Designing Experiences to Increase Stadium Capacity Utilisation in Football

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show in what way football clubs in smaller leagues with limited capacity utilisation can increase their per-game revenue by increasing the attendance frequency. A sequential mixed method research design was employed, involving both qualitative and quantitative methods, studying two clubs: Malmö FF in Sweden and FC København in Denmark. In order for the subject clubs to increase the attendance frequency of the spectators, these must be moved towards a higher level of the Psychological Continuum Model. The quantitative phase was comprised of a survey distributed at three separate occasions for each of the subject clubs. Four segments were identified to be of particular interest, two from each of the subject clubs. The two segments defined for Malmö FF were termed Entertainment Seeking Families and the Price Conscious Group of Friends. The two segments defined for FCK were termed Price Sensitive Experience Hunters and Family Focused Fans. It is shown how the two clubs can provide tailored experiences specifically designed towards the identified attenant segments. In doing so, an increased range of psychological associations will be created in the minds of the attendants, thus strengthening the psychological connection, increasing the likelihood of upwards movement in the psychological continuum and rate of attendance.

Key words: Football, Stadium Capacity Utilisation, Psychological Continuum Model, Segmentation, Mixed Methods, Experience Economy
Introduction

The financial value creation for a football club has over the years shifted from being solely focusing on gate takings to being a complex system of value creation. Grundy (1998) suggest four main value drivers for the financial performance of club: Merchandising, Media, Match takings, and the Effectiveness of play. Given the globalisation of the game especially by means of television (Sandvoss, 2003) and the following commercialisation, revenue from gate takings has lost its supreme importance and cannot alone any longer cover the costs for a football club (Cross & Henderson, 2003). This does, however, not imply that gate takings can be neglected, since the component of gate takings also greatly impacts the other components through various ripple effects. An unsuccessful attempt to enhance gate revenue by increasing ticket pricing risks reducing attendance rates, which in turn may depreciate the experience for other attendants resulting in further dropping attendance rates. This in turn also affects the overall atmosphere which negatively affects the entertainment value for TV viewers, undermining the value of broadcast media rights which then by extension also negatively affects sponsorships and merchandising. (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2010)

When discussing gate takings as a source of revenue, and especially as a potential source of increase in revenue, capacity utilisation is a determining factor. For clubs with very high capacity utilisation, e.g. Arsenal, Bayern Munich, or Manchester United having capacity utilisation over 95 percent (Jones, 2014), the potential revenue increase by means of more attendants is limited. But, for a club having a lower capacity utilisation there is a higher potential. The focal interest of this paper will therefore not be on big clubs in the big leagues where the level of commercialisation and capacity utilisation is quite high, but rather on clubs where there is room for improvement of the commercial potential.

In the following, we will put our focus on non-regular attendants to football matches. The reason for this is that the regular attendants are by definition already contributing significantly to capacity utilisation, so the potential for improvement is limited. The aim of this paper is therefore to show how football clubs with limited capacity utilisation can increase their per-match revenue by increasing the attendance frequency among non-regular attendants.
Literature review

The following literature review is divided into three parts. In the first part, fan motives and behaviour is discussed, leading to an understanding of different motives of fans. The second part discusses the nature of sport marketing and the third part takes its point of departure in the discourse on the experience economy and discusses the tailoring of experiences from a sport marketer’s viewpoint in order to attract the non-regular attendants of football.

Fan motives and behaviour

For sports marketers, discerning fans’ motives and predicting their behaviour is paramount in order to maintain a sustainable business model. However, the nature of sports marketing differs significantly from marketing in other sectors, and as such conventional means of identifying distinguishable typologies may not apply. One such mean for conceptualising sports fans has been to utilise team performance as a principal determinant of fan behaviour (Wann & Dolan, 1994), yet Fischer and Wakefield (1998) finds that the motivation and subsequent behaviour of e.g. fans and spectators need not be correlated with team performance. This is also supported in the findings of Koenigstorfer, et al. (2010, p. 664) who in their study of how the threat of relegation affected the loyalty of fans found that ‘highly committed fans and their clubs are strongly bound to each other - and this connection becomes even stronger after relegation’. More, we can extend Fischer and Wakefield’s (1998) findings to also be valid for sports consumptive objects (Hunt, et al., 1999) rather than merely for the specific groups that were the focus of their study.

The sports consumptive object (SCO) can be defined as a sport in general, a specific league, a team, a player etc. Fans experience varying levels of identification, meaning that the umbrella term of ‘fan’ may not be suitable without further clarification as it often implies high levels of identification with said SCO. For that reason, we adopt Hunt, et al.’s (1999) definition of the fan as an ‘enthusiastic devotee of some particular sports consumptive object’ (p. 440) with the term devotee meaning that ‘the fan has some level of attachment with an object related to sports’. As such, for an individual to be classified as a fan, the fan must be attached to the SCO and not merely be aware of its existence or being attracted to it.
The terms *identification* and *attachment* are just two of many terms encountered when scouring literature on the subject matter and through the years, many of these terms have been used interchangeably or with slightly differing nuances on the underlying meaning of said term, depending on the researcher(s). Terms used include; attraction (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989), identity (Wann & Branscombe, 1990), loyalty (Murrell & Dietz, 1992), involvement (Kestetter & Kovich, 1997), association (Gladden, et al., 1998), attachment (Funk, et al., 2000) and commitment (Mahony, et al., 2000).

Going forward, we will adopt the linguistic meanings as put forward in the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) as initially introduced by Funk and James (2001). The fan typologies as constituted by Hunt, et al. (1999) will be introduced and compared to the PCM as a central component with which these fan typologies were constructed, namely the degree to which fans identify with a given SCO.

The PCM is a stage based conceptual framework for understanding an individual's sociological and psychological connection to an SCO (Funk & James, 2001; Funk & James, 2006; Beaton & Funk, 2008; Funk, 2008). It examines the process that influence attitude formations and change through the four stages of awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance ranging from awareness of an SCO to relating to the SCO as part of your lifestyle.

The psychological connection between a fan and a given SCO may consist of one or more psychological associations. This could e.g. be a psychological connection to a team based upon psychological associations such as star player, nostalgia, community identity etc. and is a prerequisite for fans located in the two upper levels of the PCM. More, an individual may have psychological connections to any given number of SCOs, many of which are founded on a single psychological association. (Funk & James, 2006)

However, the PCM is somewhat unclear with regards to how additional psychological associations occur in the first place. This is especially the case for those psychological associations that cause a fan to be attracted to different, albeit closely related, SCOs. The PCM propose that psychological features of social situations pertaining to acceptance and/or achievement in combination with environmental- and hedonic factors play a dominant role in this (Funk & James, 2006). Nevertheless, it fails to account for psychological associations occurring *because* of previously established psychological associations for which a fan is attracted to a
given SCO. Several researchers have also pointed to the impact one SCO may have on another, e.g. the impact a star player may have on a team with respect to match attendance, number of viewers, fans etc. (Hunt, et al., 1999; Quick, 2000; Kim & Galen, 2010).

Properly segmenting one’s market is a fundamental part of marketing strategy, assisting organisations with the fact that not all consumers share identical needs and behaviour, which subsequently allows them to decide upon which segment(s) to target and how to position their product(s) (Dibb, et al., 2006). This is also true for sports marketers as ‘sport fans are a heterogeneous group, with the die-hard being but one cohort of many’ (Quick, 2000, p. 149), a fact clearly reflected in the various stages of the PCM. Hunt, et al. (1999) has suggested a typology of fans into five categories: temporary, local, devoted, fanatical, and dysfunctional fans.

Temporary fans have a time-limited affection to an SCO and it will eventually come to an end. As opposed to the temporary fan, the local fan is constrained by a geographical area rather than time. Unlike the two former groups, the devoted fan is neither limited by factors of time nor of geographical areas. Like the devoted fan, the fanatical fan is neither bound by time nor distance and the attachment to the SCO plays an important role for his or her definition of self. Dysfunctional fans see being a fan as the central component of his or her identity construction. The difference between the devoted and fanatical fans is not the fan-like behaviour, but to the degree the behaviour is deviant, disruptive and anti-social.

A first conclusion on fan classification and PCM connection to the SCO can now be made based on the theoretical discussion so far. The occasional attendant category is comprised of individuals who are attracted to a player on the team, the team itself or some benefits or attributes related to the sports product, such as entertainment or the opportunity to escape etc. Further, they are typically either a temporary- or a local fan as they are very rarely attached to the SCO. This does not mean that attached fans are excluded from this attendant category as e.g. a local fan may be attached to the SCO while only being physically able to attend home-matches rarely as she might live some distance away etc. The frequent attendant category is comprised of fans present in the upper stages of attraction and lower stages of attachment of the PCM. As such, besides from temporary and local fans, this category is also populated by several devoted fans. Because this category to a higher degree is populated by individuals with a stronger psychological connection to the SCO than
that of the occasional attendant, individuals in this category are as stated above more likely to allocate funds towards attending football matches than their occasional counterparts.

The nature of sport marketing

Traditional marketing approaches should be reconsidered in the context of sports. According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), marketing of sports should instead be viewed as the marketing of an experience. Another feature that ties the sports product to that of experiences is the simultaneous creation and consumption of it. The inconsistency and unpredictability inherent in sports provides both possibilities and challenges for the marketer (Tapp & Clowes, 2000).

The demand for the product tends to fluctuate greatly. Mullin, et al. (2000) finds that ‘[s]eason openers bring high hopes and high demand; but midseason slumps, injuries, or weak competition may kill ticket sales’. This is not withstanding the uncertainty of weather and the relevance of the match, which have also been found to affect attendance (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989).

While ticket prices may increase revenue this is also directly correlated to demand (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989), but this correlation is only significant for indoor sports using smaller facilities, and should therefore not have the same effect on attendance to football matches. However, according to Mehus (2010), the only way in which price does not affect attendance is by defining a new segment to serve. He posits that ‘[p]aying more for better services implied excluding the poor and attracting more affluent spectators’ (Mehus, 2010).

Attractiveness of the Game is comprised of three factors, Promotions and special events, Star players, and Team placement in the standings, all of which positively affects attendance. The latter two factors can be directly related to the understanding of fans suggested by Cialdini, et al. (1976), through the Basking In Reflected Glory (BIRG) theory. According to Hunt, et al. (1999, p. 443) ‘BIRGing involves the tendency for an individual to attempt to internalise the success of others’. As such, star players and the position of the team in the league standings will have a positive effect on attendance for certain consumer segments (Hunt, et al., 1999; Quick, 2000). However, sports marketers must not rely too heavily on the concept of BIRGing, as a key symptom of the indicated marketing
Myopia is ‘[t]he belief that winning absolves all other sins’ (Mullin, et al., 2000, p. 9).

Pine and Gilmore (1998) bid the world Welcome to the experience economy with their pioneering article in Harvard Business Review. While their argument is based on the commoditisation of services leading to a new form of economic offering, i.e. experiences, sport marketers are not required to undergo the same paradigm shift as those in other industries. Pine and Gilmore argue that the characteristics of experiences can be thought of along two dimensions; Participation and Connection. While this is one possible way of perceiving experiences provided by companies, several other ways of doing so have been presented since. These range from definitions focused on the consumption process; ‘[c]xperience is the ‘take-away’ impression or perception created during the process of learning about acquiring, using, maintaining, and (sometimes) disposing of a product or service’ (Chang & Horng, 2010, p. 2402), to those focused on the cognitive process of the experience. One such is that of Hekkert and Schifferstein (2008), which includes ‘the awareness of the psychological effects elicited by the interaction with a product, including the degree to which all our senses are stimulated, the meanings and values we attach to the product, and the feelings and emotions that are elicited’ (Hekkert & Schifferstein, 2008 in Alcántara, et al., 2013, p. 1078). Rather than focusing on either, we find a more useful definition by Poulsson and Kale (2004), who see experience as ‘an engaging act of co-creation between a provider and a consumer wherein the consumer perceives value in the encounter and in the subsequent memory of the encounter’ (p. 270). This definition relates to both the psychological process in value perception and subsequent memory, as well as the consumption process revolving around the notion of co-creation, a key aspect of the attendance of sports events.

Additionally, experiences are inherently personal as it is the subjective reaction to an event that provides the subject with an experience, memorable or otherwise (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Poulsson & Kale, 2004; Chang & Horng, 2010; Summers, 2012). Boswijk, et al. (2006) found that the experiences had in a context with other people, that will never be forgotten, are both personal and social in nature. Lastly, Boswijk, et al. (2006) opens for the possibility that experiences can alter the perspective on self and the world in general. This is done through their definition of experience, which revolves around experiences as ‘Erfahrung’. Based on sociological theories of Laing (1967) and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992),
they find that humans are the sum total of their erfahrung/experiences, thus enabling an experience to greatly affect an individual. This is what Pine and Gilmore label Transformational Experiences, representing the next economic offering succeeding the commoditisation of experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Summers, 2012). While experiences are not yet commoditised, the idea of transformational experiences can be used in sports marketing as marketers attempt to alter the purchasing behaviour of customers.

**Designing the Experience**

Pine and Gilmore (1998) and Chang and Horng (2010), suggest that the design and direction of an experience should be defined by the offering party. In doing so, Pine and Gilmore define five principles of experience design;

1. Theme the experience
2. Harmonise impressions with positive cues
3. Eliminate negative cues
4. Mix in memorabilia
5. Engage all five senses

While the theming of an experience is useful in creating an experience in traditional retail environments, the need for considering this is less important when the setting is already provided by the nature of the event, as is the case with a sporting event. Providing memorabilia for consumers of sporting events is already done to a great extent and sales of e.g. football jerseys is a great source of income for clubs. In addition to the original five principles in designing experiences, Boswijk, et al. (2006) suggest a sixth complementing principle. This sixth principle, *Naturalness: One whole* is meant to address the need for the entire concept to leave an authentic impression and that all the elements should feel right together, thus drawing heavily on principles two and three.

Opposite to this way of designing an experience, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) suggest a process for the experience in which both parties, the offering and the consumer, are equally involved in co-creating the experience. Further, Alcántara, et al. (2013) advocates for ‘a user centered approach in which experiences are co-created between companies and customers in a way that end users lead value creation’ (p. 1075). Along
these lines, Boswijk, et al. (2006) suggests that a meaningful experience proposition involves aspects of co-creation.

Rather than considering the specific stages the marketer must go through in staging an experience, some scholars have focused on defining various feelings that define the quality and impact of different experiences (O’Sullivan & Spangler, 1998; Schmitt, 1999; Poulsson & Kale, 2004; Roederer, 2012). Schmitt (1999) defines five different Strategic Experiential Modules (SEMs) that tie closely together with the work of Pine and Gilmore (1998), as well as that of Poulsson and Kale (2004). While these different SEMs are elaborated upon as strategies for marketing campaigns, they are based on eliciting specific impressions with consumers in order to produce a desired experience. The first of the five SEMs is the Sensory module (SENSE), which affects the senses to create a sensory experience. The second SEM is the Affective experience (FEEL) which appeals to the inner feelings of the consumer ‘with the objective of creating affective experiences that range from mildly positive moods […] to strong emotions of joy and pride’ (Schmitt, 1999, p. 61). The third SEM is the Creative Cognitive experience (THINK) which stimulates the individual’s intellect by ‘creating cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage customers creatively’ (Schmitt, 1999, p. 272). The two final SEMs relate to Physical experiences (ACT) and Social-Identity experiences (RELATE). The former occur when the consumers are engaged in physical activities, and the latter from an experience that encourage the consumer to relate to a reference group or culture.

Based on the frameworks of Pine and Gilmore (1998), and Boswijk, et al. (2006), as well as theory on factors affecting fan attendance, we define the following four phases and considerations that a sports marketer should go through in designing a memorable experience for different types of spectators. This experience should both adhere to and trigger the abovementioned modules and feelings while allowing the consumer to be part of the co-creation process of her experience:

**Theme the sub-experiences:** While it is not relevant for sports marketers to theme the experience as a whole, the different types of consumers and levels of identification with the SCO dictate that consumers who attend the event will have different experience needs. Families attending sporting events a few times annually will have different needs and expectations than a fan that never misses a match. However, as Pine and Gilmore (1998) informs, it is highly useful to have a defined theme on which to
build the remaining aspects of the experience so as to ensure that all impressions are guided towards providing the desired experience.

*Ensure Unidirectional Cues:* In order to make sure that the desired experience permeates the entire setting, it is crucial that the offering party ensure that the various consumer touch points all support the experience from the moment they approach the venue to the moment they leave it. This suggested phase goes a step beyond the proposed harmonisation of positive and elimination of negative cues suggested by Pine and Gilmore (1998), in that it is necessary to consider the fundamentals of these cues and make certain that they are unidirectional by ensuring that the organisational culture permeates the touch points.

*Supplementary Activities:* In order to successfully provide various segments with different sub-experiences, it is necessary to provide supplementary activities or cues guided towards each of the segments, to ensure that they are left with a feeling of having had a personal experience that has been both positive and engaging.

*Ensure Access to Memorabilia:* To prolong the experience and the memory of it, it is important for the offering party to provide the consumers with the opportunity to purchase memorabilia which can extend the memory of the experience while positively affecting the intention to attend future sporting events from the same provider.

Schmitt (1999) suggests a range of Experience Providers (‘ExPros’) for implementing different marketing tools for the experience. These experience providers ‘include communications, visual and verbal identity and signage, product presence, co-branding, spatial environments, electronic media, and people’. In line with the second suggested phase – Ensure unidirectional cues – these ExPros must be controlled coherently, consistently, and through focus on details, to ensure that the impressions given elicit the desired experience.

In using these ExPros along with the SEMs, Schmitt creates the Experiential Grid where four different concerns are raised. First, should the experience, provided through the different ExPros (in this case the various touch points), be experientially enhanced or diffused? Second, should the experience be enriched by more ExPros or should it be simplified by keeping the amount of touch points to a minimum? Third, should more SEMs be introduced to elicit the desired experience or should the focus be put on delivering a single SEM? Lastly, should the various SEMs and ExPros be connected or separated?
As Pine (Summers, 2012) introduces the importance of the use of narratives in providing positive experiences to the consumers, it is vital to understand this concept and the role it plays in both the provided experience, in extending it as well as in marketing it. Additionally, Pine and Gilmore (1998) finds that the theme that permeates the experiences provides a storyline, which guides the consumer through the experience. In this sense, the story that is told throughout the process of the experience is what should be supported by the cues indicated above. This is supported by Boswijk, et al. (2006), as they equate the theme with a story and find that the experience needs a storyline in order to be adequately rounded off and provide a full experience that extends beyond the consumption.

Marshall and Adamic (2010) finds that the narrative for use in affecting culture is ‘a story told by a leader which becomes not only part of a company’s folklore but eventually the unconscious fabric of employees’ behavior patterns’ (p. 18). More, Allan, et al. (2001) finds that narratives work because they, much like experiences, are memorable, economical, entertaining, and centred on people. Additionally, they suggest that narratives can be used to help people make sense of a puzzling situation and that storytelling works because stories are user-friendly and help people learn about a given situation. As such, narratives do not just share key characteristics with experiences; they can also help the experience provider to ensure that the provided experience makes sense for the consumer and that the desired effects on their behaviour patterns are achieved.

To successfully use narratives as a means of eliciting the desired impressions in the minds of the consumers, Marshall and Adamic (2010) defines four different characteristics that determine the likelihood of the narratives being internalised in the consumer: Purpose, Allusion, People, and Appeal. They find that the most successful stories are ones that are ‘told with a particular purpose in mind, which allude to a company’s history and role in the market, told by the right person to the proper audience, and that contain an inspiring emotional appeal’ (Marshall & Adamic, 2010, p. 18). As such, the purpose acts as the strategy for the narrative that directs the behaviour of the subject of the narrative by connecting on an emotional pane between the storyteller and the audience. A key aspect of narratives in providing experiences is the way in which they can extend the experience and affect potential customers outside of the event. This can be achieved by the experiencers taking in the narrative and projecting it further in her social setting outside of the sporting
event and the immediate audience of the experience through word of mouth (Marshall & Adamic, 2010). Second, they can assist the experience provider in ensuring the memorability of the experience as narratives are memorable in nature, consequently further aiding in extending the experience (Allan, et al., 2001). As such, combining the theme of the experience with a specific narrative that permeates the different touchpoints between the experience provider and the experiencer assists in providing a positive experience. An experience that is both unified across touchpoints and extended through memorability as well as word of mouth.

In both the Sports Marketing and the Experience Economy literature, the notion of co-creation is widely used to define what brings value to the consumers of sporting events as well as the process in which the experience itself becomes more than a staged event by the experience provider. In fact, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) find that ‘customers are not prepared to accept experiences fabricated by companies’ (p. 83). As a result of this, companies wishing to harness the power of co-creation have four tasks that must be controlled and performed in order to be successful. Accordingly, “[t]hey have to engage their customers in an active, explicit, and ongoing dialogue; they have to mobilise communities of customers; they have to manage customer diversity; and they have to co-create personalised experiences with customers’ (ibid, p. 81). While it is relevant to base the experience on communication with consumers in order to provide a positive experience, it is particularly the latter two that are of great interest in designing the experiences of a sports event.

As previously shown, the attending consumers of sporting events are diverse in level of understanding of, interest in, and identification with the SCO, resulting in different experiences coming to fruition. Additionally, these diverse consumers increasingly ‘want to shape those experiences themselves, both individually and with experts or other customers’ (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, p. 83). Through this need for personalisation of the experience, the customer demands not just to choose features from a menu, but rather co-define these features with the provider and through dialogue with other customers and experts. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000; 2004) find that in order to manage these different needs for experiences it is necessary for a company to provide several different environments and settings through which the customers can enjoy their consumption experience. As such, managing different experiences is not the same as managing different products for the customers.
to choose from. Rather, ‘it is about managing the interface between a company and its customers; the range of experience transcends the company’s products’ (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, p. 85). In the case of sporting events these different settings are represented by the different themes for the different types of customers.

### Research procedures

In order to illustrate the challenge for clubs with limited capacity utilisation, two case clubs were selected: Malmö FF (MFF) in Sweden and FC København (FCK) in Denmark. Both these clubs have a strong standing in the national leagues and attracts national interest. However, none of these clubs can compare themselves to the big clubs in the big leagues in terms of capacity utilisation. The three years leading up to the time of this study, the two clubs had shown varying utilisation rates between 50 to 60 percent, and therefore the two clubs serve as good cases for this study.

We employ a sequential mixed methods research design (Creswell, et al., 2003), while taking a pragmatic stance to relevant theory as well as gathered data. Additionally, we utilise a dominant-less dominant design (Corral & Towler, 2003; Masadeh, 2012) in which we base our research largely on qualitative data collection while supporting our findings with quantitative data collection. The choice of this research design is based on the pragmatist worldview, which sanctions the practical use of empirical data and theory, as the understanding of knowledge from a pragmatist view point is ‘both constructed and based on the reality of the world we experience and live in (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 18). Further, it suggests an ‘importance for focusing attention on the research problem […] and then using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem’ (Creswell, 2009, p. 10). We do not perceive the world as an absolute entity, rather as a set of actions, situations and consequences that demands various different methods of study in order to understand. As such, pragmatism serves ‘[a]s a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies’ (ibid, p. 10) such as the present paper.

With the benefits of mixed methods in mind, the theoretical literature review is followed by a set of single cross-sectional quantitative surveys using questionnaires, conducted with the various attendants at the events of each of the two case clubs. The aim of these surveys was to ob-
tain a quantitative portrayal of the different attitude formations towards club staged sporting events in order to segment these separately for each subject club. This was done by collecting the quantitative data at a range of three separate events at the home venue of each of the clubs.

In performing the quantitative survey, the instrument of measurement was a questionnaire¹, designed with the purpose of identifying different value sets based on psycho-, and demographic variables in mind. These variables were derived from the two first parts of the literature review.

The set of psychographic variables included questions regarding:

- Season Ticket Holder
- Amount of Matches
- Match Companions
- Reason for Missing Match
- Expense on Merchandise
- Expense on Refreshments
- Warm up for Match
- Reason for Earlier Attendance
- Most Important Aspect of Match Experience

Table 1. *Likert Scale aspects.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Match</th>
<th>The Season</th>
<th>Prices</th>
<th>Comfort/Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance – Home Team</td>
<td>League Position – Home Team</td>
<td>Ticket Price</td>
<td>Parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Players – Home Team</td>
<td>League Position – Away Team</td>
<td>Ticket Discount</td>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance – Away Team</td>
<td>Influence on Season Result</td>
<td>Refreshment Prices</td>
<td>Visibility from Seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Players – Away Team</td>
<td>Faith in Club</td>
<td></td>
<td>Additional Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Equality</td>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Winning Chances</td>
<td></td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stadium Accessibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final section of the questionnaire consisted of a range of 22 highly structured questions in which the respondents were asked to rate the extent to which various elements affected their desire to attend a match.

¹ The full questionnaire can be provided by the corresponding author upon request.
and their likelihood to do so again, on a Likert scale. The 22 aspects were defined based on the literature review. This led to four different paradigms to which these aspects could belong, namely: (1) The Present Match, (2) The Season, (3) Prices, and (4) Comfort/Experience. These four paradigms then led to the 22 aspects to consider for the respondents, shown in Table 1.

The sampling frame decided upon was the respective stadium area for each of the subject football clubs during match day, starting on average 150 minutes prior to kick-off and ending approximately at the time of kick-off. The researchers would then move around the stadium area in order to survey the large variety of elements present at a match day. This was done by screening the elements for various demographic characteristics such as gender, age etc., behavioural characteristics such as demeanour, what types of social groups the element was present in at the time and other characteristics such as which queues the element was lined up in, e.g. queuing to lower- or higher priced sections, family sections etc. The time frame was set to three separate home matches for each subject football club, each of which had different implications for the clubs. These implications ranged from potential impact on league standings, status in a rivalry, to a national Cup match and a qualification match for an international league. This wide spectrum of types of matches ensured that each match would be attended by a large variety of individuals, which in turn allows for greater accuracy. Data was collected from in total 184 respondents attending FCK matches and 165 respondents attending MFF matches, and a summary of the different matches attended can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Sampling for the quantitative study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Match attended</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Match type</th>
<th>Spectators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FCK – BIF</td>
<td>4 May 2014</td>
<td>League derby rival match</td>
<td>32.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCK – AAB</td>
<td>5 May 2014</td>
<td>Cup final</td>
<td>27.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCB – OB</td>
<td>18 May 2014</td>
<td>Final fixture of the league season</td>
<td>17.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFF – AIK</td>
<td>26 May 2014</td>
<td>League fixture</td>
<td>17.382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFF – FK Ventspils</td>
<td>16 July 2014</td>
<td>UEFA CL Qualification round 1</td>
<td>8.831</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subsequently, qualitative face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted in order to deduct subjective attitudes and preferences amongst
the target segments, allowing a better understanding of how these affect their behavioural patterns when deciding upon an entertainment offering. Through interviewing representatives of the desired segments, it becomes possible to ask these to reflect upon their behavioural patterns as well as their priorities and feelings (Bryman & Bell, 2007) towards the sports consumptive object, thus providing a clearer image of how this affects their likelihood of attending a sporting event. In understanding these traits, it is our belief that it becomes possible to provide the different segments with the desired product or experience, thus increasing the rate of attendance amongst these. The interviews served as an input, together with the third part of the literature review, to the suggested design templates for these particular segments.

Empirical findings

This section will account for the two steps of empirical analysis in the study. The first step is the analysis of survey data collected among attendees at six different matches, three for each club, resulting in empirically based clusters of attendees. The second step involves the qualitative interviews with representatives from these clusters, in order to add nuances and interpretation of the quantitative analysis.

Table 3. Classification results from FCK Dataset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster Number of Case</th>
<th>Predicted Group Membership</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey results
Data analysis was initiated with a cluster analysis in order to identify and classify various segments within the sample population. The clustering was performed based on the psychographic variables produced through the range of Likert scales at the end of the questionnaire as well as the question regarding amount of matches attended. In performing the cluster analysis, the non-hierarchical K-Means clustering method was utilised (Malhotra, et al., 2010). The number of clusters was defined by the use of discriminant analysis, where cluster solutions between 2 and 7 clusters were tested in the two data sets. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, the predicted group membership derived from the discriminant analysis of both datasets indicated five clusters to be the most suitable solution.

Further, in the case of both datasets, the choice of five clusters for further analysis was supported by a Wilks’ Lambda lower than .0008. Therefore, five clusters were identified as a suitable solution for both datasets. The five clusters provided in the MFF dataset clearly shows two clusters that set themselves apart with respect to amount of matches attended, namely clusters 2 and 4, as they scored 1.9 and 2.8 on a scale from 1 to 5 respectively. This indicates that cluster 2 attends less than 6 matches on average while cluster 4 attends less than 11. As such, these two clusters fit well within the two groups that are of interest in this study. Similarly, clusters 2 and 4 from the FCK dataset are of interest in that they scored 1.2 and 1.5 respectively. As such, both these clusters attended less than six matches last year, while the third least attending cluster, cluster 5 attended more
than 11 matches with a and average score of 3.5. Consequently, these four clusters will be elaborated upon in the following.

Table 5 highlights the key differences between the clusters of each of the datasets, as indicated in preference indicators as well as the descriptive statistics collected in the beginning of the survey.

Table 5. *Key differences across clusters.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MFF</td>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>Cluster 4</td>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>Cluster 4</td>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>Cluster 4</td>
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<td>Cluster 4</td>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>Cluster 4</td>
<td>51,4</td>
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<td>78,3</td>
<td>56,8</td>
<td>40,5</td>
<td>39,4</td>
<td>41,3</td>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>56,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Towards four segments*

The quantitative data from the survey was supplemented with qualitative interviews\(^2\) with identified representatives from the four clusters. For each of the four different clusters, two interviewees were identified. This was done by means of a snowball judgmental sampling in the extended network of the researchers.

\(^2\) Detailed results from analyses, quantitative as well as qualitative, are not accounted for in this paper. Details are available upon request to the corresponding author.
The qualitative interviews helped adding nuances to the quantitative findings, leading to a set of factors affecting the choice to attend a football match. The most important of these aspects are summarised in table 6.

Table 6. *Overall cluster characteristics.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Malmö FF</th>
<th>FC København</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occasional attendants</td>
<td><strong>Experience Seeking Families</strong></td>
<td><strong>Price Sensitive Experience Hunters</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0-5 matches/season)</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>Football in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall comfort and safety</td>
<td>Price sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family activity</td>
<td>Comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent attendants</td>
<td><strong>Price Conscious Group of Friends</strong></td>
<td><strong>Family Focused Fans</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6-10 matches/season)</td>
<td>Social aspects</td>
<td>Family activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local connection of the club</td>
<td>Comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Home team performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Price sensitive</td>
<td>History of the club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and Implications
Based on the above empirical findings and in combination with the literature on how to design experiences, four distinct experience templates, one for each of the segments of interest, will be developed in the following sections. These will consist of the suggested range of SEMs utilised in marketing the experience towards each of the segments, as well as a range of suggestions for each of the four steps of designing the experience. First, the templates for the two segments containing occasional attendants will be developed followed by templates for the two frequent attendant segments. The objective of these templates is to evolve the level of attraction to MFF or FCK as an SCO for each of the attendants in the four segments, and thereby drive attendants towards becoming devoted fans in the attachment phase of the PCM.

*The Experience Seeking Families*

When designing an experience specifically for the Experience Seeking Families (ESF), MFF should consider using SEMs such as SENSE and RELATE in combination to increase the willingness to attend the matches among the individuals in this segment. The quantitative research clearly showed that the atmosphere is one of the vital aspects affecting the
attendance of this segment, a finding that was further supported by both of the interviewees. As such, the SENSE SEM should be by using the intense atmosphere that is created on the stands during a match, highlighting the noise, smell and excitement of larger matches. Further, the RELATE SEM should be utilised in order to provide a feeling of unity in the stands as well as across the family unit to nurture the very reason for attending for this segment, namely social interaction with the family members with whom they attend.

Following the use of these SEMs in marketing the attending experience specifically to the ESF, MFF must go through the four steps of designing the experience for this segment, so as to ensure a positive experience, and increase the likelihood of repeat attendance.

In deciding upon the sub-theme for this segment, MFF should be aware that they frequently attend with family members, and are there in order to get an exciting experience with these. As such, the sub-theme, targeted towards the ESF can be termed the “Family Fun-Day”.

In order to ensure unidirectional cues, it is imperative that the atmosphere is active and lively from the moment they arrive at the stadium and throughout the match. As such, it is important that MFF as a club enables and assists the fans in providing an intense atmosphere throughout the match. Further, lines at the concessions should be kept to a bare minimum e.g. by implementing a Wi-Fi system making it possible to order refreshments from the seats. In ensuring short lines, high level of constant activity can be ensured, meeting the demands of the segment as portrayed through the interviews. Finally, in providing the unidirectional cues, offers targeted towards families both in terms of merchandise and refreshments would ensure that the notion of the family fun-day permeates every aspect of the experience. These then, should not only be targeted at parents with young children. Rather, adults attending with their parents, siblings or the like should be able to draw upon these offers.

In terms of supplementary activities for the adults attending together, without children, supporting the generation of the atmosphere is sufficient, as this is the supplementary activity, relevant for this group. However, on the family stands, handing out lyrics to the different songs associated with the club allows the children to partake in the atmosphere generation, and feel as part of the excitement.

While the access to memorabilia is covered for individuals attending the MFF matches on the stands containing the more devoted fans, the
families attending together on stands designated for this, should be catered to differently. In doing so, initiatives that support the family offers from the concession stands could be undertaken. In providing special family offers of scarves or jerseys in the family stands, MFF would provide further value-for-money for the parents, ensuring greater willingness to attend more often with their children.

The Price Sensitive Experience Hunters

While the intense atmosphere is instrumental in driving the ESF to the stadium, the qualitative interviews indicated that the atmosphere that the Price Sensitive Experience Hunters (PSEH) are drawn by is not necessarily the atmosphere at the event itself, but rather the atmosphere surrounding the event, and the importance of the match itself. As such, FCK should consider using the THINK SEM, in that this segment, to a larger extent than any other segment, attends based on being fans of football as a sport. Therefore, the experience for these spectators can be affected positively by adding aspects that pertain to the quality of the football match and the tactical side of this, through the use of the THINK SEM. Further, both of the interviewees stressed the importance of the unity that is felt across the stands. As such, it is paramount that the club ensures the use of narratives explicitly stating the feeling of unity that is generated when attending a match at the stadium, rather than watching it at home.

The sub-theme that should be developed for this segment needs to revolve around football as an SCO, and that the comfort of watching the match at the stadium can be as comfortable as it can at home. Therefore, the sub-theme directed at the PSEH can be termed “Insider’s View”, in seeking to provide extensive understanding of the actions on the field rather than on the stands.

In developing and providing this theme, FCK must ensure that this segment is catered to in terms of the comfort they perceive as being important. In doing so, they should be able to sit down and have a good view of what is happening on the pitch. Additionally, should these individuals decide to enter the stadium area early, there must be enough seating at the bars in and around the stadium for them to sit comfortably, and enjoy the company of the friends they frequently attend with.

To further support the theme focused on increasing the understanding of the match itself and getting the fullest out of this, a range of supple-
mentary activities could be offered. Providing live-betting through the, already installed, Wi-Fi, is a prudent way of increasing the quality of this experience as it allows this segment to enjoy yet another of the benefits of viewing the match at home. This should be supplemented by providing access to a match program, as well as a range of expert comments on the match and the potential outcomes, as well as the consequences of these. This could be done by providing right to use the television signal. In doing so, yet another benefit of watching the match at home is nullified and deeper analysis of the match is obtained for this segment.

Finally, the access to memorabilia should be focused on the SCO of football rather than that of FCK. Conversely, providing merchandise that is centered on FCK as the SCO and has little to do with football, would not only be a waste in that the likelihood of purchase is minimal, it would also provide contradictory cues to the theme, and thereby decrease the quality of the experience.

The Price Conscious Group of Friends

In order to increase the level of attachment and extent to which the individuals of the Price Conscious Group of Friends (PCGF) identify with MFF as a club, the use of SEMs such as FEEL and RELATE in combination, is likely to entice them to attend more often. With the FEEL SEM, MFF should seek to affect deeper feelings that this segment associates with attending football matches. An example of such feelings is the local pride. In implementing this, the use of the RELATE SEM allows MFF to utilise the power of narratives by portraying the history of MFF. This plays an integral part in ensuring that the PCGF get a feeling of being part of something greater than themselves that is deeply rooted in the culture of Malmö as a city.

In deciding upon the sub-theme of the attending experience, MFF must ensure that the PCGF segment feels a sense of unity, not just with the group that they attend with, but with the entire crowd of spectators and through this, the city of Malmö. This sub-theme can therefore be termed the “The Malmö Theme”.

Only the touchpoints that exist at the entrance and inside the stadium needs to be affected by narratives supporting the theme since this segment does not go to the stadium early. Here the surroundings should be covered in the city colours and the traditional griffin used in the Malmö coat of arms. Further, posters of historic victories for MFF along with
plagues displaying names and events should be displayed around the stands in order to increase the feeling of local unity.

In order to provide supplementary activities to the segment, various forms of information about current and historic events surrounding MFF, as well as football in general, could ensure a greater understanding of these SCO’s. Done with the sub-theme of Malmö in mind, this is likely to increase the perceived importance of MFF as a club in the football industry and in the local community.

Finally, considering the price sensitive nature of this segment, the memorabilia that needs to be provided can be limited to older versions of merchandise such as scarves or jerseys. Further, additional memorabilia can be provided while ensuring minimal expenditure and small profits, while this price consciousness can be kept into consideration. In order to do so, increasing the quality of the cups used to sell beer (the largest selling object at the concession stands), allows these to be designed to display images of the current players or historic events. The slight increase in costs for the cups can then be put onto the price of the beer as a refundable amount, should the cup be returned. Should this not be the case, the costs of the cups are covered by the customers, while memorabilia is provided to this price conscious segment.

The Family Focused Fans

While the previous segments have been focused on unity with one object or the other, the Family Focused Fans (FFF) is more focused on the intense feelings that they have towards FCK. In order to utilise these, the SEMs of SENSE and FEEL should be applied. One of the most important aspects of the experience for them is the intensity of the atmosphere, whether it is in providing it or enjoying it. Further, the grandeur of the atmosphere delivered from displays on the atmosphere creating stand and how the noise that is created affects them deeply. In line with this, the FEEL SEM should be used in provoking the strong feelings towards the club. This can be done by highlighting the history of the club and the significant moments that have passed in order to entice this segment to be part of new historic events, leading to increased rate of attendance.

We find that the sub-theme of this experience can be termed “Another Great FCK-Experience”, considering that these attendants are likely to have had great experiences with FCK previously, as part of their process of moving into the attachment phase of the PCM.
In order to provide unidirectional cues to the segment it is necessary to affect all touchpoints inside as well as outside of the stadium as these fans are likely to arrive at the stadium well in advance of the beginning of the match. These should then clearly indicate the importance of the fans, and the significance placed on them by the club. Further, historic events both on the pitch as well as in the stands in the form of spectacular displays should be highlighted through the use of banners or video clips provided on the big screens.

Table 7. Tailored Experience Templates for each segment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malmö FF</th>
<th>FC København</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ESF Segment</strong></td>
<td><strong>PSEH Segment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SENSE</strong></td>
<td><strong>RELATE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supplementary Activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Family Fun Day&quot;</td>
<td><em>Lyrics to songs for kids</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Exciting Entertainment</em></td>
<td><em>Comfort</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unidirectional Cues</strong></td>
<td><strong>Access to Merchandising</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Constant activity</em></td>
<td><em>Family centered offers and merchandise at family section</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Short queues</em></td>
<td><em>Comfortable</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Family centered offers</em></td>
<td><em>Good view</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>4 Steps of Experience Design</strong></th>
<th><strong>PEGF Segment</strong></th>
<th><strong>FFF Segment</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RELATE</strong></td>
<td><strong>SENSE</strong></td>
<td><strong>FEEL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supplementary Activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sub-Theme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Malmö Theme&quot;</td>
<td><em>Provide football/MMF related knowledge to the stands</em></td>
<td>&quot;Another great FCK exp.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Social aspect</em></td>
<td><em>History</em></td>
<td><em>Record attempts e.g.: Longest song</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Locality &amp; Unity Narratives</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Make fans part of history</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unidirectional Cues</strong></td>
<td><strong>Access to Merchandising</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unidirectional Cues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Appear Cheap</em></td>
<td><em>Cups that can be brought home with pictures etc</em></td>
<td><em>Fans are important</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>City Colors</em></td>
<td><em>Older &amp; Cheaper merch. at the memorabilia stands</em></td>
<td><em>History is created in the stands</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Posters of history</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Fans offers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Plaques and statues</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for supplementary activities for this segment, old highlights could be shown on the big screens as well as TV screens by the concession stands, while the match is not underway. Further, performing record attempts with the fans, such as singing the loudest or longest, could gather the fans in providing a great atmosphere while experiencing a feeling of adding to the history of the club. Lastly, providing various contests that the fans can partake in along with their families prior to the match, could further increase the likelihood of early attendance as well as more frequent attendance. These contests could include penalty kicks outside the stadium, a videogame contest in which families compete against each
other or the like. Additionally, these contests would assist in providing the socialising experience which is an aspect in considering attending.

This segment is the segment that is most likely to spend large sums of money on merchandise as well as refreshments; therefore, it should have a constant access to the various forms of merchandise, be it outside the stadium in the form of the fan shop placed there, or inside the stadium in combination with the concession stands. Finally, utilising that this segment often attends with members of their families provides additional ways of increasing both merchandise- and refreshment expenditure. This can be done by adding family offers to each of the additional revenue generating activities, such as father-son jerseys, in which the price of the smaller jersey is significantly reduced.

In conclusion, we can present an experience template for the four different segments in table 7.

What is suggested here is a design of experiences directed to the spectator segments that have a potential to become more frequent attendees at matches. By strengthening the positive experience, there is likelihood that these spectators can be driven towards a higher level in the psychological continuum and therefore become more frequent visitors.

Conclusions and Future Research

This study has illustrated that it is possible to identify different spectator segments with different motives and behaviour among non-regular attendants. It has also been suggested how experiences can be designed based on the Experiential Grid, using ExPros along with SEMs. It should be noted that these specific segments and the designed experiences are specific for the two cases, but the model as such is applicable beyond the setting of the two cases. With this in mind, future research should focus on rectifying these in order to produce more applicable findings, aiding practitioners and theorists alike to better understand the intricacies of what affects sports consumers to attend matches at the stadium, rather than consume the SCO from the comfort of their homes. Further, by doing so, individuals for which the SCO is merely another form of entertainment along with, for instance, concerts and the Zoo, can also be attracted as the experience of the stadium appeals to their needs more specifically than is the case with other forms of entertainment. In order to do so, we make two suggestions for future researchers to consider in
attempting to decipher the ways in which attendance can be increased, which will be elaborated upon in the following.

First, a large-scale quantitative research aimed at segmenting the different football spectators in each country, would allow the researchers to create arch types, which can be targeted through improved experiences. The new aspect the experience economy would allow academics to gain greater understanding of the aspects that affect the rate of attendance for sports consumers. Likewise, it would allow practitioners in general, rather than merely prolific Swedish and Danish clubs, to design the experiences needed to appeal to each of the segments in their market, thus increasing the per-match revenue.

Finally, a price elasticity research among football fans could assist in increasing the per-match revenue. Theory, as well as the expert interviews, indicated that to many sports fans, the price of a ticket is largely irrelevant. However, the entertainment seeking segments found through the quantitative phase of this study indicated the price as a considerable barrier in attending more matches. As such, investigating the price elasticity of the potential spectators of a sport would not only add to the understanding that academics have of the sports consumer, but also allow practitioners to identify the optimal price point, needed to increase revenue through increased attendance and sales of refreshments. Once this is found, it should be noted, the clubs must properly communicate the new price point so as to ensure that all potential consumers are aware of the costs involved with attending a football match. Not doing so would leave the club in the situation presently facing FC København, where an entire segment does not understand or have a realistic overview of the costs associated with attending a football match.

References


