S. Sassuolo, as usual, went against the trend compared to what the Italian football scene is, frightened more and more by the unpleasant facts that frequently occur inside the stadiums. The company, thanks to the correct dialogue it has with its fans, has tried to instill in them a feeling of responsibility and fairness. Once again, the positive example comes from the black and green club, aware that it

has introduced a "2.0 security model" into Italian football, "which will allow you to write a new sustainable security page that will help create a" participatory security system "and increasingly responsible" A further step forward in Emilian society, increasing attention to families, children and all those fans who intend to attend a game without incurring unpleasant situations.

CONCLUSION

The work started with an analysis of the innovations that characterized the sports industry in the last decade, in particular for what concerns Fan Experience, the economy that exists around the fans and its relationship with Digital Innovation.

The aim of this work was to deep search the reasons behind the changes that built up the modern structure of the clubs marketing departments and how the innovations and the new technologies affected those changes. I have shown which steps clubs as Sassuolo Calcio and Juventus FC faced during this crucial decade of digital evolution in order to reach a top management level. I have analyzed how objectives, functions of use, related enabling technologies, and structural elements must cooperate. Starting from those assumptions, I have interviewed a Liaison Manager at Uefa, a US College Soccer Head Coach, the St John's University Athletic Director and three Student-Athletes, that made the "next step" to the Professional Level, to better understand through their point of view how the world of sports is facing the shifts discussed.

The foundation of these reflections is that at their origin, sports were about the competition. As of today, while the competitive spirit is still there, the enthusiasm and financial gain the fans brought to the table of the sporting world turned sports into a business. As the games evolved, it no longer required to take part in the event attendance (even if it still remains the core of Fan Engagement). Today, we are entering in the new era of Sports, thanks to technologies, Social Media, Web Platforms and the new generation of Fans. The competition is for the attention of the consumer. As such, the management of the fan experience and their

engagement is critical to the success of the business, which in many cases also impacts success on the field of play. After all, if a club is unable to attract the talent necessary to compete, the engagement levels go lower in a viscous cycle.

As stated by Ken Peterson, President at CX QuestionPro, *"The "competitors" in the fan engagement are many: competing leagues, competing entertainment, other leisure activities and hundreds of channels of television. While there is still a core of fanatics that will be loyal, there is a need to enhance the experience and engagement of fans at both the venue during sporting events and outside of the venue away from match/game day. Critical areas include in-game entertainment, relevant sponsorships, game excitement (no one likes losing all the time) and an experience that is easy on the fans (easy to get in, safety/security). I feel strongly that the engagement should also be measured and understood - in both winning and losing seasons. While it is easy to be successful in the business of sport when the team is winning, you'll also need to understand which aspects the fans require in the event of a downturn in performance. A team will recognize that engagement is lower when the team is losing, but measurement will identify revenue opportunities (in both fan revenue and sponsorship revenue)"*.

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