

Nuuti Pulkkinen

IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE VALUES ON FOOTBALL FANS

Understanding the impact of sustainability among football fans.

THE IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE VALUES ON FOOTBALL FANS

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This thesis investigates the influence of sustainable values on football fans, mainly focusing on their perceptions and behaviours towards football clubs' sustainability efforts. The study, commissioned by Finnish football Team Rovaniemen Palloseura (RoPS), aims to fill a gap in understanding the interest between football fandom and sustainability.

Sustainability gets identified to understand the target to develop recourse balance, which includes economic, social, and environmental factors. The concept tries to address the challenge without sacrificing important factors (United Nations Academic impact 2023).

This research project aims to bring to the light the opinions of football fans, specifically examining how large is the impact of sustainability among football fans. Furthermore, the study seeks to find potential practises to be used in future by football organizations worldwide. A quantitative research method was used, involving a survey distributed to football fans across Europe. The survey was completed by 75 individual football fans, from five different countries.

The findings reveal that majority of respondents are interested in sustainability within football in one way or another. The research importantly revealed the difference between fans who are keen about sustainability, and fans who do know about sustainability within football area. The knowledge of sustainability related practises is lacking, despite multiple organizations publishing sustainability reports on yearly basis.

Based on these findings, strategies and ideas were identified to enhance the fan engagement within sustainability topic. The survey had two open answers to give external ideas for organizations to work with in the future. The established of a supportive and diverse network within football fans increase the motivation for organizations to work with the subject.

Keywords: Sustainability, Football Fans, Fan Engagement, Quantitative Research, Environmental Practices, Sports Management

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1 INTRODUCTION

Football, a global phenomenon, the archetype of the world's passion, competition, and community. The language besides love that can connect cultures together. According to International Association Football Federation, or shortened "FIFA", The final of football world championships, "World Cup" acquired over 1,5 billion (1,500,000,000) views worldwide (Jones, 2023).

The globalization and high popularity of the sport has also raised some concerns. The first chapter of this thesis introduces the reader to role of sustainability in football. The reader is also introduced to the topic of the thesis and the commissioning case company.

The topic of the thesis is "The impact of sustainable values on football fans." The title refers to gathering information to study and interpret themes from the results. Goal of the thesis is to understand the impact of sustainability among football fans. The thesis was commissioned by a Finnish football team called Rovaniemen Palloseura ry.

This thesis shares useful information for people and organizations interested in the field of sustainable values among football fans. The examine can be made to understand the area in present time and can be used to estimate the impact in the future.

The theoretical background consists of multiple different parts. Identifying the important topics with sustainability is a key concept. In theoretical background also some practises used by different football organizations all over the world, including countries like Germany, Italy, Finland, France, and England. Multiple different key concepts are also identified at the chapter.

The research is implemented to be a quantitative research. Survey has been distributed among football fans. This research uses data-analysis.

In a sport as large as football, no longer is fully for athletes and their capabilities to win and lose on the field. The finances of a football organization are no longer tied to the match day revenue. The revenues going through a football organization can end up in high extends. "Manchester Uniteds plc's annual report in 2020 consisted of 782 pages when it filed its accounts with the US authorities" (Kieran Maguire, 2021,8).

The commissioning organization is called Rovaniemen Palloseura RY, RoPS for shorter. RoPS believes that the organization in their market area can make significant moves regarding sustainability. Located in the northern part of Finland, Rovaniemi. The aim for the organization is to be a successful sports organization. A professional football organization ran as registered association. The team is a traditional Finnish football team which has been founded in 1950.

While being a successful in terms of placement in Finnish football, also the sustainability is major key element for RoPS in daily basis. The commissioning team has created their own strategy report to ensure that their goal and vision is clear and can be observed and judged from outside. Reason behind the thesis is the lack of information about the subject.

The first information-based chapter is Literature review. The chapter consists of identifying key concepts and giving two case organizations to be investigated. Next chapter includes research and methodology, which holds explanation about the made research. Results and findings are the chapter after. At the latter part of the report discussion and conclusion can be found before references and appendices.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following chapter review of the literature is presented among the topics. Important topics and terms are identified, and two example cases are presented. Case examples come inside Europe, Germany, and Italy.

2.1 Sustainability

Sustainability can be seen as an abstract concept, but the concept of sustainability was defined by the United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987 as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (United Nations Academic impact 2023). The central of this definition is the target to develop recourse balance, which includes economic, social, and environmental factors. The concept tries to address the challenge without sacrificing important factors (United Nations Academic impact 2023).

Economic dimension of sustainability focuses on developing policies that ensure all individuals meet their basic needs and achieve a decent standard of living, meanwhile conserving the natural resources on which future economies will depend. For example, directing investments in renewable energy or sustainable agricultural practices represents a shift away from overconsumption, which could otherwise be wasted or lost. Rather the idea is finding the balance that makes us prosperous today without endangering the planet's ability to feed generations in the future (Basheer et al. 2022).

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (2021) have emphasized the role of renewable energy in food systems, expressing its potential to advance energy and food security for future. This economic activity encourages economic practices that support long-term growth and resilience. Ways can be such as investing into renewable or into sustainable energy farm management.

In environmental sustainability, the idea emphasizes the importance of ensuring the health and viability of ecosystems and the planet. Doing responsible management of natural resources are

needed so that they regenerate and continue to support life on Earth. By the words of article, published by Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory (2023) at Colorado State University. This includes a holistic approach to ecosystem management that considers all aspects of the ecosystem. The idea includes actions such as reducing pollution, conserving water, protecting biodiversity, and minimizing climate change to ensure the natural environment can sustain still for future generations (Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory 2023).

In social sustainability, this idea explains the importance of ensuring that development and recycling are done in a way that not only benefits the present, but also helps the future. This can be achieved by providing basic services such as education, healthcare, and housing. The World Bank 2020 defines social development and inclusion as essential to building cohesive societies that empower citizens and create resilient, peaceful communities. Meanwhile making of an inclusive society, where human rights and the development of communities are respected in a changing world (Sivaraman 2020).

By the strategy of United Nations (2024), this approach of sustainability involves implementing practices across various sectors that promote sustainability, aiming to protect the planet's future. When using this principle in practice, a sustainable development strategy comes into place that integrates economic, environmental, and social considerations. Governments, businesses, and individuals are encouraged to make decisions regarding these factors and to see their role in a sustainable future. (The United Nations 2024).

2.2 Fans and clubs

Football clubs, especially those in the higher tiers which have larger audiences, operate on a global scale, enabling them to attract fans and followers from diverse geographical locations, rather than leaning only to localization (KPMG footballbenchmark.com 2021). More popular clubs may have their own fan clubs across different countries, such as team from Germany's second tier football, Hamburger Sport-Verein e.V., known as "Hamburger SV" or "HSV" has official fan clubs in almost every country in Europe, according to their official website hsv.de. In addition, in countries outside of European market, such as Singapore, Namibia and Paraguay do have official fan clubs for the team (Hamburger SV Official Fan Clubs: Fan Clubs Abroad, n.d.). According to football fan can be determined to be "An enthusiastic and active follower of football; a person truly passionate about

football; a person extremely interested in accompanying a football team and / or football icons.” (Mascarenhas et al. 2020).

There are instances where football teams or leagues can be known partly due to their fans and their presence. German football teams from country’s highest tier of football, Bundesliga are somewhat known for fan presence. By the article published by German top-flight, Bundesliga, especially team named Ballspielverein Borussia 09 e.V. Dortmund, known as “Borussia Dortmund”, is partly known, “best-supported, most fun, coolest club in the world” (Bundesliga 2019) thanks to the fan group the team holds. According to the research made by traditional London based newspaper, The Independent (2010) Dortmund’s home stadium, “Westfalenstadion”, known by sponsor name, “Signal Iduna Park” holds largest home fan stand in European football. According to the league itself, Bundesliga (2019) states that the 24,454 capacity for the stand is full to every home game they have in domestic league. Borussia Dortmund has sold out over 70% of their home games in German top-flight in the past 10 seasons when not counting restrictions caused by government (transfermarkt.com n.d.). Emphasizing the idea that organisations can have major effects when keeping their fans happy and engaged with i.e. sustainability practises, should they wish to do so.

2.3 Football team as a Brand

“Branding is no longer simply a case of adorning a product or a service with a logo. Branding is integrated strategic thinking that defines what a product or service stands for, why it exists and what it will do for its consumers. A well-crafted brand is built from inside out, with the strategy being manifested externally.” (Union of Football Association, UEFA 2019). The branding of football clubs has raised to be a phenomenon across the whole Globe. Some iconic football kits can be seen across the world. Kits from the clubs such as Fútbol Club Barcelona, known as “FC Barcelona”, Real Madrid Club de Fútbol, known as “Real Madrid”, and Manchester United Football Club, known shortly as “Manchester United” can be seen in all parts of the world (Union of Football Association, UEFA 2019).

Football clubs can have high follower base and significant impact on their own area. They hold a unique level of influence and fans all over the world. Communications lecturer from Universidad de Málaga, Gema Lobillo Mora, journalist Xavier Ginesta, and a full professor at the University of Vic-

Central University of Catalonia, Jordi de San Eugenio Vela published article examining project held in Spain with a target of enhancing sustainable development.

With the idea of enhancing sustainable development, Real Betis Balompié, launched “Forever Green”, aligning their brand with sustainability standards (Mora et al. 2021). This project puts the organization into environmental policy, meanwhile also affects the mindset of followers, demonstrating a holistic approach to charitable and affective corporate social responsibility of the organization (Forever Green, 2019). Such efforts highlight the potential of football organizations to act as powerful agents of change to promote sustainability. Football organizations can also have impact by their practices. If organizations were publicly against practises that use football as an advantage to give their own ideology, football fans would be more likely to trust organizations and their practises in the future. (Mora et al. 2021) This possible approach provides a unique platform for promoting sustainable development within the sport.

2.4 Sportswashing

"Sportswashing refers to the strategy employed by individuals, governments, corporations, or groups to leverage athletic events as a means to enhance or rehabilitate their reputations, particularly in the face of controversy or scandal" (Frommer n.d.).

The origin of the word “Sportswashing” seems to come from 2015 when the sports event, European Games were held in the Azerbaijan, Baku. By the words of iNews reporter Sam Cunningham (2021), the word originates from London based impact agency authors, Pdraig Reidy and Mike Harris. The term can be agreed to mean a specific event tied to sports, of which does not originate from the roots of the sport. The referred events can happen in various of ways. One way is sponsorships from outside of the sports main market area, to gather audience for their idea. Another way is to financially gather rights to hold sports events on soil, that is not traditionally seen as the area of the sport. Common theme being the ability to financially influence the area around sports (Cunningham 2021).

Sportswashing as a practise have been happening throughout the years, but the practical term is under 10 years old. According to the author Jules Boykoff, the 1936 Summer Olympic Games in

Berlin under a nazi leadership is widely seen as the first major occurrence of sportswashing. The event was held during a time where Germany used the Olympic “- Games to rally political support in Germany and abroad for his white supremacist worldview.” (Boykoff, 2022,124).

Later, the term has been used in various of cases, mainly in times where unsustainable party has a possibility to influence sports event, Such as FIFA World Cup in Qatar 2022 (Ganji, 2022) Azerbaijan Grand Prix in formula 1 (Saeed, 2023), and Saudi prince ownership of English top-flight football club, Sheffield United (Kunti, 2023, Goal, 2019).

2.4.1 German example

A oddest town located at the eastern Germany, Markranstädt holds a population just over 15,000 (citypopulation.de n.d.). In 2009, their local club SSV Markranstädt was having financial issues before the change of decades in 2010. The club had competed for a long time in lower-tier leagues of football. The lack of recourses and the inability to gather significant sponsorships was taking over the club’s finances. (Ruf, 2009)

In the year 2009 Austrian energy drink giant Red Bull GmbH (later referred to as Red Bull), was already making themselves seen on a sports area, but German football was new sector for giant brand to tackle. Established company with large knowledge of rules was able to find a creative solution for their needs. (Ruf, 2009)

50+1 Rule, in German 50+1-Regel is a rule implemented by German Football Association (later referred to as DFB) and the German Football League (DFL) To maintain the integrity and ensure the level of influences by fanbase in decision-making processes (Bundesliga n.d.). In theory, this means that the club needs to have the ownership majority within club members, usually fans. In this type of situation, more than half of the voting rights must be held by supporters’ association or by club members. The rule was designed to prevent the full club takeovers from happening by large entities, such as outside investors or corporations. This would ensure the community-oriented nature in clubs, while also maintaining democratic practices in German football clubs (Honigstein, 2021). There are exceptions to the rule for clubs such as Bayer 04 Leverkusen and VfL Wolfsburg,

which have historically been associated with big companies (Bayer AG and Volkswagen). (Blickenstaff, 2022)

2.4.1.1 Red Bull's execution of acquiring a football team

Red Bull as a large established entity with dedicated law team, was able to find a loophole to work around the restrictions. The rule seemingly prevented corporate entity to acquire majority of an established club. To navigate around the restriction, Red Bull established all new football team, rather than acquiring an existing one. In 2009, RasenBallsport Leipzig e.V., (later referred as RBL) was founded, and Red Bull became the primary financial funder (Leipzig Global, 2021).

The name "RasenBallsport" is a made-up word to fulfil the name purposes (Goal.com, 2021). DFB's regulations insist that brand such as Red Bull cannot be the branded name on a football club. The name is used to shorten it down to RB Leipzig, RB being the shortened version of Red Bull also to have the connection (Ruf, 2009). RBL organization was operated and formatted in a way, where it was not breaking the regulations. In addition, RBL did not have a membership structure. This meant, that there was no one to back up the 50+1 rule. This meant that club was allowing a corporate entity to exert substantial control over the club while technically fulfilling to the ownership percentage requirement. RBL limits club membership to maintain dominance within the club (Blickenstaff, 2022, Bidwell, 2015)

As RBL was founded in the small market area of Markranstädt. The local team's SSV Markranstädt's license was bought by Red Bull and used as foundation of building RBL (Völker 2009). RBL acquired the Markranstädt's first team and their license in competitions in 2009 (Völker 2009). Additionally, RBL made a rebranding for SSV Markranstädt reserve team, ESV Delitzsch, which was rebranded as RB Leipzig II (second) (Das deutsche Fußball-Archiv n.d.). The colours and traditional values associated with SSV Markranstädt was seemingly wiped out of existence after the acquisition had happened and team was rebranded to match Red Bull's desires. Also, the localness and deep town's identity was wiped out in the matter of seconds (Rilke 2016).

As the RBL was established in 2009, clubs' history starts from 2009, seemingly executing the history of SSV Markranstädt away from the competitive football history (Bundesliga 2022). The ab-

sence of historical continuity and the lack of localness in the new brand left local football fans without ties to the club (Rilke 2016,). Currently in 2024 The SSV Markranstädt team is operating as an unprofessional team in local sixth division in German football league system (Transfermarkt.com n.d.).

By the statistics of transfermarkt.com (n.d.), SSV Markranstädt's home games audience numbers dropped to a third of the previous in three seasons. Average audience being in season 07/08 was 695, as the 10/11 season ended with only 225 average eyes on a home performance (Transfermarkt.com). This can be seen working against the sustainability, in where the cohesive societies that empower citizens does not happen, (Sivaraman 2020).

2.4.1.2 Backlash and response

The public response to the lack of sustainability in the corporate's behavior with RBL among football fans was judgmental. Traditional football fans, rooted in the community and historical nature of the football, viewed Red Bull's involvement with disapproval. Accusations of circumventing the DFB regulations and exploiting loopholes in the system raised the controversy, amplifying the backlash against the corporate-backed model. RBL was Red Bull's fourth football team acquisition in 6 years, amplifying the fact that the acquisition was not made as a love towards the sport, rather as a branding technique (Oltermann 2014)

Eintracht Frankfurt e.V., a top-flight football club based in the major German travel city of Frankfurt, refuses to use the Red Bull logo in their promotional materials. Instead, they have opted to use the shortened version "RBL" for RB Leipzig. Notably, Eintracht Frankfurt displays the logos of all other teams without any issues (eintracht.de, n.d.).

The beginning of a new team had large issues building a fanbase. Usually, emotional bond to a team is growing among years when growing up. The reason to be a fan of certain team may vary from hometown, success, funny logo, family ties, or great looking jerseys. It is hard to gain emotional ties to a brand-new organization, especially when it behaves in a way that ignores the fans, and thus lacks social sustainability. This has led to a wording "plastic" used to describe organizations with similar stories across the globe. According to German statistics platform, Statista, RBL

had at the beginning of the 2022-2023 season, 750 members or fans, or both. This was over 10,000 members behind the second lowest amount (Statista n.d.). 11,000 Was the number of members for TSG 1899 Hoffenheim team, coming from a town Hoffenheim (Statista.com n.d.), which is a home for just over 3,000 inhabitants. Leipzig in the other hand having population bit under 600,000 (Citymonitor.ai 2023).

Multiple games in which RBL has participated has been delayed or stopped due to the actions made by opposing team's fans. The actions that have caused the stoppage include such as chants, banners, and choreography against the team and ownership (Rosenblatt 2016, Oltermann 2014, RDL, 2022, Reuters 2015).

In the year 2023, RBL started publishing their sustainability reports, sighting their progress and contributions regarding sustainability. The reports consist of multiple different ideas and practises that are implemented or being implemented to the organizations work. The main words used play, care, and share encourage ideas about sharing and caring. Organization emphasizes previous steps, such as their premises using 100% renewable energy, biking garages have been built around the stadium, and possibility for large quantities of unused merchandise to be donated to charitable organizations (Rbleipzig.com n.d.). The impact of the practises towards fan's attitude will be seen in the future.

2.4.2 Italian example

'Calcio', Italian word for football is known for their long history among European football. Italy has been home for multiple worlds most appreciated football players among the years. World class players such as Roberto Baggio, Andrea Pirlo and defensive masterminds Paulo Maldini and Fabio Cannavaro have been among the better footballers ever existed. Italian footballs top-flight, Serie A was founded in 1929 and is noted by Union of European Football Associations for being among top 5 leagues in the world (UEFA n.d.).

Often at the centre of major controversies in Italian football, Juventus Football Club S.p.A., known as "Juve", is the most successful Italian football team, with 36 domestic league championships (Juventus.com n.d.). According to poll made in 2019, Juve operated as the most popular team in Italy, (All Football - Live Scores, News & Highlights n.d.) Juve as an organization has a complicated

history marked by numerous scandals, the most notorious of which was the revelation of the “Calciopoli” scandal in 2006 (Carlo Garganese 2021). Many clubs in Italy were involved, but Juventus was given the most severe consequences. The team was relegated to Serie B, second tier of Italian football, deducted of league points, and lost two Serie A titles for engaging in match-fixing fraud aimed at influencing the outcome of games. The two Serie A titles taken from the organization are from season 2005-2006 and retrospectively from previous season, 2004-2006 (Tripathi 2023). Using foul play in such of a large organization can be seen to be unsustainable towards the community and fans around the organization. Aim for the project was to gain unfair advantage financially in a situation, in where team would gather funds from various of sources. As in regular situation the money were being distributed fairly for the deserving parties.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 financial crisis, Juventus and Barcelona made high-profile changes including between players, targeting financial gains by increasing player valuation with the swap rather than athletic merits. This led again to situation in where the organization would gain unfair financial advantage. This led to an investigation into the €282 million deal for “Prisma case” by the Turin prosecutor's office. The case was reopened since new evidence and alleged involvement in seized transactions. This highlights the unfair advantage that was the goal to be achieved with suspicious acts. The situation led to Juventus board resigning, and various of bans taking place within competitions and executives (Doyle 2023).

Juventus has made large efforts in sustainability, from internal policies to global commitments. The main goal being improving the environmental and social responsibilities, which can be seen being part of sustainability (United Nations Academic impact 2023). Juventus began publishing progress reports in the 2013/2014 season. The move was the group's formal commitment to open dialogue with stakeholders on sustainability and management projects, with an emphasis on transparency and consumption dealing with social and environmental impacts. (juventus.com n.d.)

With environmental and social goals, the club has taken an approach including incorporating corporate responsibility into its activities beyond football. This includes initiatives aimed at promoting respect, diversity, and social inclusion, such as the "Straight People" program to combat racism and the "Juventus for Special@School" program, for children with intellectual or relational disabilities access sporting opportunities (Juventus.com). In addition, Juventus wants to offer better health and well-being, better education, reducing inequality and partnerships to achieve goals, though

support education and promote healthy lifestyles among children and adolescents (Globalthoughtleaders 2023). This type of actions is in line with sustainability as described by United Nations Academic impact (2023).

When Juventus commit to climate action, they were the first Italian club to sign the Sport for Climate Action Plan made by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which committed to systematic efforts to reduce climate impacts, educate for climate action, and promote sustainable consumption (unfccc.int). Juventus are also involved in the Climate Neutral Current program, measuring, reducing, offsetting greenhouse gases an emissions are limited, and actions have been taken, aiming for a zero-carbon future (Globalthoughtleaders 2023, Juventus.com n.d.). The efforts made by Juventus in this regard are in line with the United Nation's description of sustainability (2023).

To further emphasis the sustainability, since the 2018/19 season, Juventus has been using 100% renewable energy to power all their facilities. (Juventus.com) Being environmentally in sustainable line with United Nation's idea of sustainability (2019). They have committed to monitoring and remediating their CO2 emissions and plan to strengthen their efforts on reporting and monitoring the environment (Campelli 2019).

3 RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological design used in this study. Each step of the research process is described, including the selection of participants, data collection, and the analysis of results.

Data collection was conducted through the author's connections among football fans across Europe. Participants were selected based on their potential relevance to the study. An alternative method could have been to collect data from the public, which might have gathered a greater number of responses. However, focusing on the target audience football fans was deemed more appropriate for this research. Data was collected from five different countries: Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

3.1 Quantitative research

The idea to go with a quantitative approach was easy because of the authors already established connections among football fans. The possibility to gather data outside of the origin country gave great possibility to see collective opinions among subject through country borders. The landscape of football fans is broad in the globe, and the "fan" term can be agreed or disagreed on.

Multiple factors influenced the choice of a quantitative research for this study. The authors established contacts used across Europe allowed for targeted and effective data collection, making sure that the research reached a relevant audience.

Also, the possibility of statistical analysis. The analysis allowed for the identification of objective and generalizable factors. Furthermore, the possibility to gather information from different countries, made it easier to use especially locally known cases, such as German and Italian examples.

Quantitative method also ensured accuracy and replicability among the answers. The systematic and standardized approach to data collection makes it easy to be replicated in the future. The choice of quantitative research was well suited for this study because of the relationships among football fans, the need for collective opinion, and the benefits of statistical analysis.

3.2 Survey creation and data collection

The questions of the survey were formulated by the mixture of experience and the help of literature review. This approach allowed the author to make questions relevant to the topics, that have been discussed in media or among connections in the past.

The questions were split into six different sections (appendix 1). The survey was formatted to make it easier to access for a person who did not want to answer every question. Most of the questions were designed to be answered from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a scale one to five. Two questions were multiple-choice with an option to provide "other" option. Additionally, there were a few yes/no questions to access additional questions among the designated subtopics. The author decided against making it mandatory for everyone to answer all the questions with subtopics, allowing those with specific knowledge to answer the relevant topics. The aim was to minimize "I don't know" answers.

The first section asked for the respondents' background. In addition, the first section was home to six questions aimed to profiling the participant, ranging from personal experience to opinions. The second and third sections each contained a single question to possibly access another sections. Subtopics hold a place in the fourth and fifth sections, which cover RB Leipzig and Juventus, respectively. Both sections investigated specific case examples and the participants' knowledge of them. The sixth section served as a conclusion part, thanking participants, and giving them a chance to leave comments the author.

Aware of the common uninterest to participate in surveys, the decision to keep the survey short was made. This was intended to it easier for participants to answer and share the survey. With full focus, the survey should not take more than three minutes to fill out. The questionnaire consisted of up to 15 questions for participants, and at least nine questions to be answered. The form made it possible to move forward and back without answering a single question, leaving the possibility to participant to answer questions they wanted to answer.

The data was collected with survey and results are provided with descriptive statistics analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis involves summarizing and organizing data to be easily understood. Meanwhile focusing on describing the main features of the dataset in a quantitative manner, (Cohen et al. 2018).

3.3 Reliability and validity of the survey

The reliability of the survey can be agreed on since the consistency of the responses. The survey was distributed to a specific target audience contacted by author to help ensure that responses were relevant to the topic. The sample size of 75 responses increases the reliability of the findings, as it gives room for different opinions and answers. Additionally, the pure number of answers outside of authors origin country gives more reliability, since it reduces the possibility of homogeneous thinking of a certain friend group. The research consisted of two different case examples. The survey gathered respondents from the countries where these examples originated.

The questions used were standardized and only consisted of 3 different types of questions. This made sure that the type of question was always present of participant. Options had different names, such as yes/no, which further enhances the understanding of a participant.

The questions made for the survey cover the wanted topic. The formulated questions based on a combination of experience and a literature review, ensuring the relevancy for the topic. The survey was made to be answered by football fans. The task was successful, excluding the subtopic questions, every single participant answered all the questions. First and last question had same number of answers. In this regard the survey effectively measures the opinions not only in general level, but additionally about the said subtopics. It is important to note that the sample does not fully represent all football fans worldwide.

4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results gathered from the survey completed by 75 Football fans across Europe (The results are displayed in various of colours in Figure 2). The results are split up into three four sections. The first section will describe the results related to profiling, opinions, past- and potential habits. Second section is tied to the case example RBL. Third section includes results found on Juventus part of the survey. Fourth one is conclusion for the survey.

From which country are you?
75 vastausta

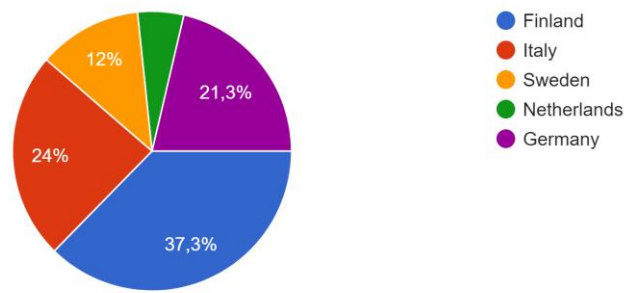


FIGURE 1. Survey results form a question: 'From which country are you?'.

4.1 First section

The first question regarding of the subject was super clear. Out of 75 answers, only 17 participants said that they disagree or strongly disagree on "Funding from another country does affect my attitude towards a football club". This led over 77% of the participants saying that it does affect partly or really their attitude towards a football club.

Results displayed in figure 1 below, show the difference of keenness on the topic and awareness of the topic. The question "it is important that my favourite team engages in sustainability practises" gave important answers. (The results are displayed in blue in Figure 1). Just over 20% of the respondents thought that they don't even partly agree on the statement. Middle of the park answer, 3 from 1-5 scale got most votes among partly agree, both getting over 33,3%. The answers got

highlighted, since “I am aware of my favourite football team's sustainability efforts” question gave different types of answers (The results are displayed in red in Figure 2). Only 28% of the participants were knowledge about their favourite’s sustainability efforts, even though over 45% kept it as an important matter.

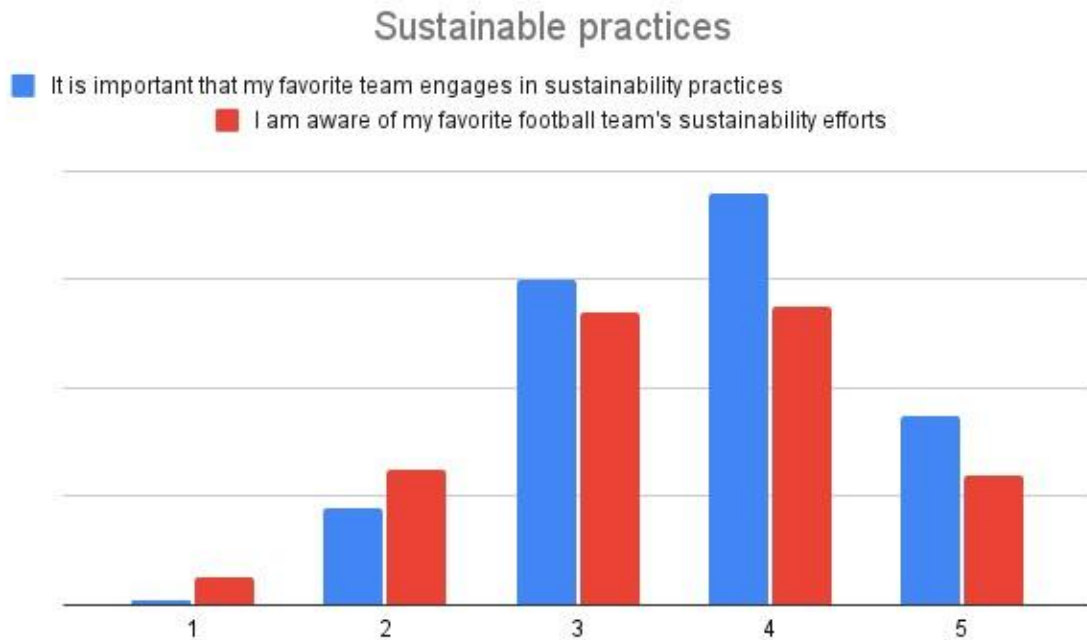


FIGURE 2. Survey results of two statements: ‘It is important that my favorite team engages in sustainability practices.’ ‘I am aware of my favorite football team’s sustainability efforts.’

Just under 43% of the votes for the question “Sustainable or unsustainable practices by football team's influence my attitude towards them” went to the middle, option 3 from 1-5. The lower half of the scales answers made under 14% of the results, in where all the remaining percentages went to answer 4 and 5.

Answers in both multiple-choice questions were important. “Are there any sustainability-related actions you have taken or plan to take because of your interest in football? (if other, please explain)” and “In what type of sustainability-related practices you could participate in? (if other, please explain)”, both had similar possible answers (results seen in figures 3 and 4). The idea was same, but the format of the answers was altered a little (donate to a cause – donated to a cause). Over 60% of the answers in both questions said that they have attended football game without a car and could do that in the future. Other opinions did not gain such a large support. Over third of the participants have recycled sports gear through football organization and just under half would be

open to do that in the future. Almost 37% of participants would be interested to donate to a cause with the help of football organization, meanwhile 23,4% of the participants have already done that.

Are there any sustainability-related actions you have taken or plan to take because of your interest in football? (if other, please explain) Kopioi

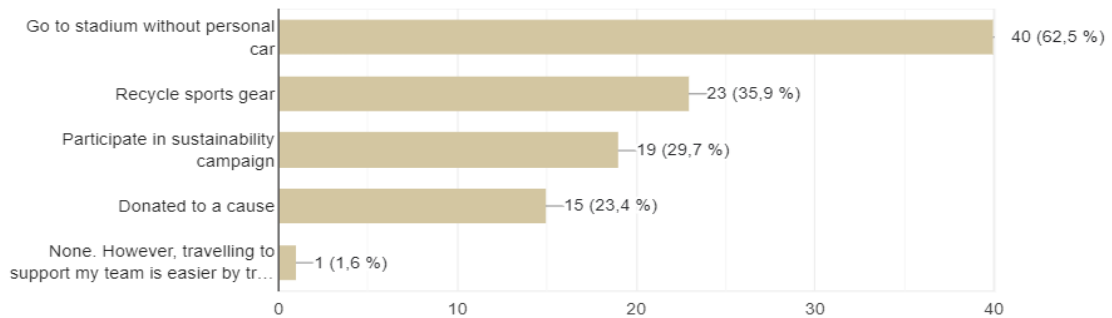


FIGURE 3. Survey result of question: “Are there any sustainability-related actions you have taken or plan to take because of your interest in football? (if other, please explain)”.

In what type of sustainability-related practices you could participate in? (if other, please explain) Kopioi

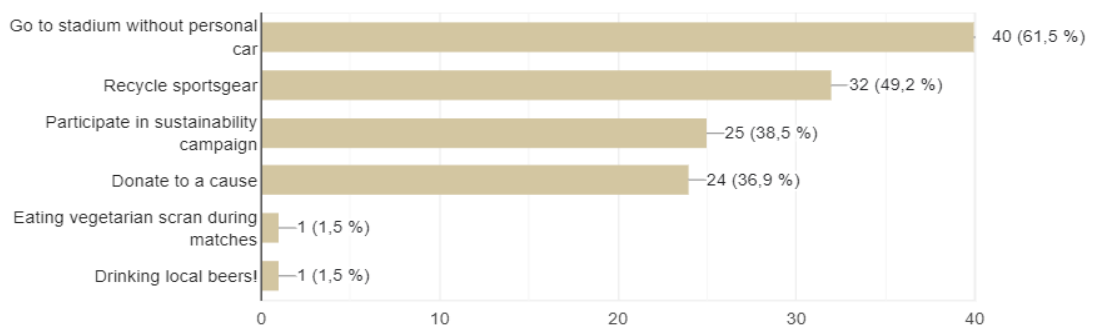


FIGURE 4. Survey result of question: “Are there any sustainability-related actions you have taken or plan to take because of your interest in football? (if other, please explain)”.

In total only couple of open answers were given. One was open thinking in “have taken or plan to take” part, “None. However, travelling to support my team is easier by train (over car) so I use a better way of transport, but not actively considering that it is more sustainable.”. This emphasises that in multiple cases, the stadiums have some form of public transportation option, which in some cases is easier to access than using a private car.

The possibilities in the future question got two open answers. First one stating that a person would be open to eat vegetarian food offered in the stadium, “Eating vegetarian scrans during

Matches". Another participant would be open to drink locally produced beers, instead of consuming exported goods, "Drinking local beers!".

4.2 Remaining sections

In the second section RBL was discussed. Out of all the answers, almost 55% acknowledged the history of RBL and wanted to get extra questions regarding the organization. The question "The ownership of the organization affects my view of the club" got a little dispersion. The answers 1-3 only got in total 12,2% of the answers. And almost 59% of the people strongly agreed on the statement.

When asked about the awareness of RBL's sustainable practices, only 22% were even acknowledged about the subject. Options one and two together gathered over half of the votes. When asked about "With sustainable or unsustainable practices, my vision towards the club can be changed", 58,5% of the participants stated that they are not open to change the attitude towards RBL, with different practises regarding sustainability.

Out of all the answers, 37 participants, 49,3% acknowledged the history of Juventus and were open to get extra questions regarding the organization and their history. This happened in third section. "The past activities of the organization affect my view of the club?" question sparked some diversity among the answers. 54% of the votes stated that they agree or strongly do, but over almost 30% of the participants answered the middle of the park option. Compared to the RBL, participants would be more open to change their attitude towards Juventus with sustainable practises. This is coming from the fact that over 62% of the answerers said yes. (The results are displayed in red and black in Figure 3).

Are there any sustainable practices that would change your view of the club?

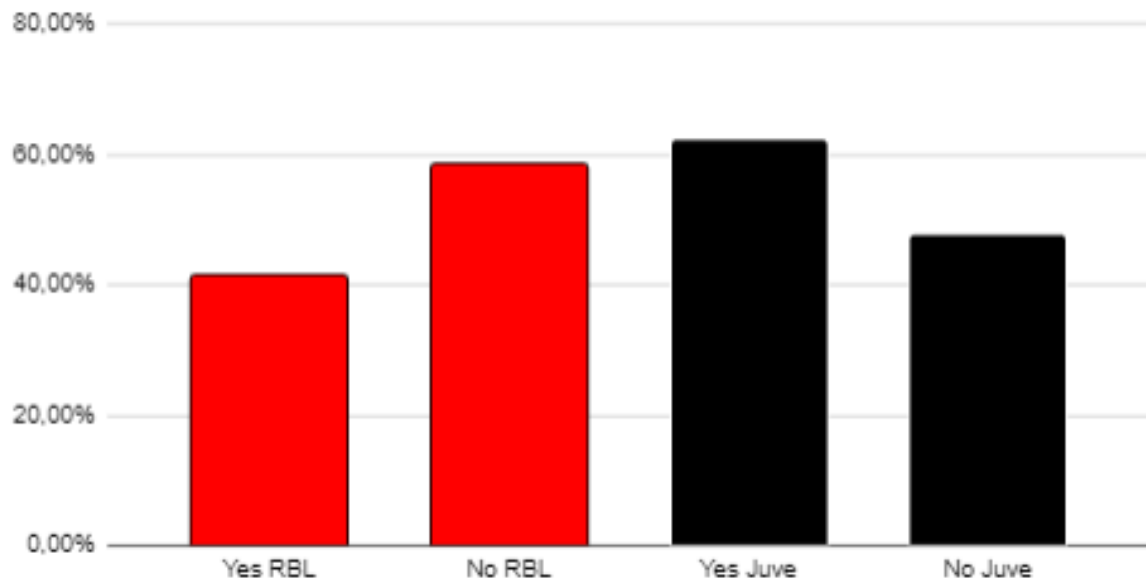


FIGURE 5. Survey results of same statement with different team: 'Are there any sustainable practices that would change your view of the club'.

At the fourth section, out of 75 answers only nine left an open comment behind. Seven of the comments were thanks, cheers, or jokes aimed towards the author in some form. Two of the comments consisted of poking fun at Red Bull with "Scheisse Red Bull" being part of the comment, another one ending with cheers for the author.

5 CONCLSUION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will begin with a summary of the findings. Also, limitations of the study will be discussed. Additionally, some recommendations for further research will be included. The latter part of the chapter will include potential future use for the data. Ending will include conclusion.

5.1 Summary and limitations

The main research subject for this thesis was: **Impact of sustainable values on football fans.** Despite the size of the sport, the lack of information on the subject sparked an interest for the research. The discussion seen in the media, online and in human interactions usually tend to have similar ideas. While many may think that the subject is important for football fans, there was not enough information backing it up. Multiple footballers are seen as superstars and hold individual fans and followers across teams needs to be noted additionally.

This study aimed to access the football fans from more inside, rather than focusing more public parts. Additionally, in the past most of the research made remotely close to the topic, have been strongly tied to certain event, league, or a team.

This study had its limitations and therefore results cannot be generalized. The survey sample size is miniscule compared to the potential reach of the sport. The generalization cannot be made additionally, due the number of citizenships participating.

5.2 How aware are football fans?

The football fans who participated in this study had opinions regarding to the topic. Football fans are apparently aware of the topic in some cases. There was difference among the answers. Interest can be seen in the media, with the amount of protesting the World Cup in 2022.

Personal knowledge of own favourite team seems to be a challenge for organizations. By the results, more people were interested on own teams' practises, than were informed properly about them. Multiple teams do have their own sustainability related publications, but the information does not reach everyone by the results of this research.

Many football fans seem to have an interest on the topic and somewhat awareness, but it seems to consist of a broader topics, such as event or a known example. The topic gives much room for organizations to use and work with in the future.

5.3 Differences with subjects

Sustainability can be seen in practise with different ways. This research had two distinct case examples to be used as part of the topic. Two different examples with two different types of answers were given regarding the topic. "Are there any sustainable practices that would change your view of the club" gave interesting answers, as discussed before.

As explained previously, respondents were more likely to change their attitude towards Juventus than RBL. This possibly gives interesting subtopic about what exact practises have led to this situation. Additionally, the possible sustainable practises to make the view chance would need to be identified.

Sustainability as a topic possibly would need more explaining to do for participants to ensure clear understanding of the topic for all parties of the research.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

To further expand on the findings of this study, future research should consider narrowing down the target audience, either geographically or demographically. This research could potentially gain more information about designated subject. Multiple studies from narrowed down audience could

lead to a situation, in where demographics could be compared together and differences could be identified.

Interviews with representatives from fan groups could be done to gather more information behind answers. Currently the information gathered consists of numbers without a reasoning. When multiple interviews take place, similarities can be seen which might cause multiple participants giving a specific answer.

While this study primarily focused on opinions of football fans, other topics could be investigated in the future. The different channels of informing about sustainable practices can be a valuable data to collect for external communication. Additionally, mainly focusing on existing sustainable practices and their efficiency can be a focus for another research. This could gather multiple different practices to a one place, in where participants can give their thoughts. Current study only had 4 examples to offer.

5.5 Potential future use of the data

After evaluating the results, several potential ways raised to use the data in the future. The main thing would be enhancing the communication outside of the organization regarding the sustainability practices. With this research conclusion can be made, that there is interest on the subject, but the interest is not on the level, in where fan would purposefully investigate sustainability related topics with football organizations.

Sustainability related practices that give fan a possibility to participate are also needed. Since over 60% of the respondents could participate in one or another to sustainability related activities. Notably, the idea of going to stadium without a personal car got multiple answers. This data and idea can give endless opportunities. Situation in where match host team could give a discount to a match visitor with a personal bike or a helmet, or bus / train ticket could encourage supporters to come without personal car. Making nearby parking spots cost could gain extra revenue for the hosts but would not benefit people already coming without a car.

Recycling sports gear also gained interest a lot and apparently it has happened already. Gathering unused sports gear to be put in the use in different areas would be possible. Teaming up with a local voluntary sector parties or with other sports organizations could make the idea happen. Meanwhile gathering donations to a cause with the help of different parties seems to be interesting for many.

The interest to local and vegetarian based consumables also raised interest, even without being an option is interesting. This would lead to a situation in where match visitor would rather spend money on a sustainable products, whether it being environmentally, or socially friendly.

To conclude, it is important to remember that sustainability in all its forms is crucial, regardless of whether the participating party benefits from it or not.

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APPENDIX

QUESTENNAIRE

Appendix 1

From which country are you?

Finland

Italy

Sweden

Netherlands

Germany

Muu...

Funding from another country does affect my attitude towards a football club

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

It is important that my favorite team engages in sustainability practices

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Sustainable or unsustainable practices by football team's influence my attitude towards them

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Are there any sustainability-related actions you have taken or plan to take because of your interest in football? (if other, please explain)

- Go to stadium without personal car
- Recycle sports gear
- Participate in sustainability campaign
- Donated to a cause
- Muu...

In what type of sustainability-related practices you could participate in? (if other, please explain)

- Go to stadium without personal car
- Recycle sportsgear
- Participate in sustainability campaign
- Donate to a cause
- Muu...

Are you aware of RB Leipzig's history?

RB Leipzig's history with Red Bull and the transformation from SSV Markranstädt.

- Yes
- No

RB Leipzig specific questions



In this section, you can answer questions regarding RB Leipzig

The ownership of the organization affects my view of the club

- Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree
-

I am aware of the RB Leipzig's sustainable practices

- Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree
-

With sustainable or unsustainable practices, my vision towards the club can be changed

- Yes
- No

Are you aware of Juventus's history?

Juventus's history with misconducts and disagreements with the Italian Football Federation

Yes

No

Juventus specific questions



In this section, you can answer questions regarding Juventus

The past activities of the organization affects my view of the club?

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

I am aware of the Juventus's sustainable practices?

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Are there any sustainable practices that would change your view of the club?

Yes

No

Ending



Thanks for participating. Please feel free to leave any comments or thoughts!

Kiitos! Grazie! Tack!

Danke! Dank je!

Open comments!

Lyhyt vastausteksti