

The Motivational Factors Affecting Football Fan Attendance in Finland: A Study and Segmentation

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<p>The main purpose of this Bachelor's thesis is to identify the core motivational factors which affect the attendance of football matches in Finland's top football tier; the Veikkausliiga. In addition, the thesis aims to outline the discrepancies between segments of individuals comprising incremental levels of attendance regularity. The subjects of research were individuals living in Finland, both natives and non-natives.</p> <p>A quantitative use of research was selected in the form of a questionnaire, to assess respondent attitudes and uncover the motives and habits regarding the decision whether or not to attend football matches. The survey consisted of 14 questions in total, gathering basic demographic details, opinions on football; both in general as well as in Finland, assessing attitudes towards motivational factors and uncovering thoughts pertaining to the brand image of clubs in Finland.</p> <p>This research based thesis is supported with existing research relating to both sports fan motivational theories as well as branding. The section on fan motivations will provide evaluative analysis of sports fan motives, knowledge-based frameworks and fan types. The chapter surrounding brand importance will introduce the basic foundations of branding as a whole, shall present the theory of brand equity and will uncover various theories within sports branding in particular.</p> <p>Analysis of the results highlight a clear correlation between several fan motivations and the rate of active attendance, as well as uncovering unanimity in attitudes relating to other motives. Regarding brand attitude, results showed that respondents favoured more traditional, historic and community-based values when it comes to supporting football clubs.</p> <p>The segmentation of football fans in Finland, has uncovered a polarisation in supporter behaviour, with most individuals having either very high or very low activity and interest levels. This is resulting in a dissolution of mid-level football fan activity.</p> <p>Further investigation and experimental research may be of value in understanding the importance of versatile approaches to marketing when combined with this newfound knowledge. Focused actions can as a result, provide more impactful outreach to football fans in Finland as well as abroad.</p>	
Keywords Football, Attendance, Branding, Motivation, Fans, Finland, Segmentation, Polarisation	

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1 Introduction

Globally, football remains the most popular of all sports. Widespread interest in the game as well as involvement - through participation and spectating, means it continues to lead the way, with an estimated 270 million people involved worldwide (Conmebol 2013). In England; the birthplace of the sport, exponential growth in interest means around 20% of all adults play football regularly (The FA 2015). Furthermore, in places where it is not the most popular sport; take for example the U.S.A, it is continuing to increase in popularity. In the United States, a precipitous rise in young persons' involvement has seen the number of registered US youth players surpass three million (US Youth Soccer 2015). In Australia, the game has seen rapid growth over a short period of time, and has surfaced as the most engaged in activity, surpassing more traditional and indigenous sports. A 2015 survey showed almost three times as many Australians play association football than play Australian Rules football (Herald Sun 2015).

Football is not only massive in the sense of a practise but also as a spectator sport through live football. In addition to the physical engagement, spectating figures are blossoming: The Women's 2015 Football World Cup final drew more live television viewers in the United States of America than the prestigious Ice Hockey Stanley Cup finals and even the NBA finals (Forbes 2015).

In Finland, the sport of association football has been played for over a century now. From a supporter standpoint, ice hockey remains the major competitor for football, with both of the sports boasting a long history and tradition in this country. Ice Hockey, however can claim a more prestigious and successful existence. At the end of 2015 Finland was ranked 37th of all European associations within UEFA according to club coefficients (UEFA 2015), whereas it ranks fourth globally at Ice Hockey (IIHF 2015).

Finn's relationship with football does stretch back far, as we have read; and in fact it is the most participated sport in the country. By mid-2016, there were approximately 500 000 people involved in football activities in Finland, of which over 130 000 were registered players (Palloliitto, 2015). The top tier of the Finnish professional football league structure is the Veikkausliiga, which was founded in 1990, and it consists of twelve teams. The league schedule is structured to accommodate Finland's cold-climate; so, unlike the major European leagues, the season runs from April to October. This means teams must play 33 league games, plus domestic Cup and possible European fixtures, in just over seven months. Subsequently, the logistical and financial demands of spectators are different to

that of those following major leagues elsewhere which are played over a ten-month period.

Team rivalries in Finland have typically stemmed from levels of success rather than geographical domesticity, until recently, with the re-emergence of the “Stadin derby”, which had provided some much needed historical rivalry in the capital city. Roughly translated as the Helsinki derby in local slang; the fixture between the two Helsinki based rivals HJK and HIFK, returned for the 2015 season, after HIFK promotion from the second tier. The average attendance of HIFK alone increased by a staggering 231,9% from the 2014 season when they were still playing in the second tier, Ykkönen (Kuntopuntari 2015). The most inarguable reason for this change would be their promotion to the Veikkausliiga and being in the same league as their city rivals HJK after a 43-year absence (Helsingin Sanomat, 2015). To accommodate the inevitable increase in attendances, their home fixtures were relocated to the home of rivals HJK, the Sonera Stadium for the 2015 season.

The low attendances of the Veikkausliiga as a comparison to both Ice Hockey games in Finland and to football matches elsewhere, does suggest a lack of interest in attending matches. It would be markedly unfair to draw on the average attendances of the English Premier League or the German Bundesliga for comparison, given their global appeal, stadia, quality of football and marketability. It is however, fair to say that there is room for improvement in Finland, and a clear opportunity to create a greater cultural hub of activity at football matches, as is the case elsewhere.

According to a research by Sponsor Insight, 31% of Finns are either fairly or very interested in football. The sport has risen three places in the ranking of sport popularity during the past ten years in Finland. The researchers also claim that the reason why football has gained more interest recently is because of an enthralling season in the Veikkausliiga in 2015 (Helsingin Sanomat 2016).

With the above considered, we are seeking to shed light on the reasons why Finnish people, despite their clear interest in the sport of football, are shying away from matches, but instead are filling the seats at ice hockey games or staying home and watching from the comfort of their living room. In order to find out why, we believe we must unearth the common motives that the football fans in Finland possess.

1.1 Problem

As we have read, Finns’ relationship with football does provide a weighted argument supporting growth opportunity for attendance of matches. Their participative engagement with

football is increasing. According to Puronaho and Huttunen, the amount of licensed players had already exceeded 100 000 by the end of the year 2001. Approximately 97% of these players were participating in football as a hobby in various age groups and levels, while the remaining 3% were involved in higher-level or competitive football (Desbordes 2007, 275).

Attendance figures however do indicate a worrying lack of interest in spectating, especially outside of the capital city, Helsinki. As a whole, the average attendance of the league in the 2015 season was 2,574 (World Football, 2015), with the highest average of any team being Helsinki-based reigning champions HJK, whose average home crowd was 5,281. The second most attended side was that of Ilves Tampere, whose average gate was 3,265; almost 40% lower than that of HJK. Even surprising eventual winners of the league SJK Seinäjoki could only attract 2,689 fans per home fixture on average.

It is perhaps the lack of progress when it comes to attracting more spectators to top-flight football matches, which is most concerning. When assessing the statistical data available, we can see that whilst the average Veikkausliiga attendance of 2,574 in 2015 saw a rise of 25.8% from an average of 2,046 over the 2014 season, it was still fewer than that of the 2,631 average in the 2008 domestic season. This backward decline suggests a continued waning in fan interest (Kuntopuntari 2015).

The struggle to combat the popularity of Ice Hockey in Finland when it comes to attendances may or may not be attributed to the differing successes of the national sides; the Finnish Football Team is still yet to qualify for a major tournament whereas the Finnish national ice hockey team has won a World Championship as recently as 2011, and has competed with somewhat omnipresent regularity at Olympic games. The average attendance of the SM Liiga, Finland's top flight hockey league now known only as 'Liiga', during the 2014-2015 season was approximately 4,362, with Helsinki's HIFK boasting the biggest average attendance of any team at 5,678 during the year (Liiga 2016).

Involvement in football does offer a strong indicator for potential success and capability, but the challenge lies in mirroring the participative nature of football players in Finland as actively attending supporters. As attendances have continued to fluctuate domestically, we could query if clubs are doing enough to attract fans to attend their matches, but before we should consider the direct financial impact of marketing and its success, or lack of, we must scratch below the surface and take a greater look at the psychology of the sports fan. We need to discover what his or her motivators are, and ascertain how they may be

used to understand the individual as a core component of a sports club as opposed to regarding them as a marketing entity.

With the above considered, we can therefore define one core problem: a lack of spectator attendance in Finnish domestic football. Furthermore, this problem is exacerbated by the lack of research pertaining specifically to Finnish football fandom and spectatorship.

1.2 Purpose of research

The unwavering commitment of many football fans is no new phenomenon, nor is the fickle nature of others, but in a sport where success and failure are separated by a thin line, how can clubs ensure financial sustainability through high attendances unconditional of on-pitch success? By identifying and managing the recurrent issues which affect fans desire to attend games, creating a future-proof plan for supporter attendance is as important as developing a winning formula on the field. The first step of this is understanding why fans attend games, and perhaps more importantly, why not.

There continues to be a somewhat defeatist acknowledgement that the Finnish footballing culture has a long way to go before it can compete with the strength of other European domestic leagues; the indication of low supporter attendance gives support to this belief. That said, the foundations are in place to compete on many levels: youth involvement in the game and an increase in watching football among young people (Helsingin Sanomat 2016) point to a high level of interest in the sport. Quite how this can be carried towards spectator figures remains somewhat of a mystery. In order to generate such a demand, clubs must first understand the supporter as an individual prior to trying to mould them into a homogenous group.

Whilst some followers are more passively engaged with the game; pursuing an interest in their team through widespread media coverage - others are more tribal-like in their affiliation; investing the majority of their time, money and mental energy into supporting their team. Sometimes the loyalty can be so immense that retaliation against decision makers are inevitable. Over the past few years the tensions have risen between football supporters and football clubs in the UK, as ticket prices have increased. The price of the cheapest match tickets in the English Premier League has risen by 15% since 2011. This caused numerous fans and the Football Supporters' Federation to protest about ticket prices (BBC Sport 2015). Inter-generational love of a certain team often stems from a predecessor's long running relationship with it, as a bond is emotionally inherited through family encouragement. For others it might have been a case of love at first sight, or as rebellious decision to cheer for the rival of one's father, brother or entire family for that matter. Either

way, like any form of love, it grows and develops over time, becoming somewhat of a habitual and hopeless devotion; as a club becomes perpetually followed, their passion manifested in moments of euphoria or despair. It is the fans who arguably form the backbone of any sporting team, and like any other business retaining its customers, it is pivotal that clubs keep hold of these people.

The ultimate purpose of our research then, is to help Finnish football clubs understand their fans better; providing clubs with a segmented dissection of domestic-based football fans, to increase fan motive understanding and ultimately encourage higher attendances.

“What is a club in any case? Not the buildings or the directors or the people who are paid to represent it. It’s not the television contracts, get-out clauses, marketing departments or executive boxes. It’s the noise, the passion, the feeling of belonging, the pride in your city. It’s a small boy clambering up the stadium steps for the very first time, gripping his father’s hand, gawping at that hallowed stretch of turf beneath him and, without being able to do a thing about it, falling in love.” ~Sir Bobby Robson

1.3 Delimitation

The quantitative nature of our research is specifically focused towards helping clubs achieve a better understanding of the Finnish football fan, through improved knowledge of motivations and desires. This should help stem the dissipated costs of misguided marketing and bridge the divide between the teams and their fans.

Previous research on the subject of sports fans motivators and marketing strategies is widely available, as is statistical information pertaining to the attendance of fans in professional leagues globally. There does exist a relative lack of literature on the subject of football fan motivators specifically, however, and thus, motivational frameworks which have been assessed comprise of sports fans as a whole. Furthermore, the branding of sports fans as a whole was studied, given the wider availability of literature on the subject.

The common acknowledgement among researchers that fans of all sports are impacted by the same emotional stimulators and motives, provides added weight to the relevance of our area of focus towards theories and frameworks surrounding sports fans in general.

The Finnish Veikkausliiga alone was chosen as the subject for investigation thanks to the availability of data, and the acknowledgement that attendances outside of the highest tier in Finnish football are very low. The low spectator figures outside of the top tier are inarguably a result of factors beyond the power of clubs: existing Veikkausliiga teams from the

same city or town, lack of population, lack of marketing funds available to the smaller clubs and a dearth of general infrastructure at club level. Given the inimitable scale of the footballing economy in countries such as England, Spain or Germany, we chose not to form a comparative study with Finland. Furthermore, we have chosen to investigate the culture of Finnish football fans in general, rather than the followers of just one club.

2 Literature review

Our review of existing literary content focuses on existing information and research which fall parallel with our own research. This material surrounds both the subjects of motivators of sports fans, and also of sports branding; in particular football. Subsequently, this material forms the evaluative factors of the survey which we have undertaken to segment the Finnish football fan. We have chosen these two particular subjects to research given their impact on the decision of sports fans whether or not to attend sporting events.

As we have read, Finnish association football statistics suggest an ongoing problem in the development of a strong fan culture, and a losing battle in the war of Ice Hockey vs. Football supporter attendances. The challenge to understand exactly why the *inactive* fan in Finland is reluctant to attend live matches, and equally as important, why those who do attend games continue to do so, can be aided by research and publications which are closely related to our thesis.

Whilst plenty of research pertaining to sports fan attendance motivators in general, has been undertaken; there are limited studies which focus solely on the motivation of football fans, especially in Finland. The psychological components and stimuli which drive sports fans to attend matches and actively follow their team have been widely investigated and given evidential support, however the different compositions of fans of different sports have been less closely engaged. Whilst there have been many studies centred on the segmentation of sports fans for marketing purposes, our aim of segmenting the fans of a single sport in a single population should provide insightful findings and easy-to-interpret data.

2.1 Fan Decision Making Process

The first subject which we have taken into account in our literature review is that of fan motivation, and in particular; the fan decision-making process. Our research looks in particular at the psychological reasoning of supporters of sports teams. The psychology of

sports fans has been afforded much attention; to try to understand which values supporters have, and how they affect the decision making process of the individual. These cognitive components form the basis of whether or not fans choose for example, which team to follow, whether to attend a game or if they should buy a teams' jersey or not.

It must be noted that research surrounding sports fans has, over time - led to segmentation in attempts to differentiate between fan and fanatic: highlighting the differences between the casual enjoyer and the more emotionally connected supporter. In this section of the literature review we shall cover research material which does not discriminate between so called fan types, and have been accepted as commonplace amongst all those interested in sports.

Research on the decision making process of fans has widened over time to incorporate newer trends and emerging demands, and whilst several measurement tools for the purpose of research have been devised by theorists, the core composition of the values of each tool are somewhat recurrent. Below, we shall take a look at some of the values which affect sports fan motivation, and why they arguably play a large part in the decision making process to attend a match or not. We shall also evaluate some of the more prominent models which have been forged as a result of the decision making process.

2.1.1 Motivational Factors

The sense of drama for sports fans is perhaps the most notable and well regarded motivator. Often at the core of many motivational theories, Prisuta discovered in a study concerning fans, that over half of all respondents watched televised sport because the drama brought them an emotional involvement in the event (Duncan and Brummett 1989, 201). Positive stress as a stimulator is ultimately a major reason that so many also opt to attend matches, especially of the team that they follow. Burmann and Schade (2010) go on to say that society as whole cannot offer enough variability of exciting stimuli, which means humans seek greater drama and stress from elsewhere. As sports clubs and associations strive to generate greater attention through marketing ploys and crowd-sourced hype such as forums and fan involvement, events become monumental occasions steeped in drama and a sense of heightened importance.

Entertainment is perhaps as equally acknowledged as a motivator. We, as individuals need to be entertained, and Kahle and Close (2010) suggest the enjoyment and emotional satisfaction of watching their favourite team are major driving forces for fans who follow sport. Furthermore, they go on to mention *schadenfreude*; a German term which refers to the enjoyment which fans take at the misfortune of rivals. This undoubtedly provides

added motivation for fans to pay further attention to matches other than that of their own team.

Similarly, many agree that a desire to increase self-esteem is a key form of motivation. In his hierarchy of needs, Maslow (1970) he cited esteem as a psychological need for the individual. Hirt et al (1992) studied the effects of a teams' success on its' fans. The study, which involved the followers of basketball teams from the Indiana and Wisconsin Universities in the United States examined the changes in the mood of both sets of fans before and after matches. They found that, rather inevitably, the mood and self-esteem of the fans on the winning side improved whilst that of the losing team declined. The evidence was highlighted in the failure of fans from the losing side to successfully complete several tasks given post-defeat, especially by the most dedicated of fans. This direct link between the success of a team and the personal success of its' fans provides valuable cause to argue the impact and importance of self-esteem; as both a motivator and as a source of emotional dependency between fan and team.

Whilst the financial implications surrounding fan attendance are broad: ticket cost, travel expenses and refreshments, to name but a few – the growing interest and accessibility of gambling, provides fans and followers with the chance to make money on sports, as opposed to spending it. Whilst sports betting is no new phenomena, technology in the form of mobile accessibility is driving fans from static gambling in-store to betting in-play from anywhere, even within the stadium of their favourite team. There have been several theories outlined, which incorporate the importance of gambling in fan decision making. Whilst this is undoubtedly a motivator for individuals to pay more attention to matches which they have bet on, the question remains; does gambling on matches which don't involve the fans favoured team detract attention away from actively supporting their own side? Although the interest of gamblers in matches does exist, it's limited importance to a select number of followers makes economic value the least motivating fan motivator, according to Shank and Lyberger (2015, p. 183).

Aesthetics has also been widely acknowledged as a reason for fans to attend games. The lure of watching top athletes at the peak of their game is seen to be a key reason why people who perhaps are less affiliated to a team, still want to spectate. Shank and Lyberger (2015, p 186) mention that games of basketball have been likened to ballet performances, where the beauty of the occasion draws further interest from fans. They also agree that a need for affiliation is the case for many sports fans. Indeed, research has proven that the behaviours of so called reference groups such as family, friends and community members do have an impact on game attendance for others. Group mentality of

this kind doesn't just mean an increased encouragement for fans to attend games, but also an increased likelihood of becoming attached to the same teams as friends (Shank and Lyberger 2015 (p. 186-187).

Sports often provides chance for fans to escape from reality, and it has been proposed by many researchers that it remains a core part of the mental composition of supporter decision making. Trail and James (2001, in Chung 2014, 22) agreed that such events allow individuals to re-ignite some excitement and joy into their life and break away from the mundane nature of everyday life. Furthermore, Prisuta (1979), argued that family inclusion in sporting events is a core component of many fans' motivations to spectate. He argued that interest in sports is a family affair and viewing is likely to be consistent throughout a family.

Lee (2011, in Chung 2014, 21) also claims that the desire to learn about sport, is a reason an individual may tune in to watch their favourite side, or even neutral events. Discovering new information about teams, individuals and competitions draws individuals towards spectating more intensely. Chung (2014) argues that others may have a more muted interest in the finer details of sporting events, and instead watch for the purpose of passing time. The costs of attending live matches, does however suggest that spectating just to pass the time, is more relevant to television viewers rather than those at the stadium.

2.1.2 Models of Fan Motivation

When it comes to aggregating the many psychological factors which affect fan decisions and motivations, there has been an emergence of models to encompass multiple values as a way of recognising their collective relevance.

Wann (1995) first proposed the SFMS (Sports Fan Motivation Scale) over twenty years ago, which came as a result of decades of wide, yet relatively generic research. This scale was created as a tool with which to measure eight separate motives of sports fans. Each of these Wann argued, play some part in the decision making process of the supporter. They were; eustress; a positive sense of drama which motivates the individual, self-esteem; a craving to improve individual self-esteem, escape; the motivation of escaping normal routine and lose themselves in sport, entertainment; the desire to be entertained, economic; relating to the desire to gamble on sporting fixtures, aesthetic; which relates to the awe expressed at the beauty of athletic capability, group affiliation; noting the desire to be part of a community of followers or spectators, and family; the motive of spending more time with family through sports. Wann's scale incorporates both the value of entertainment as well as that of aesthetic needs.

Rein et al (2006), mention the FDF (Fan Decision Factor) as an alternative diagnostic model which evaluates the importance of several assessing factors when sports fans make a decision. It may be used to ascertain which specific factors play the greatest importance in assessing the likelihood of a fan deciding, for example - to attend a match. The aggregative input of these factors serves as proof, they argue, that all fan decisions are subject to evaluative engagement with many influencers, even if a decision is ultimately made as a consequence of a single reason above all others. The tool was designed a quantitative research aid, as opposed to a theoretical framework, but recognises not just the importance certain factors have on fan decision making, but how well the sports team manages each factor. This, in effect, provides a wide perspective of the assets of a club and the ability to influence the behaviour of its' fans.

Agreeing with previous research outlining the emotional demands of fans, Kahle and Close (2011, 74-75) argued that there were three core needs which constitute to the fundamental behaviour of fans. The three needs were validation, pleasure and arousal. Within each of these were several motives, mostly drawn from the studies of predecessors. The motivational factors such as self-esteem and group affiliation were part of fan validation, they argued, and entertainment and aesthetics belong to the need of being pleased. Finally, arousal, they devised, would incorporate such motivators as escape and eustress.

When evaluating the passion and involvement of fans for the purpose of sponsorship and marketing, Degaris (2015) says that whilst existing fan decision making processes and factors are useful attributes, sponsors should recognise fan involvement through three main categories; cognitive, affective and conative. The first; cognitive, should take into account fan knowledge and memory of their team or favoured sport. Affective, the second factor, questions the amount a fan loves their sport or team and seeks to identify the key emotions of feeling which she/he has. Finally, the behavioural aspect focuses on how the fans act and are argued to be the most crucial part. Knowing fan behaviour allows marketers to access the supporters and create effective campaigns, he argues.

The greater focus on the behavioural aspect above the emotional desire of fans in Degaris' framework, further highlights the absence of desire for in-depth fan understanding between the sports club/sponsor and the fans. The fissures between the increasingly frustrated and disenfranchised sports fanatic and his/her club are highlighted in this simple yet evident ad-hoc marketing behaviour which places the fan not as an asset to a club or industry brand, but rather as financial prey.

2.1.3 Types of Fans

Following on from research which was made to try and uncover the inclusive factors of fan decision-making, there have been subsequent attempts made to classify fan types. These have typically been generically proposed to consider fan types of all sports, from the more actively engaged follower to the more passive individual who perhaps is not so acquainted with the game.

Mahoney (2000), developed the Psychological Commitment to Team (PST) Scale to assess the loyalty of fans. His work segmented fans into four levels of commitment: High Loyalty, Spurious Loyalty, Latent Loyalty, Low Loyalty. He argued that it was of great importance for clubs to tailor marketing towards each segment individually, in order to meet the varying levels of attachment which each fan segment has.

Rein et al (2006) proposed the Fan Involvement Ladder. Their seven tiered approach to fan involvement summarises all individuals' affiliation to sports. Unlike many other fan models, it is inclusive of the anti-fan, which they refer to as "Indifferent Fans": individuals who are not in any way affiliated to a sport or specific team. Rather than see this group as a lost cause, they instead form an interesting and potentially marketable group. Since the omnipresent nature of sports branding and marketing is somewhat unavoidable today, this type of individual is recognised as just a memorable experience away from becoming an enthusiast. The second level of fan they refer to as "Eyeballs". These fans, they argue, represent the largest group of all sports fans. As followers they tend to focus on media coverage over match attendance. Although they rarely surpass the passive media-spying level of commitment to sports, they form the most profitable section of the sports market thanks to their media hungry attitude. Investment comes in the form of excited engagement for these fans.

The third group, "Wallets", are those who invest financially in sport. They are willing to spend money on travelling to far flung places to watch sports and purchase sporting video games, claim Rein et al. They are the ones who queue for tickets for matches and are the marketing teams dream customer. Their interest is key, and keeping them satisfied is an important job for decision makers. In return for the financial commitment and loyalty these fans show, the fans themselves are rewarded with escapist experiences and a feeling of deeper satisfaction and belonging. The fourth group of fans, they call the "Collectors". These are the ones who pay great sums of money for sports merchandise and memorabilia. Whilst the interest in sports manifests in the collection of notable goods, the deep-seeded and widening interest in the goods creates new communities where collectors

gather. Next, the fifth level, are “Attachers”. These fans are not content with being an anonymous part of the crowd. They want to be involved and interact with the club and its star players and performers. They crave attention and communication from their favourite team. Where once fan clubs provided such opportunity, nowadays this hunger can be satisfied with online message boards and chatrooms

Ensnared
Insiders
Attachers
Collectors
Wallets
Eyeballs
Indifferent Fans

Figure 1. The Fan Involvement Ladder by Rein et al. 2006

The second to top tier of the ladder are “Insiders”. In this group are the fans which form part of the inner realms of a sports club. They invest in the best seats in the stadium, sat with a director or even a player. They perhaps invest into charitable events for the teams and receive special treatment from board members in the form of guest invitations. Finally though, the highest level of fan commitment is the “Ensnared” fan. As the name suggests, these fans, Rein et al argue, are so embedded with a sport that they feel part of it. This sharing of identity results in a die-hard support for a team, product or sport. Unwilling to defer from their support, they are both a huge asset to a sport, but also a potential problem. The commitment of such fans to supporting a team for example, may lead to them becoming an integral part of the match atmospheres. This could lead to special privileges from the club itself, creating a feeling of added importance for the fan. This type of fan, on the contrary, may with such encouragement become overinvolved, crossing the line between what is acceptable involvement and what is not. Hooliganism or excessive romanticism of stars leading to stalking, are two examples of how.

2.2 Branding within football

In the following part, we will discuss about branding and its relevance in sports, mainly football. It will go through the core concept of branding and brand equity followed by an

overview of some framework of how branding has been implemented in sports and especially team sports in this case. It will generally provide sports-centric framework with some described specifically involving football in the context. The reason this was chosen was because we wanted to discover if the perceived brand image has a direct or indirect effect towards match attendance.

2.2.1 Branding

Branding as we know it today is the process of creating a unique identity to differentiate your product or service in the market. As a word, brand is of Old Scandinavian origin and originates from the word brandr = to burn (Keller 2008, 2). This would most obviously suggest the marking of livestock with a branding iron to distinguish them from other livestock. This would also suggest that the ownership and property rights would be the actual brand and not the livestock (Rein et al. 2006, 97).

According to Aaker (1991, 17), a brand is a name or a symbol which is set to give the seller's goods or services a distinct identity which is differentiated from the competitor's goods or services. Therefore, the source and the producer of the brand will be clearly indicated to the consumer, separating it from other identical products.

"A strong brand delivers a promise of benefit or performance to the audience" (Rein et al. 2006, 98).

Currently, branding has developed to involve intangible assets such as services in addition to tangible items. According to Murphy (1998, 1-2), modern branding is an assembly of values which are both tangible and intangible, they are relevant to consumers and are properly distinguished from other supplier's brands. Murphy states that branding has developed in a number of significant ways; trademarks, patents, design and copyrights have become the norm of property ownership. The concept of branded goods is now involving offerings that are less tangible which gives service brands the same status as product brands. Choosing brands over other ones now consists of more specific requirements such as size, shape, make-up and price which means that the smallest difference between similar brands can make a difference in consumer choices. Murphy also says that brands have financial values in addition to consumer values, meaning that the brand's financial values can be measured.

2.2.2 Brand equity

Brand equity is a set of assets which together comprise the value of a brand's name and symbol. Specifically, the assets are brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand associations and perceived quality (Aaker 1996, 7-8). Reaching an equally high level in each of these assets will aid in achieving higher brand equity.

Brand loyalty is simply about how loyal is the customer towards a product or service of a certain brand. The loyal customer would choose the product with his or her favourite brand over a similar one with a different brand (Aaker 1996, 21). Comparatively speaking, brand association and awareness are something that companies can invest on whilst loyalty is an asset that is solely achieved determined by the customer's enthusiasm to keep an ongoing relationship with the company's specific services or products (Fetchko et al. 2013, 130).

Brand awareness is determined how strongly a certain brand is present in the mind of a consumer. Awareness is generally measured according how well the consumer remembers, recognises or recalls a brand, which also determines the enhancement of brand equity (Aaker 1996, 10).

Brand associations "are thoughts and perceptions people hold for a brand" (Fetchko et al. 2013, 130). Brand associations are what businesses wish the brand would stand for in the minds of the customer. It is what the customer associates the brand with associations such as product attributes, a celebrity, or a symbol of some sort. (Aaker 1996, 25).

Perceived quality as an asset of brand equity is the overall quality the consumer perceives of the product or service. It is about how does the business place its product, service or even its own brand for the consumer to be assured maximum quality. Within the spectrum of brand associations, the asset of perceived quality is seen as the major driving factor in the financial performance of a brand. It is also seen as an opportunity to differentiate the product or service from others that rely other marketing factors such as price or prestige (Aaker 1996, 17).

As brand equity is comprised of a set of assets, investing in creating and enhancing them is vital when it comes to brand management. Also, the purpose of brand equity is to create value for the firm and customers. In addition to the end users, the customers comprise of all the persons at the infrastructure level, e.g. travel agents, in addition to the travelers. To prepare for a situation where the brand's name or symbol were to change, it is very vital

that the assets and other liabilities in the brand equity are strongly linked to the name and/or symbols (Aaker 1996, 8).

2.2.3 Branding in sports

According to Rein et al. (2006, 103-117), segmentation, involvement, ethos and transformation are the essential components when it comes to developing sports branding.

Segmentation of different sports consumers according to their habits and needs can allow sports brands to come up with more individualised services for consumers and also prioritise on more lucrative segments. Selecting reasonable target markets is also included in this process where sports clubs would set themselves in a beneficial marketplace, especially when considering accessibility for the local crowd to attend matches. (Rein et al. 2006, 103-108)

Involvement is about sport brands building and maintaining a strong relationship with its fans. Rein et al. explain that there are five levels in involvement of fans in a sports product: awareness towards the sport, regular checking of results, attending matches regularly, using all the distribution channels to stay updated with the sport and, finally, making the sport a part of his or her life (Rein et al. 2006, 108)

Ethos refers to creating credibility for the sports brand in order to gain trust from the audience, especially the fans. Fans of a sports clubs want to be given clear promises by the managers that will ultimately benefit the club. Ethos is therefore gained from the fans and a sports brand without it will not survive in the competitive market. (Rein et al. 2006, 112-115)

Transformation, in this context, is about the sports product changing purposefully into a brand which enhances strengths, minimises weaknesses and is adaptable in a competitive climate. It is an understanding that in order for them to maintain a competitive edge, sports clubs need to be aware of the expectations of the fans, what competitors are doing and other current affairs (e.g. technology) that can affect their situation. (Rein et al. 2006, 115-117)

As an extension of Aaker's theory of developing brand equity, Gladden, Milne and Sutton came up with a model that measures brand equity specific to the sports industry (Figure 2). The main purpose of the model is to develop brand equity in the perspective of a sport product. The model assesses this product with the four fundamental assets of brand equity; brand loyalty as the competence to attain and retain consumers, brand awareness as

the fact how familiar are consumers of the sport team or product, brand associations as the features from the experience of symbolic factors brought by the team and finally perceived quality as the perceived success rate of a team (Shank et al. 2015, 276-277).

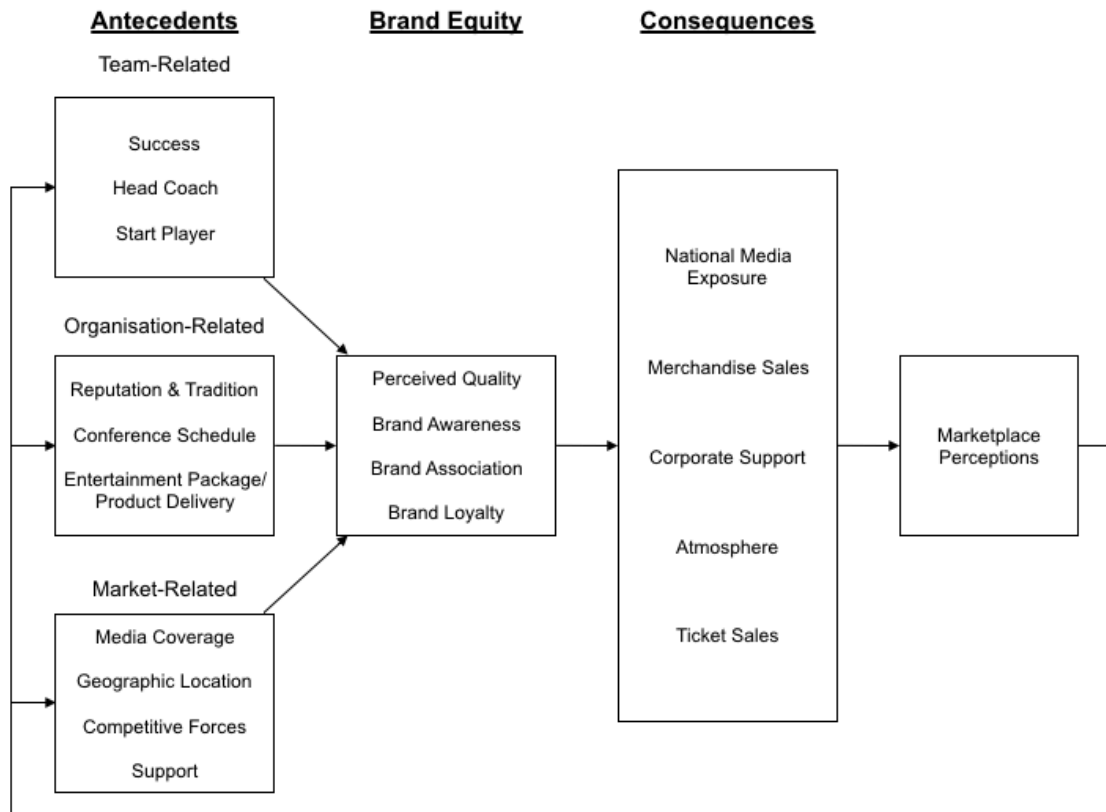


Figure 2. The conceptual model for assessing brand equity. Gladden, Milne and Sutton in Shank et al. 2015

In this particular model, Gladden et al. also presented the three categories of antecedents which are determinants for the level of brand equity. The three determinants are stated as team-related, organisation-related and market-related antecedents, which will be elaborated as follows:

Team-related factors refer to the actual athletic competitiveness of a certain sport team. Gladden et al. state that although a team could attain success in other various areas such as merchandise sales and media exposure, athletic success plays a vital role in succeeding in creating a strong sports brand. Appointment of a renowned head coach or signing of a star player to sport teams can also improve brand equity (Shank et al. 2015, 277, 280). For example, the appointment of renowned German football coach Jürgen Klopp to Liverpool F.C. was seen as a great boost for the club’s image and credibility, as it brought

praises from revered and rival former Manchester United Manager Sir Alex Ferguson himself (ESPN FC 2015).

In this model, *Organisation-related* factors incorporate three elements. Firstly, reputation and tradition refers to the importance of off-field image. External determinants, it is understood, have as important an impact on the perception of a sports team, as competitive success itself. Secondly, conference schedule which refers to the athletic competition in the team's group or league, e.g. rivalries and derbies. Thirdly, entertainment-related aspects, one of the only controllable aspects of the organisation, which are controlled and generated by the organisation. Image is the key element regarding these factors, as adaptation and consideration towards them are vital in developing brand equity (Shank et al. 2015, 280).

Market-related aspects refer to media coverage, its geographic location, competitive forces and support. The media coverage refers to the visibility of the team through various outlets in the media such as TV, newspaper and radio. The geographic location refers to actual geographic determinants influencing the brand. The surrounding competitive forces can have a strong influence towards the value of the brand due to other competition in the league or nearby area. Support is simply described by Shank et al. as "the greater number of loyal fans and supporters means the greater the brand equity" (Shank et al. 2015, 280).

The formed up level of brand equity then leads to concrete consequences which are national media exposure, increase in merchandise sales, a rise in corporate support and improvement in atmosphere and increase in ticket sales. These then result in eventual perceptions of the marketplace (Shank et al. 2015, 281).

The most prevailing question regarding branding in sports teams is: 'Are club success and performance the ultimate factors when determining brand success?' In some cases, this can be close to correct. However, sport brands of the present day concentrate on establishing a successful brand by creating determinants other than just club success. Rein et al. (2006, 99-100) state that branded teams in the sports industry provide its supporters a distinctive experience which is not solely dependent on the success of the team. They will still bear a competitive position in the market. Permanence, connectivity, and a premium are the three major qualities a sports team should maximise;

The advantage of permanence in a sports brand is that it brings a more permanent connection between the team and the fans who will not be completely demotivated to stand

by their team or club during a sequence of losses or by the loss of a star player. As a second attribute; connectivity in a sports brand involves having a large amount of various platforms that provide the fans with opportunities to connect with the sports product and also bringing them closer together. Finally, premium in a sports brand means that the sports team perceives in establishing a stronger foothold over other sports brands. It involves utilising three factors; being highly visible in the marketplace to attract awareness, involving the brand in a popular sector of particular sports in a country, and finally by attaining cultural salience and following the most predominant trends in sports (Rein et al. 2006, 99-100).

Other than club success, an average football spectator's decision to attend a football match can be strongly affected by the branding of the football club. According to a research by Bauer et al. (2004) brand awareness has a direct effect on match attendance. Their research showed that brand related factors that had a positive influence on match attendance were awareness; recognising and being familiar with the sports brand, product-related attributes; factors such as team success and star player or players, non-product related attributes; symbolic factors such as logos and atmosphere, and brand benefits; factors that the fans feel benefited of, such as identifying fans, nostalgia and escapism (Bauer 2004, 504, 508).

According to Rein et al. (2006, 263-291), branding in sports can be subcategorised into different brand entities, each comprising separate core elements. Entities such as the branded athlete, the branded league and the branded event were identified in this list. Whilst some of these are likely to hold less relevance in the battle to attract supporters to attend games; the impact of successful branding continues to play a large part in the emotional affiliation between the supporter and the supported.

A fair amount of studies related to branding in sports strongly suggest that sports clubs should involve benefiting the spectators and the local community in order to strengthen their brand image. Sports clubs should be aware of how they treat their supporters in order to get their loyalty towards their club and brand. One way to attain the loyalty of spectators is by naming them "members", instead of fans (DeGaris 2015, 63). This method is especially used by the sports industry in Europe and Australia.

Another similar theory regarding the theory of naming fans as members; is when these customers are the actual owners of the brand. Appointed as the president of the Pittsburgh Penguins Ice hockey team in 2007, Mr. David Morehouse faced a challenge to in-

crease the ice hockey following of the already American football driven city. After some research he asked the fans of the Penguins directly about how they would want their team to succeed and it resulted in three key words: drive, energy and innovation. In the end, the team committed in fulfilling and improving these factors for the Penguins and it got positive reactions from the fans. This resembles the theory that marketers are merely caretakers of the brand, whilst the customers are the actual owners of the brand. In a sports context, the brand ownership is raised from the element that it's the fans who actually benefit from the quality, feelings of trust and experiences that the teams brand delivers (Fetchko et al. 2013, 117-118).

Blumrodt (2014, 1556) suggests that sport clubs should involve a clear and visible social commitment towards the local population, in order to gain a good reputation with the community. He believes that both community engagement and corporate social responsibility should be core elements for a sports club in the implementation of a strategic brand management strategy.

Bauer et al. (2004, 497) suggest that in order to form a competitive edge, sports clubs must become progressive service sellers. In order to do this, they proposed that clubs must concentrate on maintaining a central approach in regards to relationship management of a brand. This means for example that clubs would support fan groups economically or by offering more visibility as part of the club's appearance.

It is obvious that loyalty is very important when considering the support and attendance of a club and its matches. Some corporations and companies have even tried to perceive loyalty-attaining brand strategies that closely resemble the loyalty towards football clubs (The Wall Street Journal 2010).

3 Research

The collection of respondent data for the thesis “The Motivational Factors Affecting Football Fan Attendance in Finland”, was executed through quantitative methods, using a survey. A total of 412 respondents participated, either in Finnish or English versions of the questionnaire, which comprised of the exact same questions in identical form and order. Out of the total 412 respondents, 327 participated in the Finnish version and 85 participated in the English version.

The following section of the thesis considers the weighted argument upon which the decision to use an empirical method was taken. It also looks in depth at how the survey was formed and subsequently distributed.

The purpose of said survey was to obtain an understanding of why football fans in Finland, both citizens and non-citizens living there, did or did not attend footballing fixtures. In order to deliver clear, numerical analysis and evidence, the goal was to form a well-structured questionnaire that would be reflective of the preceding theoretical research.

Widespread assumptions regarding Finnish football fan culture, and previous theories and attempts at segmenting fan types brought us to the decision to use an empirical research method for this thesis. In order to evaluate the validity and relevance of such frameworks against a Finnish market, the use of quantitative research was decided on, to highlight any correlations or misalignments between theory and fact.

The collection of data was undertaken during the summer months of July and August of 2016, during the domestic footballing calendar in Finland.

3.1 Quantitative research

Whilst the use of quantitative methods such as surveys generally meets the need of those seeking numerical evidence and supportive figures, quantitative data can bridge the divide between collecting numerical data and generating wider understanding of respondent emotions or feelings through open ended answers. It was important that we recognised the limitations of quantitative data collection, and embedded our desired outcomes within the skeleton of our research.

Quantitative research is a method of research where analysis and data are produced in the form of numerical data. The method is deductive where reason and logic are used to

come up with results in the form numbers and statistics. When regarding social reality, it concentrates on an objectivist approach (Bryman & Bell 2011, 26-27, 150).

The results of this form of research are either accurate conclusions or testable hypotheses. Results in quantitative research predominantly consists of gathered information from a numerous amount of people. Practical methods of producing data include questionnaire surveys, counting amounts from observation and gathering data from already existing administrative sources, such as sale of tickets (Veal 2011, 34).

The purpose of quantitative research is to come up with useful information from actual data. When explaining about this sort of information, Morris (2003, 1) explains the following:

“One way of looking at quantitative methods is as a collection of techniques for organising, presenting, summarising, communicating and drawing conclusions from data, so that it becomes informative”.

3.2 Creating the survey

The decision to use quantitative methods for the research came as a result of the need to obtain widely sourced descriptive data. Webropol, the Finnish online questionnaire generator was used to curate the survey. It was chosen for its familiarity, simplicity, and foremost ability to inexpensively and swiftly generate easy-to-assess results. Our survey aimed at providing a relationship between the collected data and observations made in the literature review. Equally as important as deciding on the type of research taken, qualitative or quantitative, were the form of the questions within the survey. In order to provide the most valuable and relevant responses, the construction of each question needed to recognise the underlying purpose of each of the themes it was addressing. The survey comprised of varying forms of close-ended questions, through multiple choice questions, dichotomous questions, Likert Scales, multiple choice questions and also use of a projective question.

Whilst experimental methods of research would have potentially yielded more emotionally descriptive answers and comprehensive behavioural understanding, we faced a true inability to implement intervening measures. The impossible task of physically manipulating some of the variables; such as weather, ticket prices and tradition of Finnish clubs, combined with a lack of genuine ability to have a widespread effect on others, such as atmosphere or safety, means we opted against an experimental methodology.

When creating the questionnaire, the first thing to acknowledge was the importance of language. Whilst Finnish would inevitably be the primary choice for the majority of respondents, we also had to include Swedish and/or English versions to accommodate for non Finnish-speakers. In addition to the Finnish version, we opted to select English only. The decision, we felt, was justified as English remains the most collectively understood and spoken lingua franca in Finland, besides Finnish. Furthermore, a Swedish version of the survey would have demanded an outsourcing of help, as our lingual proficiency was insufficient for creating a survey in a language other than our own mother tongues.

Our next focus lay on the required information of respondents. The gender, age and employment status of the individual was asked as well as their postal code, to allow for cross evaluation. We also acknowledged the need of a screen in the questionnaire to ensure the assessment of only the suitable respondent data was made. We had already decided not to collect data from Finnish citizens solely, but instead from anyone living in Finland. We did so, understanding that regardless of nationality, the susceptibility towards marketing remains consistent to all individuals living in the country. Although current and future marketing strategies inevitably focus on Finnish speaking individuals, the interest and association with the sport for foreign persons still makes them key respondents and sources of opinion.

We did however only want to evaluate the results of residents in Finland, so we created a screening question asking the respondent if they lived inside or outside of Finland. Answering “no” did not mean the respondent was unable to fill in the rest of the survey, however. We chose to let all respondents complete the questionnaire. We believed that by stating an ineligibility to those living outside of Finland in the survey itself, it may only encourage participants to re-enter the online platform and lie about their domicile to proceed further.

With the global appeal of the most prestigious footballing competitions and domestic leagues in places such England, Spain and Germany, comes the omnipresent coverage on television. When it comes to comparing the Veikkausliiga to its most notable European counterparts, the discrepancies exist beyond their financial dominions and quality. With this in mind, we chose to ask if supporters follow a foreign team more closely than a Finnish one. Noting the aforementioned growth of footballing coverage on various technological platforms too, we also asked respondents if they prefer watching foreign football over Finnish football. We then asked the respondents which Veikkausliiga team, if any, they supported. In order to account for those who support foreign or lower tier clubs, we included that as a potential answer.

A core evaluative criteria for us, was to compare the commitment of fans with their motivations. We judged commitment in the form of match attendance, and assessed their motivations through a series of questions related to the theoretical frameworks surrounding sports fan motivation. In order to separate the different commitment levels of fans, we asked how many Veikkausliiga matches they attended per season. This allowed us to group the individuals who attend matches as infrequently as 0-2 times per season, and as often as on 20 or more occasions.

The national appeal of Ice Hockey means it is commonly regarded as Finn's national sport, and with attendances greater on average, than that of football in the country, we made the decision to ask respondents what their favourite sport to spectate was. We emphasise our use of the term spectate, given that the attendance figures rather than participatory figures were the subject of our thesis, and ultimately the realer challenge in the sport, as we have read.

Having segregated our literature review into two sections; motivational factors and branding - we chose to differentiate the question style of each when it came to the survey. The need to distinguish the different types of desired response was key and it encouraged us to adjust the forms of questions dependant on the desired response.

The motivational factors of supporters which were highlighted from previous research, were collected and divided across two separately formed questions. We made the response to each of the factors compulsory, in order to ascertain the relevance of each and every one within the Finnish footballing market.

For the first question, we listed the factors which we felt were the more structural and environmental elements of football, such as ticket price and kick off time, and also weather and facilities. These, we felt were pull factors that with correct or incorrect manipulation (where possible), could convince or prevent a supporter to attend a match. We asked respondents to answer how important these factors were to them as individuals, when considering attending matches,

The second question was also in the form of a Likert scale, but this term in assessing the level of agreement or disagreement towards a list of motivations. The comments, we understood, comprised personal and emotional subjective factors relating to stress, feelings

of belonging and entertainment. We believed that these factors were long running emotional ties with football, and affect the encouragement to attend rather than convince an individual to go. The push factors, if you like.

Questions twelve and thirteen of the survey focused on the branding perspective of the research. The statements in these questions were designed with the consideration of common perceptions that fans or spectators would have when attending a football match or following a certain team. The purpose of this part of the survey was to find out how the respondents felt about their favourite clubs. In question twelve we asked the respondents to give a maximum of three reasons why they started supporting their club, while in question thirteen we ask them to give another maximum of three statements what come to their mind when they think of their club. One of the largest challenges that we faced, was understanding supporters' brand attitude through quantitative methods. Whilst it would have been easier to use experimental methodologies to test reactions to changes in brand equity, we instead relied on the instinctive value of the respondent with his/her immediate response to the listed feelings.

Both branding questions, number 12 and number 13 were in multiple choice formats, and participants could select a maximum of 3 from each list. This was our chosen approach to try to gather more reliable answers, as respondents had to focus more widely on the list of responses and pick carefully which, if any, most matched their feelings.

Finally, we used a projective method of questioning in the final part of the survey. We formed the question in first person format for the reader, as a statement saying "I would attend more Veikkausliiga matches if", followed by a list of suggestions. The purpose of this question was an attempt to diminish guess work when attempting knowledge translation of the data, and to also introduce potential new concepts for future use, from the inspiration of best practices or schemes made elsewhere. We also wanted to discover correlations between what fans said they enjoy or feel in the previous questions, and if such factors create genuine roadblocks in the desire to attend matches more often. For example, three quarters of the respondents may agree that they enjoy attending with friends, but would not necessarily not attend the game if their friends could not go. This would help strengthen the validity or irrelevance of certain factors when discovering if they are in fact more impactful to an individual's feelings towards football rather than directly as an impact on the decision whether or not to attend games.

3.3 Process of data collection

When it came to collecting respondent answers, the simplest and most obvious solution was to use social media channels to post the survey. Given the logistical difficulties of travelling nationwide with printed versions of the surveys, and time and money restraints in using paid marketing methods, the ever marketing-friendly platform of Facebook was chosen. The wide demographic of individuals who use the site means we could be assured of having a broad enough audience at our disposal, dependant on the right use of channels and sharing. The main constraint was the limitation of visibility which Facebook affords to our 'friend' list, which mainly comprised of younger people with whom we are more closely connected; both friends, colleagues and acquaintances. The way we overcame this problem was to make our posts public, meaning friends were able to share it, and subsequently making it visible to their connections.

The contingency plan, in case of a lack of sufficient respondent answers was to use alternative means of social media, such as LinkedIn or Twitter, to boost the feed, but shortly after sharing the original post, we had already received notable numbers of responses.

The importance of how we worded the social media posts needed to be considered prior to public engagement. We chose to write in an informal manner, citing the most important facts in brief, bite size posts. Highlighting the fact that we were interested in football fans, and mentioning that we were seeking those who are Finnish or are living in Finland. The screen question in the survey meant we could be sure that anyone living outside of Finland could be filtered out in the data evaluation phase.

3.4 Reliability and validity of the survey

It mostly seems that reliability and validity seem to mean the exact same thing but they have noticeable differences in a practical sense. The great question regarding reliability is that can the results of a study be repeated. Reliability concentrates on the consistency of measures and there are three preferred factors that determine if these measures are reliable or not: stability, internal reliability and Inter-observed consistency (Bryman & Bell 2011, 41, 157-158).

Stability involves the action of testing and re-testing a measure and seeing how much do the results correlate or disconnect with each other. An example to this is that the same survey has been given to the same respondents repeatedly in a short period of time to see if they answer similarly as they answered before. Prevailing disconnection between

measures tell that the respondents' answers cannot be trusted (Bryman & Bell 2011, 157-158).

Internal reliability involves in scales and indexes where it determines the correlation between respondents' scores in similar questions. For example, the reliability would deteriorate two very similar scaled questions would have a completely different score from one respondent (Bryman & Bell 2011, 158-159).

Inter-observer consistency refers to the consistency and reliability of the actual observer of the results. This usually is involved with open-ended questions where they would have to be categorised properly, which can be problematic when you would have more than one observer (Bryman & Bell 2011, 158).

As reliability concentrates on bringing consistency through repetition, validity concentrates on the actual indicator of the measures and if it is or is not a suitable way for measurement. For example, the questionability of IQ tests being actual determinants of intelligence is a pure example of measuring validity. Different types of validity are face validity, concurrent validity, predictive validity, construct validity and convergent validity (Bryman & Bell 2011, 159).

Face validity is determined by the correlation between the content and the measure, in other words, does the actual content of a research reflect with the outcome. This is usually validated with people who have experience of the topic of the content in hand and therefore possibly finding out if they can confirm its validity (Bryman & Bell 2011, 160).

Concurrent validity is relevant criterion used to back the validity of the research up. The purpose of it is to measure something else relevant to the actual content and lack of correlation between them tells that its concurrent validity is not adequate. As an example of this type of validity, Bryman and Bell explain that measuring the frequent absentees separately from the rest in a job satisfaction measurement would be a way to reach possible concurrent validity (Bryman & Bell 2011, 160).

Predictive validity concentrates in using criterion from the future, rather than current criterion as used in concurrent validity. Future criteria and results, which are most likely predicted, are used to confirm validity (Bryman & Bell 2011, 160).

Construct validity refers to blanking out preceding hypotheses of a research. A researcher driven by this method would not consider assumptions of results in the actual measurement of a concept, avoiding risks of the hypotheses being invalid (Bryman & Bell 2011, 160).

Convergent validity concentrates on comparing results of the same measurement and research done to different persons, objects, etc. for validation. Bryman and Bell explain that, as an example, when measuring time spent in different places for one person you should do the same measurement to other people as well to reach convergent validity (Bryman & Bell 2011, 160).

The reliability of this survey was proven by the discovery of clear correlations between individuals, and clear differences between the segmented groups of respondents. For example, we discovered that the overall loyalty and commitment towards football attendance and club affiliation was higher in the groups of fans who attended more games per season, and lower in the groups of fans who attended more infrequently.

This would mean that our internal reliability was high. In basic terms, the higher the attendance then the higher the commitment and loyalty. More of this will be discussed in the next chapter.

The particularly large number respondents points out the reliability of our survey. The fact that there were a total of 412 respondents of the survey would most probably give us a broad view on football in Finland. Even though we exceeded our expectations of the amount of respondents, a very predominant amount of the respondents were living in the Helsinki metropolitan area which would mean that the opinions would be more Helsinki based than national.

When going through the responses, we also need to bear in mind that different moods could have affected the respondent's input in the survey. For example, a supporter of a recently unsuccessful football club could have been upset at his or her club and therefore answered very negatively regarding the club he or she supports. The same thing could have easily occurred if a supporter had been very satisfied with his or her club's recent performance and has therefore responded in a positive and optimistic nature. These aspects had to be considered when analysing the results.

To attain some validity for our survey, we decided to aim to get responses mainly from followers of football. No special procedures were done to attain solely from football followers

but in the original Facebook post we pointed out that the survey would be intended for followers of football. 233 out of the 403 respondents who lived in Finland said that they went to see 3 to over 20 matches per season, so most of the respondents were frequent spectators.

4 Findings

The survey received a total of 412 respondents, of which 403 lived in Finland. Having selected this as criteria for eligibility, we decided to evaluate the responses of only residents. The following results have been divided into three parts; basic attitudes towards football and interest in Finnish football, motivational factors, and thirdly, the brand related attitudes of respondents.

Answers were made mandatory for all parts of the survey, and the widespread differentiation of opinion provided sound justification in saying that respondents answered truthfully, rather than skipping questions by leaving the automated response of *neither important nor unimportant* or *neither agree nor disagree* as their own response. Likewise, the similarities among respondents in some attitudes, which we shall investigate further in this section, provide validity to the fact that people were emotionally invested in their responses.

4.1 Demographics regarding Language, Gender, Age and Employment Status

Out of the total 403 respondents, 319 of the respondents took the survey in Finnish (79%) and 84 of the respondents took it in English (21%).

The breakdown of respondent gender from the 403 valid responses was; 370 (92%) males and 33 (8%) female.

We asked the respondents to indicate their employment status by choosing one option out of five employment status options. Out of the total 403 respondents, there were 210 full-time employees (52%), 139 students (35%), 25 part-time employees (6%), 21 who were unemployed (5%) and 8 who were retired (2%).

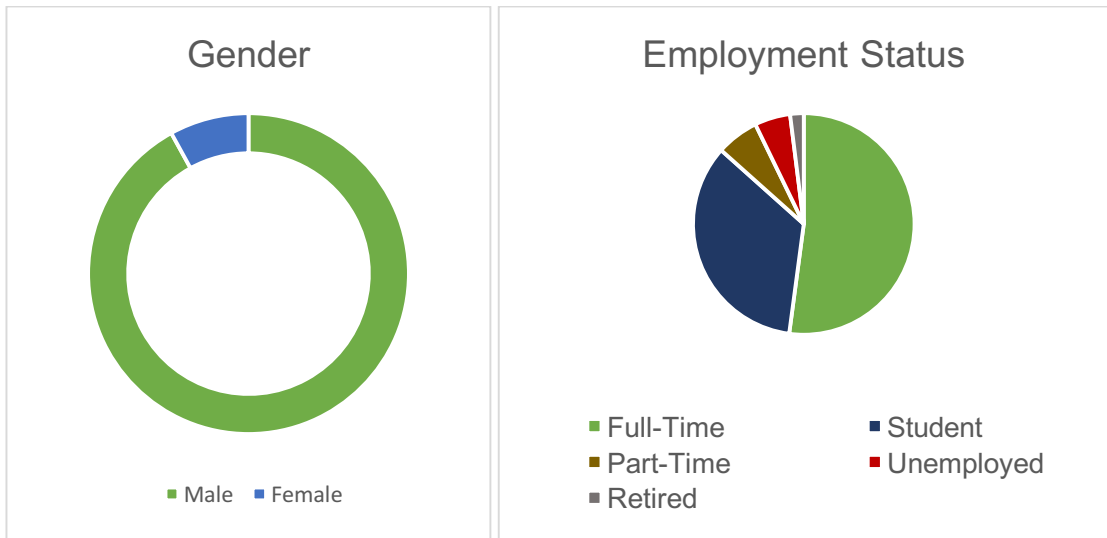


Figure 3. Gender ratio and employment status of the respondents

As far as the respondent's age is concerned, people aged 25 to 34 were the largest group with 191 respondents (47%), people aged 18 to 24 being the second largest with 121 (30%), 51 respondents consisted of 35 to 44 year olds (13%), 18 consisted of 45 to 54 year olds (4%), 16 consisted of 12 to 17 year olds, 5 consisted of 55 to 64 year olds (1%) and only one of all the respondents was under 12 years old. There were no over 65 years old respondents at all.

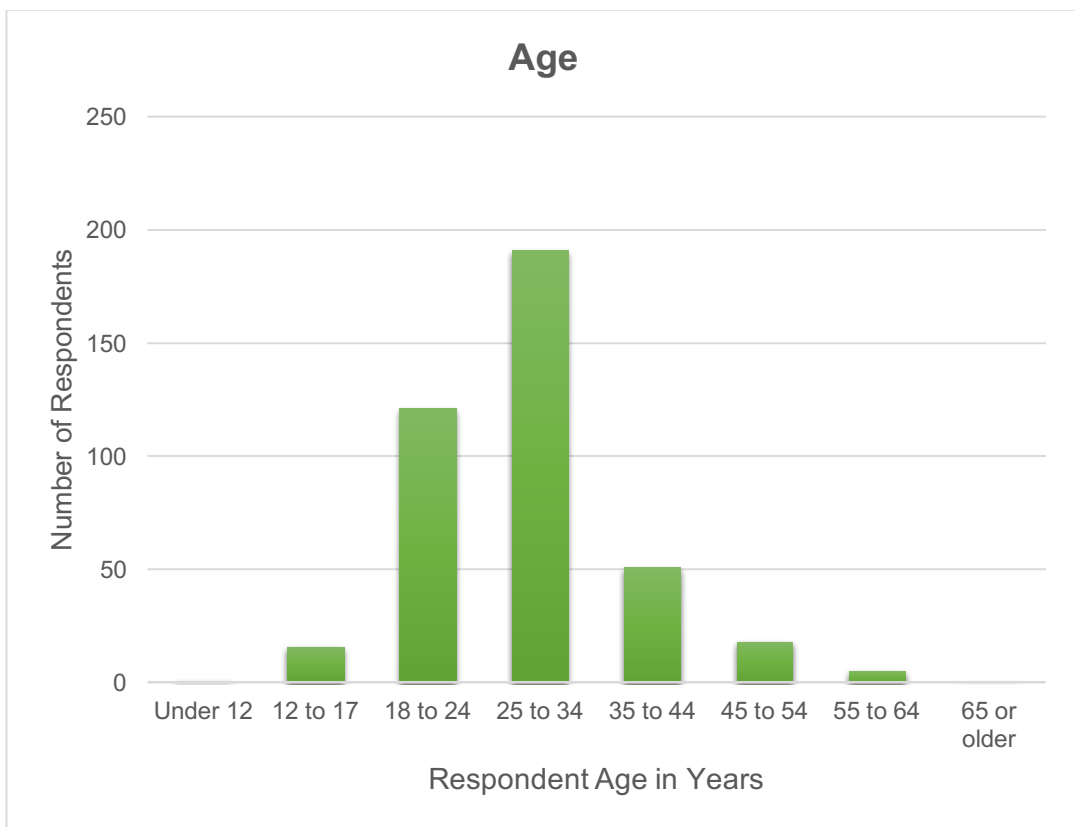


Figure 4. Age of the respondents

4.2 Basic Attitudes towards Finnish Football

When studying the data regarding Finnish football interest and emotional belonging, the answers provided the following information: 63.52% of individuals suggest that they feel a belonging to a Finnish football team, and 309 - over three quarters of all respondents (76.67%), answered that they have a genuine interest in Finnish football. Whilst around a quarter of all respondents (98 in total) said that they support a foreign football team more closely than a Finnish football team, more than 30% (122) prefer to watch foreign football over Finnish football.

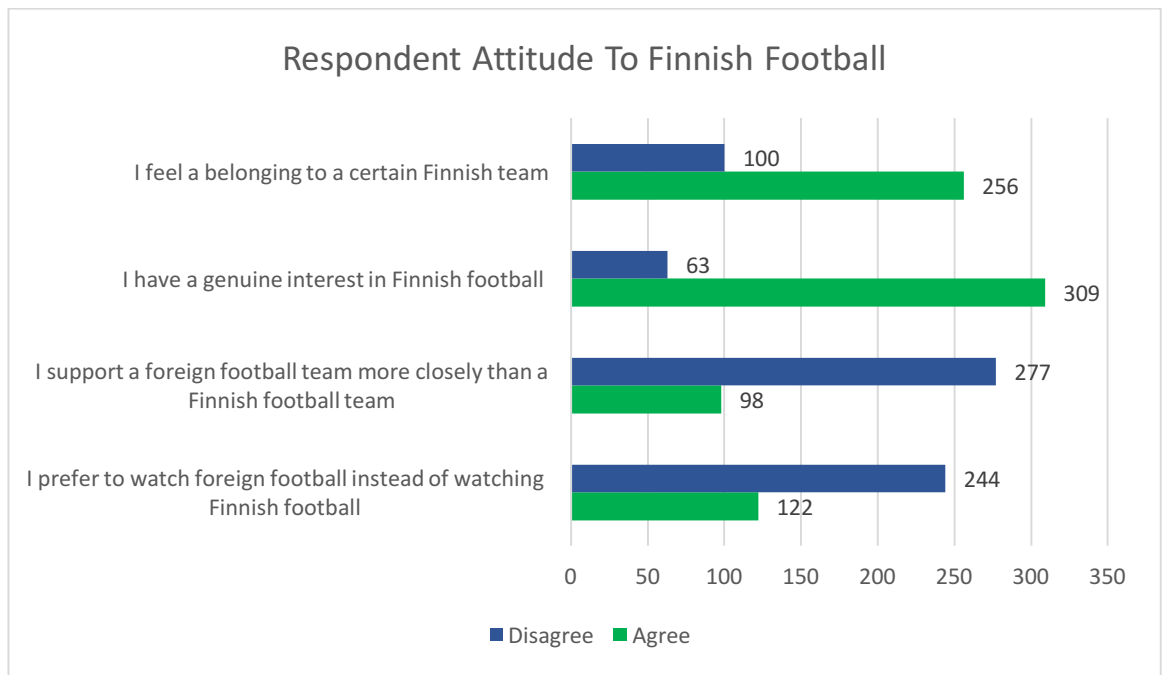


Figure 5. Respondent's attitude towards Finnish football

Regarding the breakdown of clubs supported, capital city based team HJK were the Veikkausliiga team with the highest percentage of respondent support (30.77% of all). The second most supported team were HIFK with 52 (12.90%) of respondent support. No respondents selected IFK Mariehamn as their favourite team, whereas more than one in four (27.54%) selected "None of the above" when questioned who their favourite Finnish top flight team was.

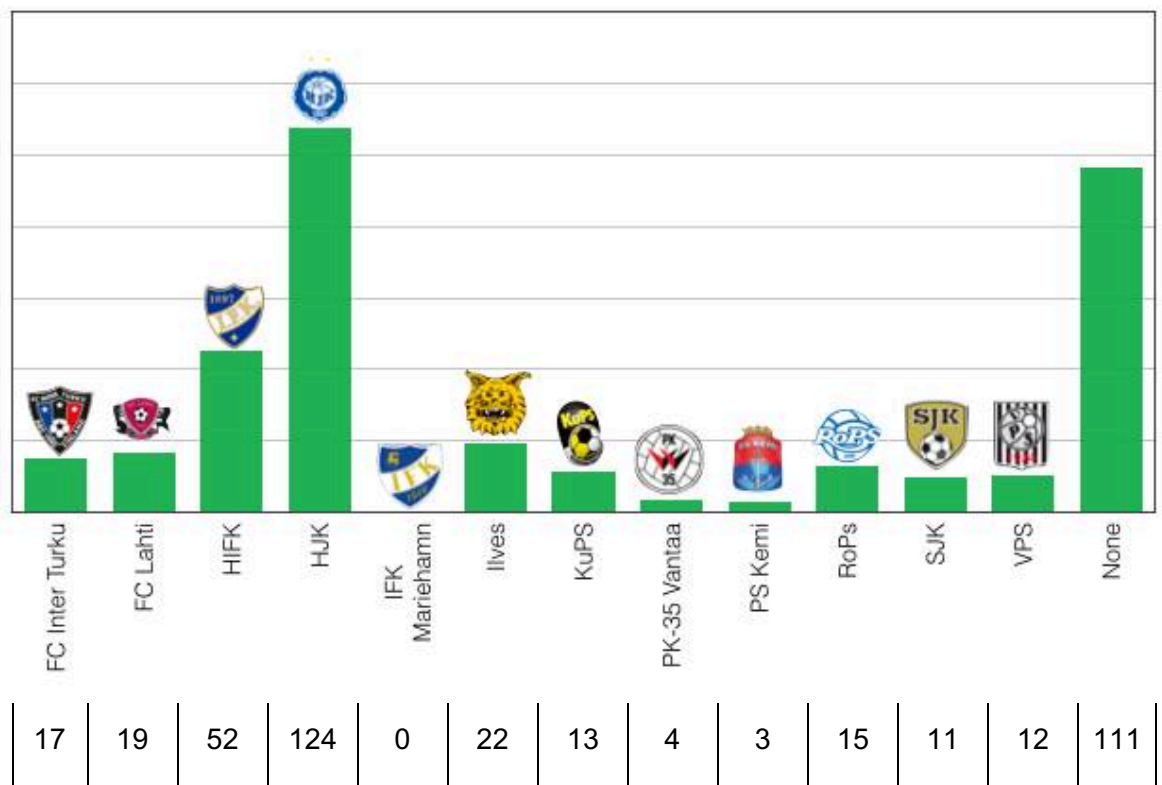


Figure 6. Divide between respondents according to what club they support in the Veikkausliiga

4.3 Segmentation of Respondents

In order to substantiate prior research relating to fan motivators, comparing theoretical claims against the amount of matches attended per season, gave us the clearest indication of how the motivational factors and attitudes to branding correlated directly to fan attendance.

For the purpose of obtaining valid results, all respondents were grouped according to their regularity of attending fixtures. The segments were then individually evaluated for the attitudes and responses to the questions regarding motivation and branding.

In Question 8, respondents were asked, “How many Veikkausliiga matches do you visit per season?” The answers to this made it possible to divide and re-group the 403 eligible respondents into five segments:

- Segment **A**. Those who attend 0-2 matches per season - **170** respondents in total
- Segment **B**. Those who attend 3-5 matches per season - **52** respondents in total
- Segment **C**. Those who attend 6-10 matches per season - **37** respondents in total
- Segment **D**. Those who attend 10-20 matches per season - **81** respondents in total

- Segment **E**. Those who attend more than 20 matches per season - **63** respondents in total

The following sections shall investigate the results of the cross-tabulation between the above segments and investigated topics.

4.4 Attitudes towards Motivational Factors

There was a clear correlation between the amount of matches attended by fans and their attitudes towards certain motivational based questions. The easiest way to visualise the relationship between how often the respondents attend Veikkausliiga matches and their attitudes towards motivators is to use the percentage of respondents as opposed to the number of individuals. This provides clear relative reflection of the differences between the groups, and is crucial given the uneven amount of individuals who comprise each segment of number of matches attended.

In order to relate the findings to the literature review section of this thesis, we shall subcategorise the key findings into eight core motivational factors that were omnipresent in more recent and developed models of sports fandom, and critically, those upon which we constructed the motivation part of our survey (Eustress/Drama, Entertainment, Escape, Group-Affiliation, Self Esteem, Family, Aesthetic and Economic). Furthermore, the additional motivational factors which we added to our questions, (Ticket price, Safety, Women Friendly, Time and date of fixture, accessibility), were also evaluated against attendance rate.

The table below highlights the difference between the motivational factors which varied and the factors which did not vary when cross tabulated with attendance rate.

Varied with Attendance Rate	Did Not Vary with Attendance Rate
Attitude towards quality	Attitude towards safety
Attitude towards standard of football	Attitude towards family and gender within fandom
Attitude towards atmosphere	Attitude towards escapism
Attitude towards amount at stake	Attitude towards additional entertainment at matches
Attitude towards football as a form of entertainment	Attitude towards success
Attitude towards friends	Attitude towards gambling
Attitude towards accessibility	Attitude towards ticket price
Attitude towards time and date of fixture	

Figure 7. Variation in motivational factors

4.4.1 Respondent Motivation regarding Aesthetics

In question 10, respondents were asked, how important the quality of football is when deciding whether or not to attend a match. The percentage of respondents who answered with *important* or *very important*, fell from 56.47% of all fans in Segment A who attend 0-2 games per season to just 9.52% of Segment E; the fans who attend more than 20 games per season. In fact, of those who attend more than 20 matches, not a single one answered *very important*. In addition, whilst 76.19% of those respondents answered either *not important* or *less important*, only 30% of fans who attend 0-2 times answered the same.

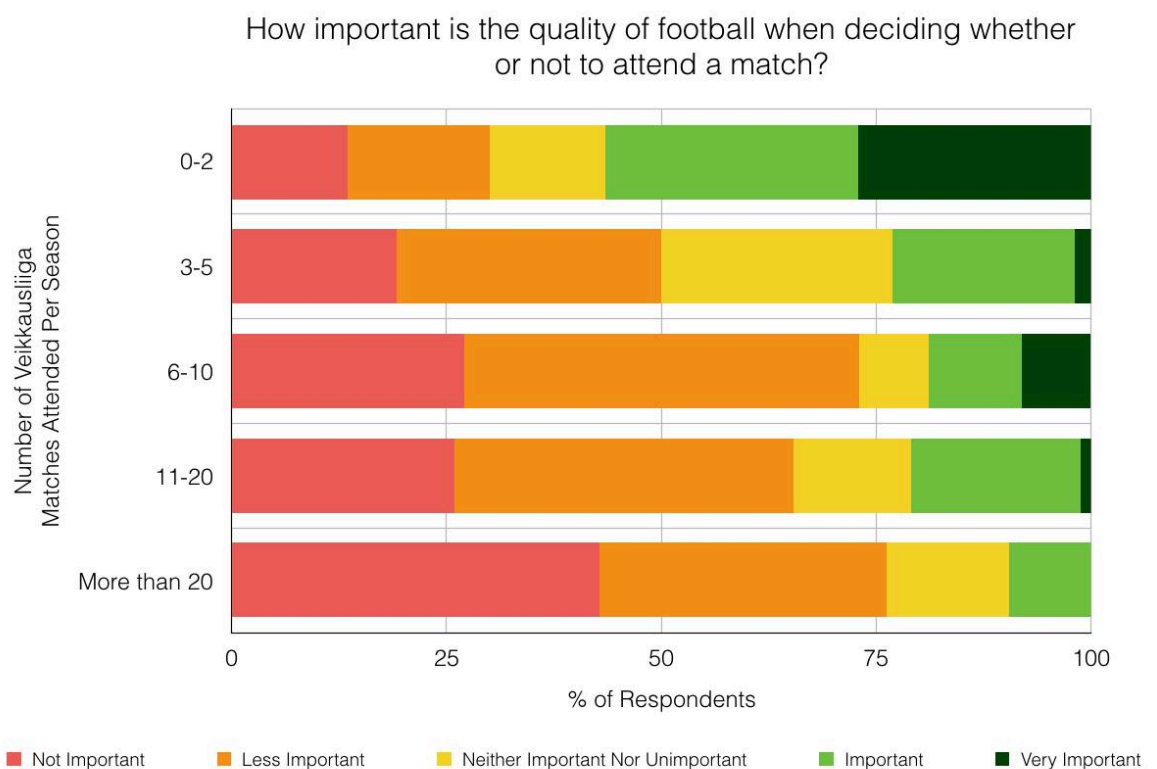


Figure 8. Importance of the quality of football between respondents

I would attend more Veikkausliiga matches if the standard of football was higher.

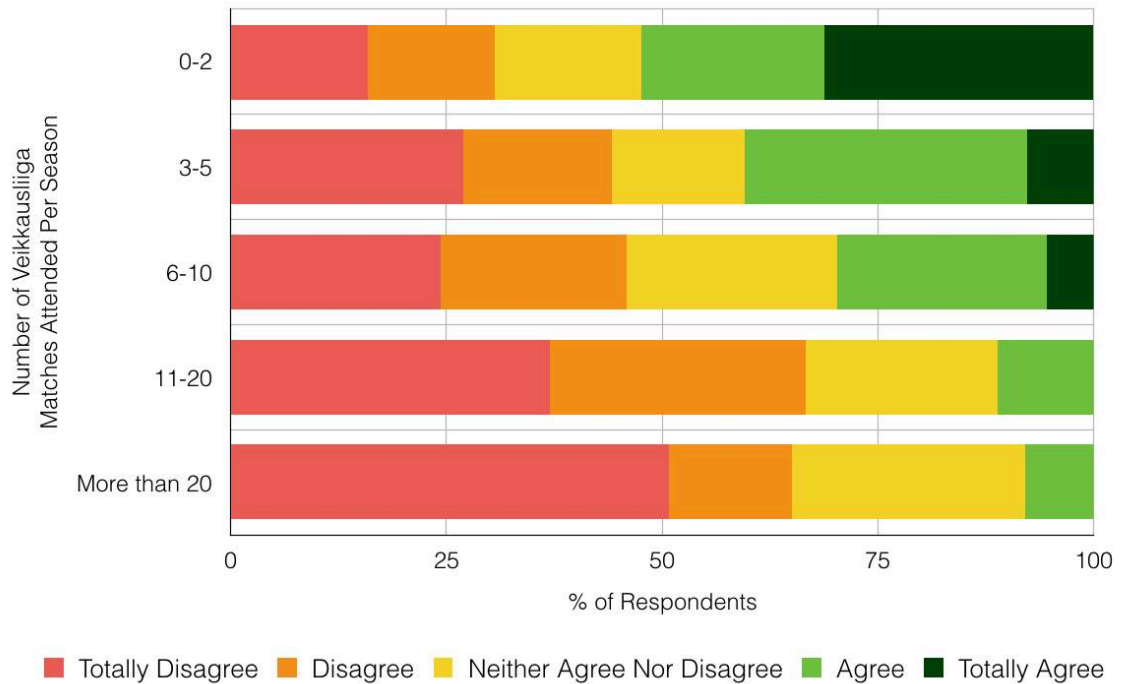


Figure 9. Importance of the standard of football between respondents

When asked whether they would attend more Veikkausliiga matches if the standard of football was higher, there was a continual increase in agreement across segments where respondents attended matches more infrequently. The percentage of fans who *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the statement was 7.94% in Segment E, 11.11% in Segment D, 29.73% in Segment C, 40.38% of Segment B and 52.35% of Segment A. The amount of respondents who *strongly disagreed* with the statement was 50.79% of those who attend more than 20 games per season, and only 15.88% of those who attend 0-2 games

4.4.2 Respondent Motivation relating to Eustress/Drama

In Question 14, respondents were asked whether they would attend more Veikkausliiga matches if there was more at stake. 32.35% of respondents in Segment A, who attend 0-2 matches per season *agreed* or *strongly agreed*, whereas only 11.11% of those who attend 20 or more games felt the same. Almost twice the ratio of respondents in Segment E (39.68%) *strongly disagreed* with the statement than in Segment A (21.18%).

There was also a correlation showing an increased agreement with the statement “*Veikkausliiga match atmospheres are good*” with the more matches attended per season. Whilst less than a third of Segment A agreed that match atmospheres are good, more

than three quarters of fellow respondents who attend over 20 games per season feel this is the case.

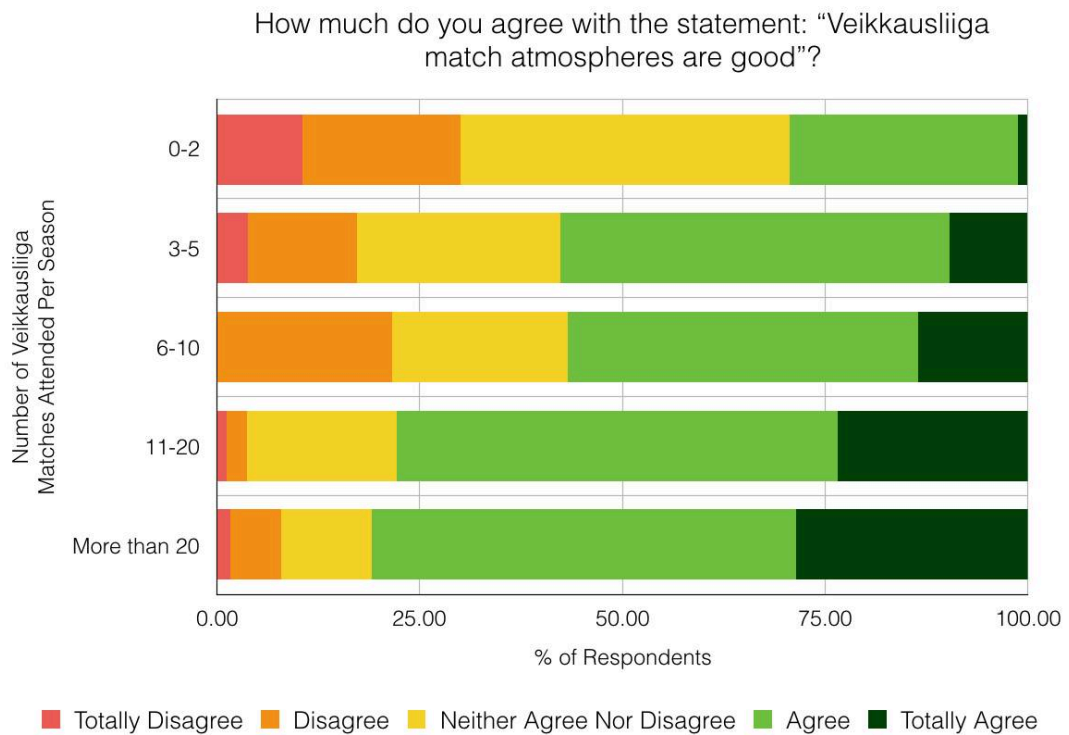


Figure 10. Respondent's thoughts of the atmosphere at Veikkausliiga matches

4.4.3 Respondent Motivation and Entertainment

When asked in question 11, did respondents agree or disagree with the statement, "I think there are better forms of entertainment than football", almost half of all individuals who attend only 0-2 times per season *agreed* or *strongly agreed*. By contrast, only 6.35% of those who attend more than 20 times per season stated the same. Similar levels of disagreement were highlighted in Segments C and D where 10.81%, and 9.88% answered *agree* or *strongly agree* respectively.

How much do you agree with the statement: "I think there are better forms of entertainment than football"?

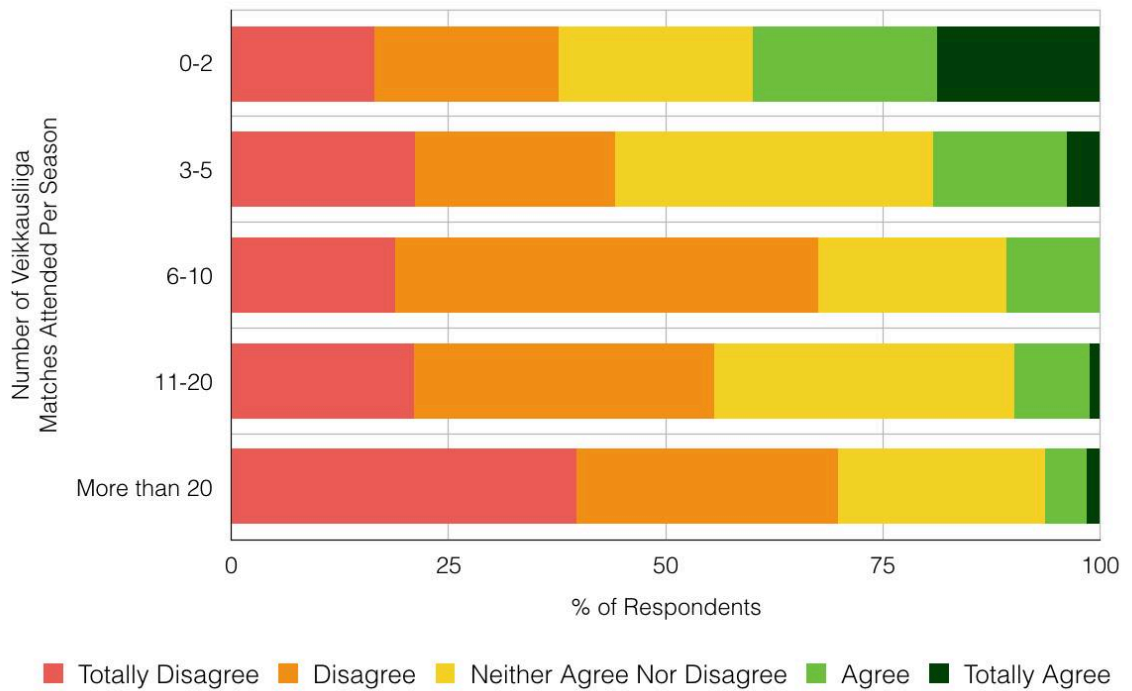


Figure 11. Respondent’s opinion on there being better forms of entertainment than football

There was a somewhat unanimous response to all survey respondents when asked whether the introduction of additional entertainment as is other sports such as ice hockey, would encourage them to attend more games. Over half of all respondents in each category either *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement and only 12.66% of all respondents answered with *agree* or *strongly agree*.

4.4.4 Respondent Motivation with Group Affiliation

When it comes to the enjoyment of attending matches with friends, and also the sense of importance that the company of friends at games played, there were visible discrepancies. For example, over 90% of fans in Segment E (who attend 20 or more matches per season) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they enjoyed attending matches with friends. However, only a third of the same segment *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they would subsequently be more likely to attend more matches *if* there friends were also attending. When compared, the same responses from Segment B (those who attend 3-5 matches per season), show that 84.62% enjoyed attending with friends and almost 60% are more likely to attend if their friends are coming too.

4.4.5 Respondent Motivation and Self-Esteem

In Question 10 the survey respondents unanimously agreed, when asked how important the chances of their team winning were, when deciding whether or not to attend a Veikkausliiga match. Only 5.71% of the total participant group felt it was *important* or *very important*, while more than three quarters of everyone answered *unimportant* or *very unimportant*. By breakdown of segments, there was little difference between the attitude towards potential success and how often an individual attends; the evidence of which can be highlighted within the least frequent attendees of Segment A where only 7.65% felt it was of any importance to them at all.

4.4.6 Respondent Motivation through Family Ties

The total amount of all respondents who *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they enjoy attending games with their family was 39.45%. On the contrary, and rather surprisingly, 33% of all respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*. The only segment of fans where a majority stated that they enjoyed attending with family was segment C who attend 6-10 matches per season. The percentage: a marginal 51.35%. In addition to the desire of attending with family, when asked if respondents would be more likely to attend Veikkausliiga fixtures were they more family friendly, only 47 respondents in total (11.66%) replied with *agree* or *strongly agree*.

4.4.7 Respondent Motivation through Escape

Watching live football to escape from routine was something which 42.43% of all respondents agreed with. This figure though rose higher in particular within the segments of fans who attend matches more often. Whilst around a third of those who attend matches the most irregularly *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the statement, over half of the most active segment, E, feel that live football is a chance to escape routine.

4.4.8 Respondent Motivation with Financial Gain

When assessing the importance and enjoyment between respondents and the chance to bet on football, the overall portion of fans who *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement "I like to gamble on football matches", was 40.45%, whilst a very similar amount, 41.44% *agreed* or *strongly agreed*. There was also consistent response rate between segments, regardless of the amount of games attended, indicating a mixed feeling towards investing greater interest in football for financial gain.

4.4.9 Other Factors

Outside of the eight highlighted factors, there were several additional factors which were added to the line of motivation-related questioning. The responses to these were, like other factors, either consistent across all segments of fans, or were correlated through an increase or decrease in perceived importance when the fan attendance level rose or fell.

Firstly, the responses, when questioned, on a potential need for increased safety at matches or the demand for more female-friendly environments were similar. Both were met with unilateral opinion across all segments. In question 14, when asked if the respondents would visit more Veikkausliiga matches if it was safer, only 5 (1.24%) out of 403 respondents answered *agree* or *totally agree*. Furthermore, only 21 (5.21%) of the same individuals responded with *agree* or *strongly agree* when prompted with the statement "I would attend more Veikkausliiga matches if it was more female friendly".

The affordability of ticket cost was posed to respondents in Question 14 when asked if they would attend more often if match tickets were cheaper. This was met with marginally more agreement than disagreement in respondents who attend 5 or less games per year, (87 *agreed* or *strongly agreed*, 79 *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*).

On the contrary the accessibility to matches was cited as a more important factor for fans who attended more frequently. When asked if they would be more likely to attend away fixtures if travel was cheaper, over half of all who attend 11 or more games *agreed* or *strongly agreed* (55.56% of segment D, 53.96% of segment E). Less than a third (29%) of both segment D and E combined did not agree that it would encourage more frequent attendance.

Time and date of fixtures was also cited as increasingly important alongside a rise in attendance. Whilst only 20.27% of Segment A and B combined *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that more suitable kick off dates or times would encourage them to attend, more than twice that figure (48.61%) of segment D and E combined, responded with the same.

4.5 Branding perspective

Earlier in the text it was established that branding in sports can be a very vital tool to raise attention towards a sports club and therefore increase attendance in its matches. Questions twelve and thirteen of the survey concentrate on the branding perspective of this research.

The foundations of sports branding by Rein et al. (2006, 103-117) was used as the backing framework for the branding perspective of the research. As it was mentioned earlier, they state that segmentation, involvement, ethos and transformations are the main components for successful sports branding. The statements and divide in questions twelve and thirteen were solely made in the perspective of these components. The components were divided the following way:

For segmentation, the respondents were segmented according to their attendance. The segments for this would be according to the options in question eight of the survey, meaning that segments in this part of the research would be divided according to attendance, as it was also stated in chapter 4.3.

In the involvement part of the research we chose to have statements that would involve building relationships between fans and the club. The chosen statements for this part were the following: it's the local team where I live now, close to the community, it's the team from where I grew up, my family or family member supports them, my friend(s) supports them, the atmosphere at the club's matches and the fans are passionate.

The ethos part of the research included statements that would involve the club's pursuits to build credibility and therefore to gain trust from the fans and attendees. The chosen statements for this part were the following: entertaining matches, ambitious, progressive, lack of progress and lack of ambition.

For the transformation part of the research we chose to have statements that would involve the sports brand's pursuits in changeability in enhancing strengths and minimising weaknesses of the brand. The chosen statements for this part were the following: rich tradition, club's rivals (e.g. derbies), tradition & history, international, successful, attractive playing style, unsuccessful, poor stadium/facilities, a certain player, they're successful, it's image (colours + crest) and boring playing style.

From the results we should then see which component would be most dominant within the respondents, indicating the most usual statements that are regarded when thinking about clubs in the Veikkausliiga.

4.5.1 Findings relating to Segmentation, involvement, ethos and transformation

When looking at the results we need to keep in mind that respondents had to pick a maximum of three statements that they favoured the most, so there is a possibility that some of the respondents chose only one or two statements.

To narrow the results analysis, the top three favourable statements from each group will be indicated separately.

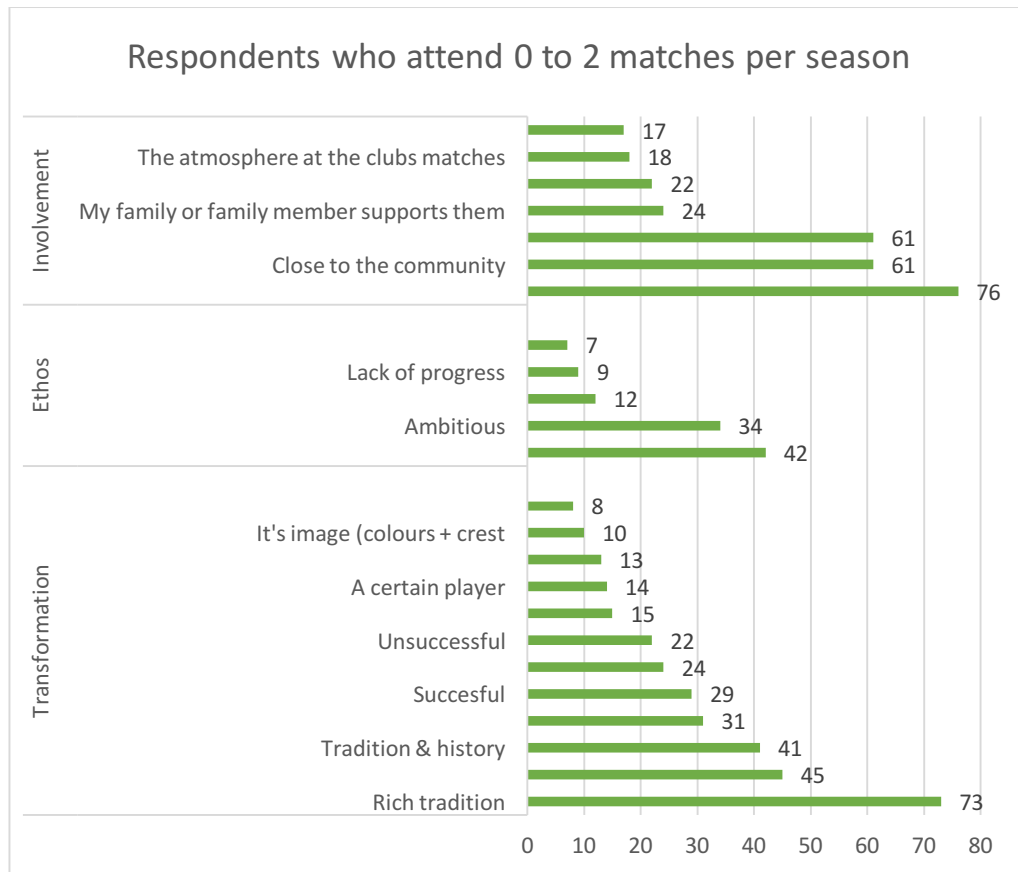


Figure 12. The results from respondents who attend 0 to 2 matches per season

Segment A (respondents who attended 0 to 2 matches per season):

In involvement the top three statements were the following: it's the local team where I live now (76 individuals), close to the community (61) and it's the team from where I grew up (61).

In transformation, the top three statements were the following: rich tradition (73 individuals), club's rivals (e.g. derbies) (45) and tradition & history (41).

In ethos, the top three were the following: entertaining matches (42 individuals), ambitious (34) and progressive (12).

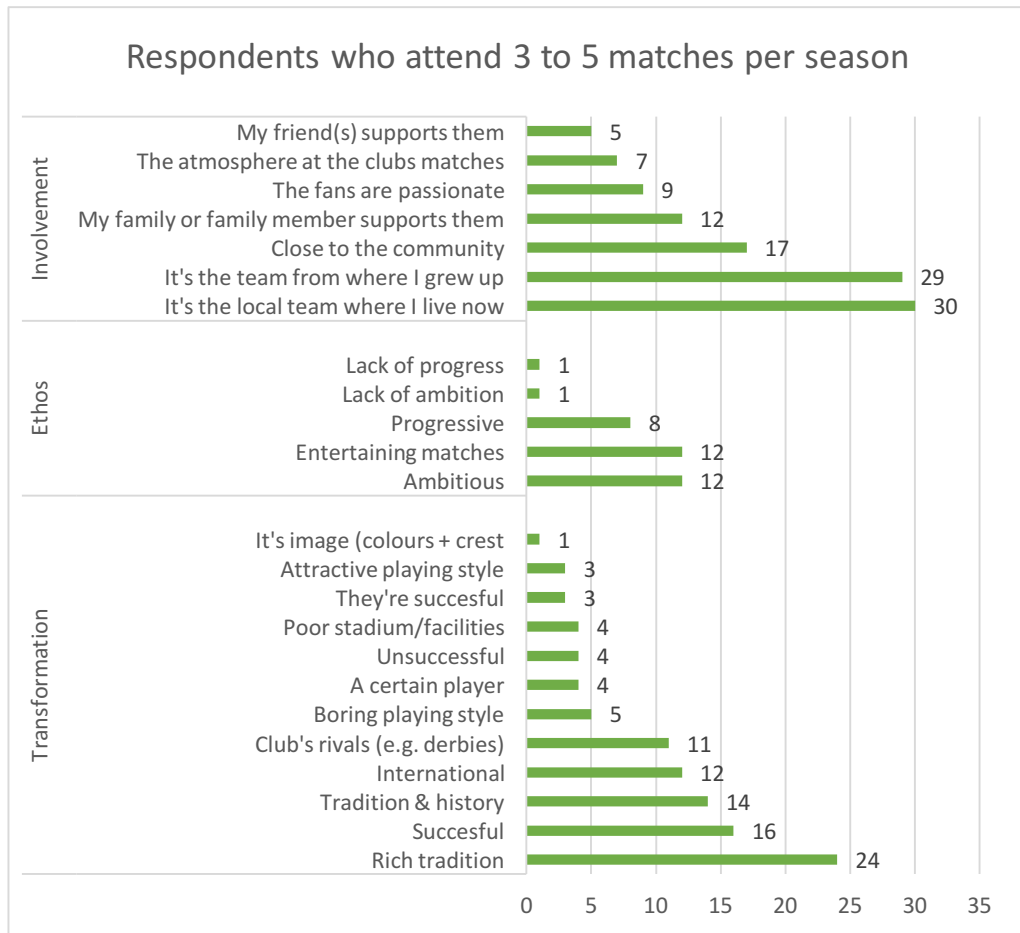


Figure 13. The results from respondents who attend 3 to 5 matches per season

Segment B (respondents who attended 3 to 5 matches per season):

In involvement, the top three statements were the following: it's the local team where I live now (30), it's the team from where I grew up (29 individuals) and close to the community (17).

In transformation, the top three statements were the following: rich tradition (24 individuals), succesful (16) and tradition & history (14).

In ethos, the top three were the following: ambitious (12 individuals), entertaining matches (12) and progressive (8).

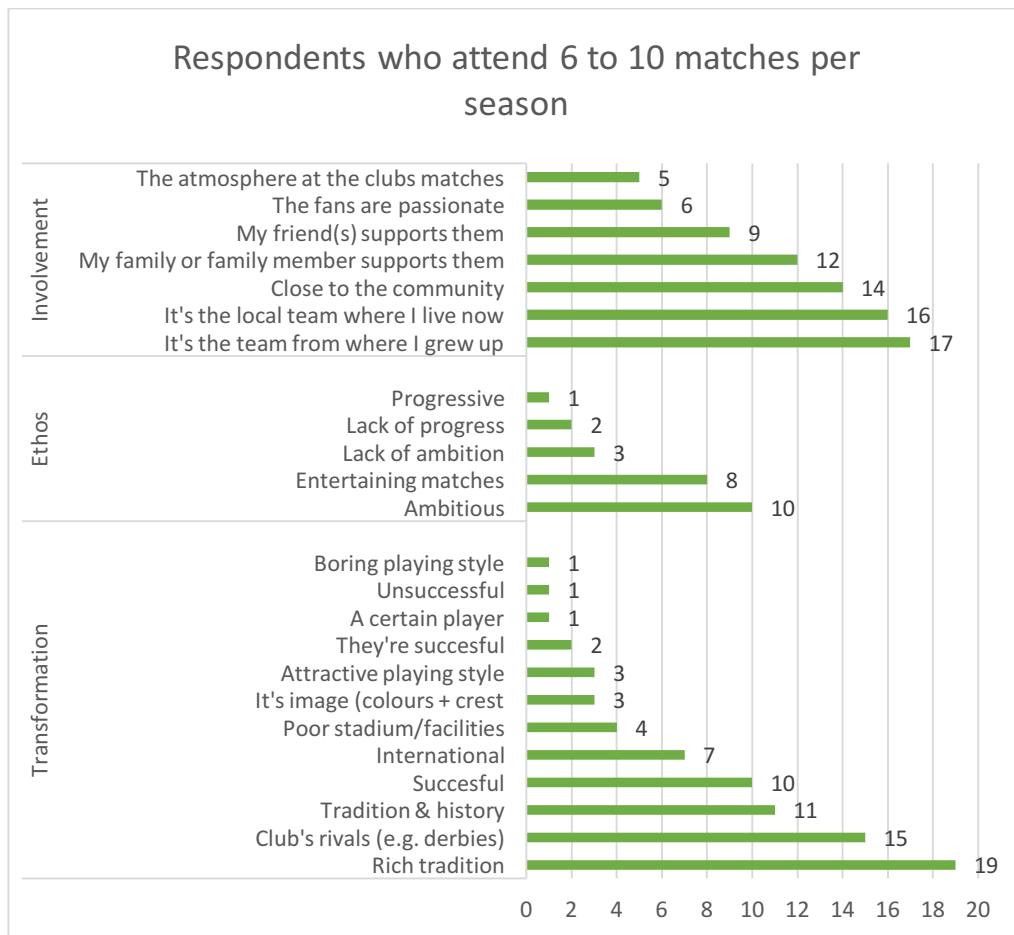


Figure 14. The results from respondents who attend 6 to 10 matches per season

Segment C: (respondents who attended 6 to 10 matches per season):

In involvement, the top three statements were the following: it's the team from where I grew up (17 individuals), it's the local team where I live now (16) and close to the community (14).

In transformation, the top three statements were the following: rich tradition (19 individuals), club's rivals (e.g. derbies) (15) and tradition & history (11).

In ethos, the top three were the following: ambitious (10 individuals), entertaining matches (8) and lack of ambition (3).

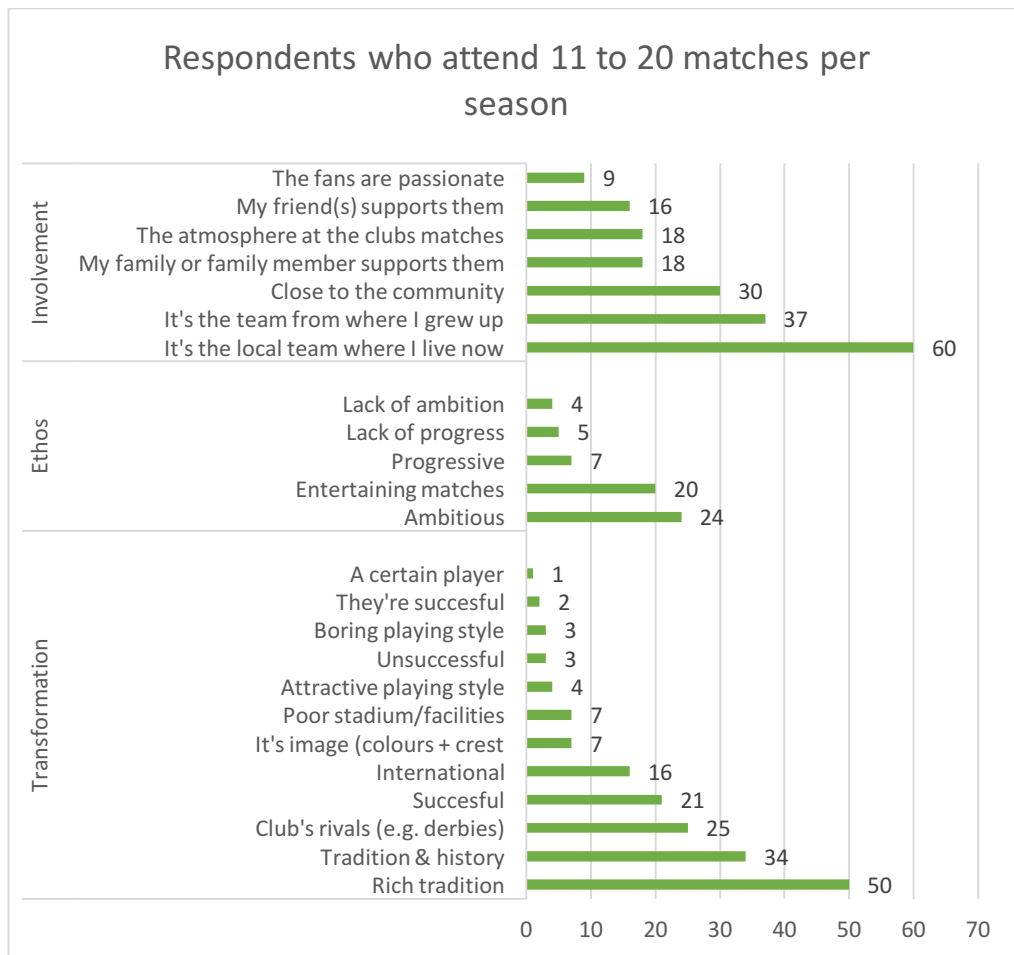


Figure 15. The results from respondents who attend 11 to 20 matches per season

Segment D (respondents who attended the 11 to 20 matches per season):

In involvement the top three statements were the following: it's the local team where I live now (60 individuals), it's the team from where I grew up (37) and close to the community (30).

In transformation, the top three statements were the following: rich tradition (50 individuals), tradition & history (34) and club's rivals (e.g. derbies) (25).

In ethos, the top three were the following: ambitious (24 individuals), entertaining matches (20) and progressive (7).

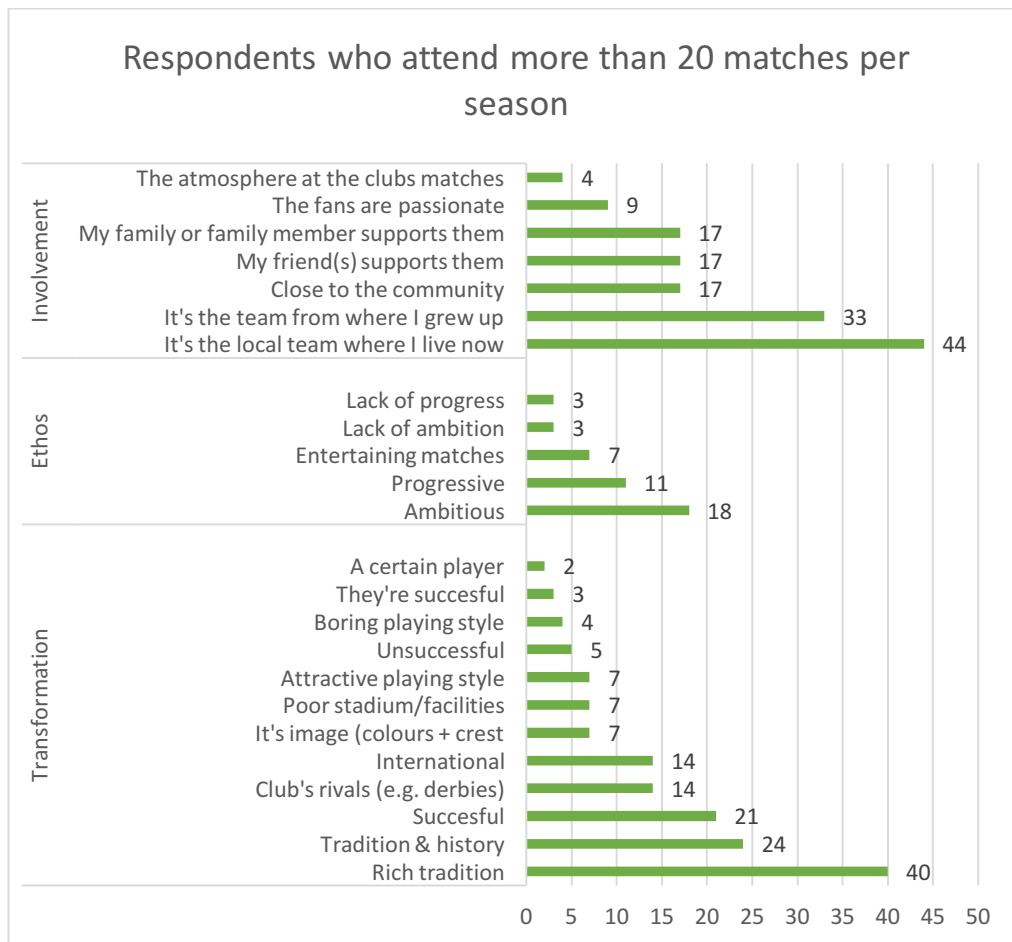


Figure 16. The results from respondents who attend more than 20 matches per season

Segment E (respondents who attended more than 20 matches per season):

In involvement the top three statements were the following: it's the local team where I live now (44 individuals), it's the team from where I grew up (33) and close to the community (17).

In transformation, the top three statements were the following: rich tradition (40 individuals), tradition & history (24) and succesful (21).

In ethos, the top three were the following: ambitious (18 individuals), progressive (11) and entertaining matches (7).

4.6 Club support segmentation

In this part of results, we will be going through the respondent's answers according to the club that they support. The purpose of this is to find out what the fans from each team thought of their own respective club. Unlike in chapter 4.4, we will go through each club

separately. The motive behind this part of the research is to identify any differences between how football fans see their own club in the Veikkausliiga.

As we saw in figure 6, there were major differences in the amount of supporters for each club within the respondents. Overpoweringly, the two most supported teams within the respondents were HJK with 124 supporters and HIFK with 52 supporters. To get a more reliable answer from these results, we decided to only examine clubs that would have received fifteen or more answers. This would narrow the remaining clubs to FC Inter Turku (17), FC Lahti (19), HIFK (52), HJK (124), Ilves (22) and RoPS (15).

In this part of research, we decided to concentrate on analysing the results from question thirteen 'When considering the team you support, what are the first statements and words that come to mind?' When analysing the results, we noticed that pretty much all of the supporters of the six teams had a very similar and almost the same conceptions of their own team when asking question twelve 'What is/are the reason(s) you started supporting your favourite team?' The results were very similar to that of in chapter 4.4, referring that a clear majority started supporting their team because they were either from the respective club's hometown or they currently lived there.

4.6.1 Findings according to club support

In order to highlight the findings between supporters of different teams, the graphs below depict the five statements most chosen by the respondents supporting each club. The 'other statements' piece of each chart represents the total responses given to the remaining statements.

Within the supporters of HJK, the most favoured statements were successful (23%), rich tradition (21%), international (16%), ambitious (12%) and club's rivals (10%). The unanimous positivity of these results is reflected in the common respondent selection of favoured brand related feelings.

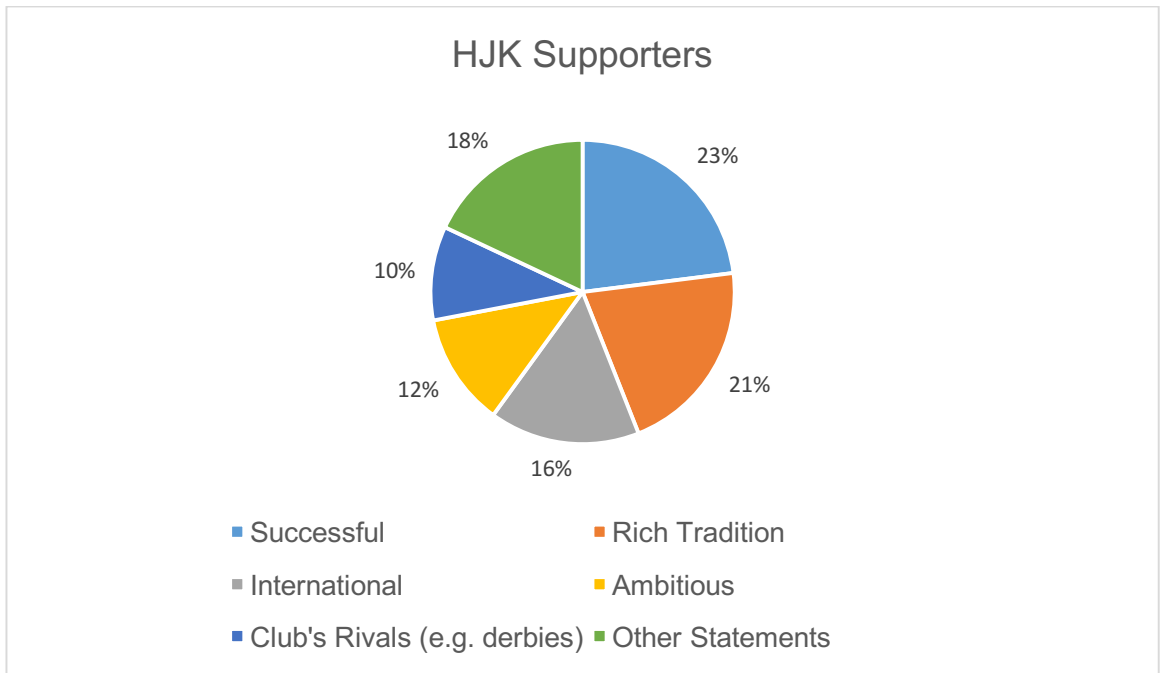


Figure 17. The top five statements associated with HJK according to their supporters

From the supporters of other clubs, the FC Lahti fans predominantly harboured negative attitudes when thinking of their club. The four most favoured statements were poor stadium/facilities (22%), lack of ambition (16%), lack of progress (13%) and unsuccessful (11%) which indicate a fairly discerning attitude towards the club. Close to the community (9%) was the only positive statement in the top five.

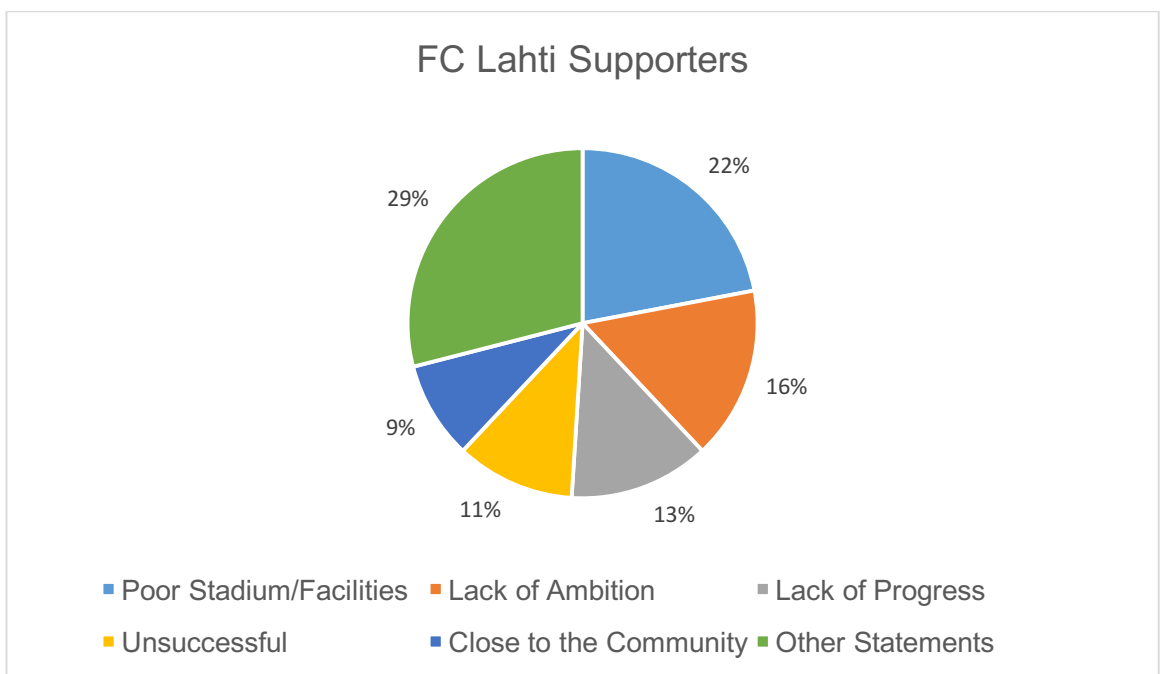


Figure 18. The top five statements associated with FC Lahti according to their supporters

HIFK supporters seem to be very determined with their opinion, as there were three statements which stood out from the rest in response rate. Rich tradition (31%), close to the community (24%) and club's rivals (e.g. derbies) (24%) were the unquestionable top three. Ambitious (8%) and entertaining matches (8%) were the fourth and fifth most selected responses.

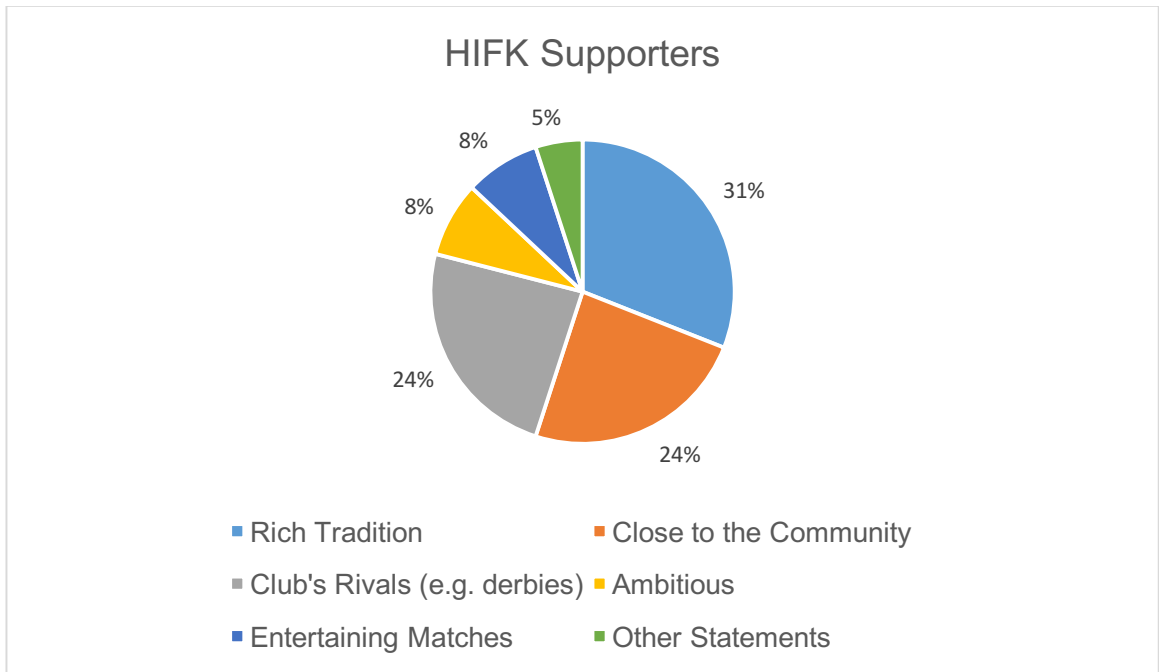


Figure 19. The top five statements associated with HIFK according to their supporters

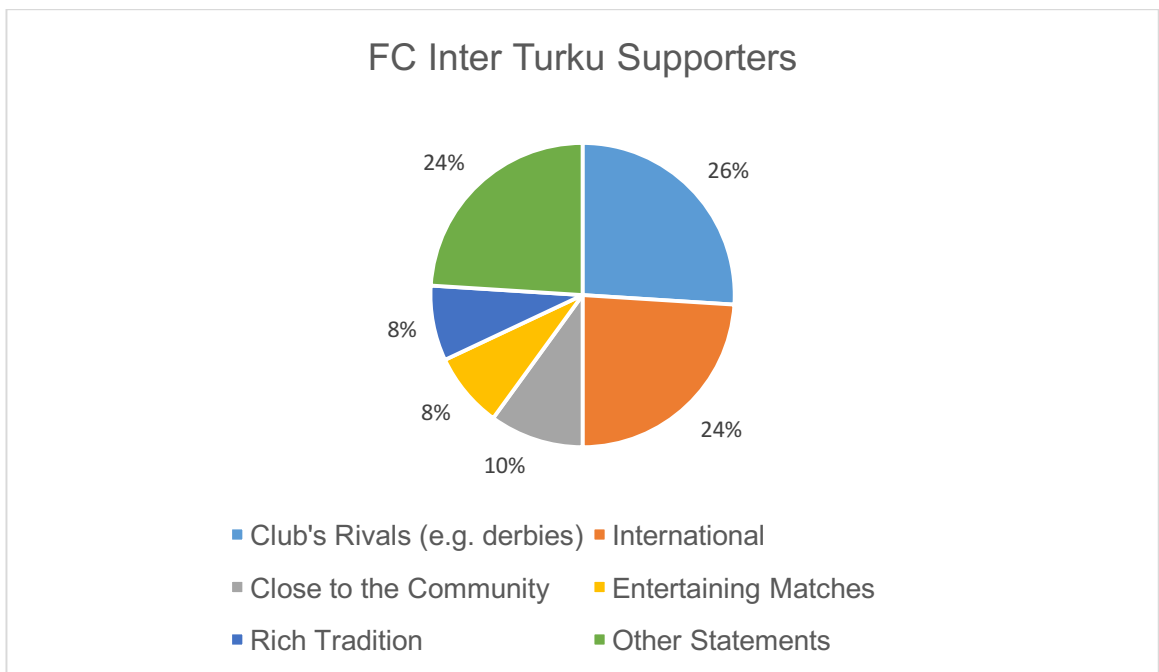


Figure 20. The top five statements associated with FC Inter Turku according to their supporters

The followers of Inter Turku were the only fans who selected International (24%) as a primary attitude towards their club. This was second only to Club Rivalries (26%) in response rate. Entertaining matches (8%), rich tradition (8%) and closeness to the community (10%) were the other predominant supporter feelings.

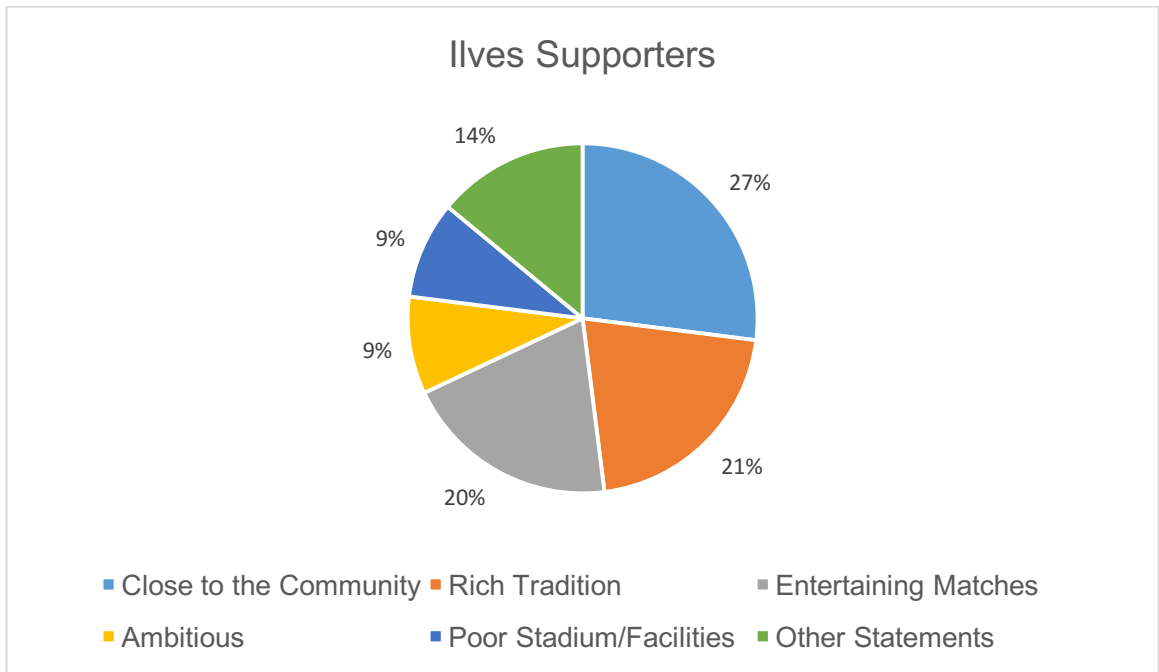


Figure 21. The top five statements associated with Ilves according to their supporters

As far as Ilves fans are concerned, the statement 'close to the community' was the clear favourite out of the statements (27%). Rich tradition (21%), entertaining matches (20%), ambitious (9%) and poor stadium/facilities (9%) were the remaining statements out of the most favoured ones.

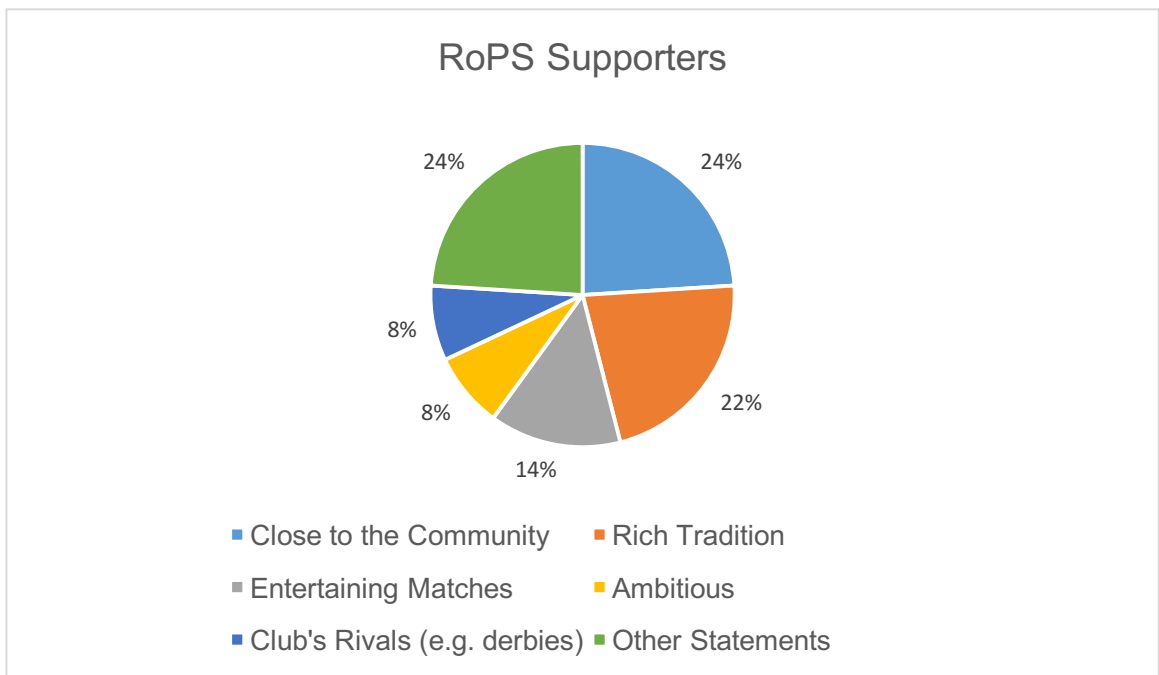


Figure 22. The top five statements associated with RoPS according to their supporters

Lastly, the most favoured statements of the RoPS supporters were close to the community (24%), rich tradition (22%), entertaining matches (14%), ambitious (8%) and club's rivals (e.g. derbies) (8%). The lack of uniformity or agreement in RoPS fan response means the other statements combined account for almost a quarter of all responses (24%).

5 Discussion

Having assessed the collected data and highlighted the key findings of the survey, the need to translate this knowledge and decipher the values underlying in the results, is key. We shall subcategorise the elements from our research within the discussion section, and suggest further use or development of the findings.

5.1 Finnish and Foreign Football

It is fair to suggest a substantial amount of non-Finnish persons answered the questionnaire, (out of the 403 valid responses, a total of 84 opted for the English version), the amount of individuals who agreed that they support a foreign team more closely was 98. It is therefore evident that at least a small portion of Finnish natives, let alone Finnish residents prefer a foreign side.

The results showed that 76.67% of respondents feel genuinely interested in Finnish football, which provides ample opportunity for the development of a spectator engagement and increase in attendances. If this figure is consistent throughout the same demographic nationwide, the opportunity for clubs to at very least engage fans in new ways is genuine.

Whilst 256 respondents said they feel a connection to a Finnish team, the fact only 244 of all respondents said they prefer to watch Finnish football over foreign football, shows the gulf in the attractiveness of the domestic game here compared with the offerings of other leagues. The figure itself doesn't suggest total doom and gloom for the sport in Finland, as the majority still feel more inclined to watch Finnish football. Nonetheless the fact that not all of those who feel a connection to a Finnish team would rather watch them than a foreign team, does suggest a forced affiliation of sorts.

Although there were many respondents comprising each segment of the amount of matches attended annually, in hindsight, we perhaps would have divided the "0-2 matches per year" category into "0 games/never attended a fixture" and "1-2 games per year". This would have provided valuable relationship data between those who go regularly and those who have never been and may be relying on word of mouth or assumption when forming attitudes regarding Finnish football.

5.2 Motivation and Fans: Observations

The results relating to respondent motivations highlighted some key findings that require further evaluation. Deciphering the resultant data and translating it into newfound

knowledge on fan traits and similarities allows us to build a wider understanding of Finnish football fan motivations. In addition, suggesting analytical factors for future frameworks can help with potential further research into sports, and in particular, football fan motivations.

The results regarding fan motivational factors, as you have read, highlight common motives amongst fans who attend a similar amount of games per season. Similarly, there are also omnipresent shared beliefs and attitudes among almost all respondents across all segments. This indeed can help us to understand two key groups of information: which were the motivators that varied according to attendance rate and which were the factors which remained consistent regardless of differing fan attendance.

5.2.1 Motivators which varied by segment

It is important to try to understand what the reasons were behind the changes in values across segments. Deciphering the data doesn't just add clarity to the importance of certain factors, but it also provides a context to the resulting facts and figures which the study uncovered.

First of all, considering the responses towards the quality and standard of football here, the increase in matches attended coupled with the decrease of perceived importance of quality and standard of football suggests one of two potential explanations: either that the perception of quality is different between those who attend regularly and those who do not; which is subsequently the reason they do not go. Alternatively, it is possible that the quality of football is of secondary importance to the experiential benefits of match attendance for those fan who do go. To suggest the more actively attending fans would be unaware of the comparative quality of football elsewhere would be erroneous, seeing as they themselves are the most aware of all respondents of the standard of Finnish football, and as football fans, would be more than aware of the global game, given its omnipresent media exposure.

There is an increased agreement that match attendances are good in Finland amongst the fans in the more active segments. This could suggest that these fans belong to the groups of fans who are more vocal at matches, and sit/stand in the sections of fans which are surrounded with the noisiest supporters. Alternatively, it could be that the lack of safety concerns (as outlined by the reaction to safety as a factor), provides a more relaxed and enjoyable setting for fans, which they then consider to be a better atmosphere.

The habitual nature of the fans who attend more regularly, provide a very different opinion from those who do not. Their attitudes towards attending games has been moulded not in witnessing perpetual success, but in the mixed feelings of winning and losing, disappointment and euphoria. The reaction therefore, to how much is at stake shows a decreased importance for these fans compared with those who do not go as often. The difficulty in enforcing a heightened significance of games given the fact fixtures are arranged long before a match, means clubs have hands tied in trying to create more drama. The increased attendances at European qualifiers or the local derby matches in Helsinki is inevitably due to the increase in this drama, and subsequent activating in the normally passive fans' engagement.

When studying the responses to the questions pertaining to friendship and the inclusion of friends when attending games, it was interesting to see the unanimous enjoyment respondents took from attending with friends, but the decrease in likelihood of attendance of less regular fans without their friends does suggest an element of dependency. The more active fans answered that they are no less likely to go even if their friends are not, showing that their commitment to their team stretches beyond a need for companionship.

The increased willingness to attend more away matches if it were cheaper to travel for those who already attend more than 10 games per year indicates that, with the correct affordability or subsidising, they would attend even more games. This doubles as evidence that the more enthusiastic followers are only inhibited by an inability to attend, rather than a lack of desire. This is echoed with the increase in agreement that with different kick off times of dates, they would be able to attend more matches.

5.2.2 Motivators which were unanimous throughout segments

Among the responses of individuals regarding the motivational elements of the research, there were some factors which received unanimous agreement or similarities

The overwhelming condemnation of suggested Ice Hockey match style entertainment echoes a wide distain for non-footballing like match atmospheres. The differing demographic of sports fans is more often than not mirrored by the experiences at different sport events, and the commitment/desire to ones' favourite sport goes hand in hand with a fashionable dislike for that of other sports.

The rivalry between football and Ice Hockey in Finland may however suggest that the question itself was poorly worded. Had the question been posed as "further entertainment" without the need to include "Ice Hockey", we may have encouraged a positive response

from respondents who would crave more entertainment but would not want to suggest the game should be more closely related to Ice Hockey.

The issue of safety was one which received widespread agreement in that an increase wouldn't encourage respondents to attend more often. It is natural to assume that this is due to the somewhat non-existent threat of hooliganism or genuine external dangers in Finnish football, and the irrelevance of safety. On the contrary, the games where safety is a potential issue, such as the Stadin Derby, attract the highest attendances. Safety concerns often go hand in hand with an increase in passion and rivalry, and this sense of drama ultimately attracts more fans. The lack of safety concerns may point to the lack of intensity in Finnish fixtures.

When looking at ticket prices in the survey, it is difficult to assess how impactful ticket price is as a whole on the sport. The research figures suggest that the cost of a ticket is a very small or non-existent problem for fans of the Veikkausliiga alone. We cannot say that it is not a stumbling block in attending at all, because should the tickets cost 100€ per match then it would be fair to say that ticket price would then become *the* main preventative of attendance. However, the cost of Finnish football tickets compared to other sources of entertainment in Finland and football elsewhere, indicated a good level of affordability. It would therefore seem likely that the individuals who said they would go to more matches if the tickets were cheaper are either unaware of the current cost of them, or are only willing to go if the tickets are free.

Whilst gambling is a factor that is present in many modern motivational theories, to suggest an inclination of fans to attend a game just so they can gamble on it would be foolish. The purpose of those who bet on games is, as theories suggest, to make money. This does not tend to support any motives of actively attending a game which requires an investment of money with.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Use of Motivational Understanding

The segmentation not just of the fans, but of the motivational factors is valuable. Given the enriched understanding of fan motivations in the Finnish market, it is fair to make the statement that some motives are more relevant for some fans than others when it comes to encouraging attendance. With the intention of attracting more fans to visit the stadium and watch a game live, clubs must acknowledge the need to customise their own marketing actions. The heterogeneity of football fans in Finland has been highlighted in their different desires. Having segmented fans regarding different levels of attendance, it is fair to say that clubs should consider the same actions regarding fan outreach.

In order to visualise the results of the motivational factors and their impact on attendance, this Motivational Factors Affecting Attendance Matrix provides a clear measurement of the level of impact which each factor has and its ability to be influenced by the football club.

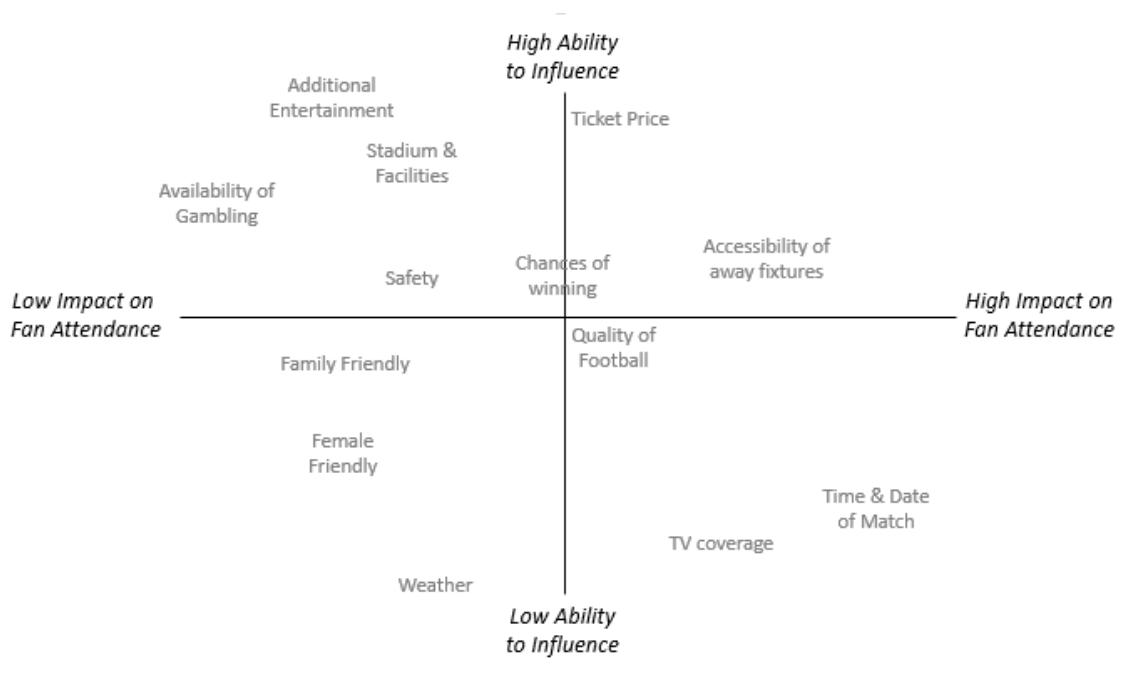


Figure 22. Motivational factors matrix

5.4 Branding perspective: Observations

When analysing the results as a whole, there were no major differences between responses from different attendance levels. All five groups answered very similarly and clearly valued statements that involved supporting a local team, traditional values, positive progression and entertaining matches. According to these findings, football fans in the Veikkausliiga value more of the traditional and historic side of their supported club.

5.4.1 Reasons to start supporting a club

One of the most noticeable findings is that a great majority started supporting their team due to it being their local club where they live now or it is the club from the place where they grew up. The statement 'It's the local team where I live now' was chosen 226 times, which was also the most chosen statement out of both questions 12 and 1. Also, the statement 'It's the team from where I grew up' was chosen 177 times being the third most chosen statement. According to these results there is an obvious sense of loyalty towards local clubs. We can argue that the reason for this level of loyalty stems not just from the tribal belonging to the area which you grew up and your fellow fans, but also through the genuine lack of a huge footballing goliath in Finland. The wildly successful teams such as

Manchester United in England, or Barcelona in Spain possess the ability to attract fans from other areas within their own country and also from abroad. This migration of emotional belonging away from ones' home town club is less prevalent, it appears, in Finland where a sense of local pride conquers any success.

As far as reasons to start supporting a club is concerned, tradition and history were also valued majorly being chose 124 times altogether. Knowledge of any sports franchise's history and possible traditions can be a major boost towards loyalty towards it. It is almost a form of nationalism where knowing about a people's or nation's history and past can increase one's loyalty towards it, especially when it's a matter of their own one.

As we get to the analysis of the respondents who attend more matches, in this case the 11 to 20 and more than 20 matches per season, we notice that the statements in each group are definite with one or two statements. This can imply that more loyal fans are more determined of their thoughts towards their club. We can argue that whilst more loyal supporters are determined with their reasons to follow a certain club, less loyal fans are still looking for that certainty and devotion to follow a club and therefore have less of a motive to attend matches more often.

It also occurred that respondents who attended less matches per season chose to support their club more because of their success when compared to supporters who attended more matches. From this, we can only assume that loyal supporters will devotedly attend matches and follow the club, regardless of their success. Some less loyal supporters would most likely pay attention to their club once they are only performing well. In the sporting world, this is usually referred to as "glory hunting".

5.4.2 Statements regarded with the supported club

When the respondents were asked about statements that come to mind when thinking of their own club, the aspects of locality and traditions were in a dominant position. 'Rich tradition' (206) and 'close to the community' (139) were the most favoured statements regarding club image. Once again, this indicates that supporters in the Veikkausliiga value traditional values in their club. The respondents' favour towards the club being part of the community indicates that football supporters in Finland believe that clubs are not increasing their distance to loyal and devoted fans and want to have a close relationship with them. Being a small football nation in a global spectrum, clubs in Finland should emphasize this value of being close to its supporting community.

Interestingly enough, 'club's rivals (e.g. derbies)' was also in very high favour within the respondents receiving 110 ticks in the survey. Although, the main reason to this may well be the fact that a great majority of the respondents were supporters of the two Helsinki-based rivals HJK and HIFK. Them being in the same league has most certainly brought a growing interest towards the strong rivalry and could have even made them more devoted towards their club.

5.5 Club support segmentation: observations

This part of the text will discuss the observations of the six chosen club's most valued statements according to their own fans.

When we go through the responses of the HJK supporters, we can easily link the statements to their past and most recent events. Their supporters seeing them as "successful" can obviously come from the fact that they have won most championships in the top flight of Finnish football (World Football 2016). "Ambitious" was also one of the most favoured statements regarding HJK and it could come from its supporters' high expectancy when it comes to the club's success. In recent times the club has faced uneasy attitudes from their supporters because of their not-so-successful times in the UEFA Champions League qualifying stages. The club has almost come to a stage where championships in the Veikkausliiga are not enough. "Rich tradition" could most likely come of the club's history of being one of the most prestigious and oldest club's in the country.

When comparing the responses of the supporters of HIFK and HJK to each other we can see that there are not that many differences. "Rich tradition" and "Club's rivals (e.g. derbies)" were almost similarly valued between these two rival clubs. The first statement may well refer to HIFK's over a century old past and its strong devotion of keeping the club both Finnish and Swedish speaking. Also, the results clearly indicate that the supporters value the derby against HJK hugely. The Stadin derby has become a very important asset to the club, as according to the CEO of the club, René Österman, the derby contributes to 25 to 30% of the club's sales (Helsingin Sanomat 2016).

In this research, FC Inter Turku and HJK were the only club's whose supporters chose "International" as one of their most favoured statement. As far as HJK is concerned, this can be an implication of the club's recent endeavours in international matches and it purchasing players from abroad. A fair share of FC Inter Turku players is also from abroad and it could also be because of their club name's connection to internationality (FC Inter Turku 2016).

Out of the six observed clubs, the supporters of FC Lahti seemed to have responded with the most negative statements regarding their club. Statements “Poor stadium /facilities”, “Lack of ambition”, “Lack of progress” and “Unsuccessful” were the four most favoured statements within the supporters with only “Close to the community” being the only positive one out of the top five. The club is currently playing in Lahden Stadion which is also used as a ski jumping stadium during winters. This may well be a reason to such negative remarks towards the stadium facilities and it may be that the supporters wish for a better stadium for their club, perhaps something that is meant only for football. The club has not succeeded especially well during the past year which may well be the reason to the rest of the negative statements (World Football 2016). The reason to why the supporters have not been positive when asking what they think of their club may not be solely because of their lack of success in recent years. It could also show us that the supporters just have a more pessimistic attitude towards their club and the results simply rely on their demeanour.

The supporters of HIFK, RoPS and Ilves chose “Close to the community” as one of their most favoured statements. HIFK seems to have a very close connection with the community and its supporters, which refers to the club having a strong relationship with its supporters. Both being growing clubs, RoPS and Ilves seem to have a close and good relationship between their fans as well.

6 Future use of Data

The results of our research have uncovered new information on fan demands and motivations in Finnish football. As a result, we have been able to make suggestions for future use of this knowledge at club level for Finnish teams. In order to heighten the impact which clubs have on fan relations, they must combine insight (in the form of the data) with action (in the implication of directed and suitable measures). The following section of the thesis has been divided into two parts; suggestions for development regarding fan motivation and engagement, and suggestions for brand development for Finnish football clubs.

6.1 Future use regarding Fan Motivation

The results of our survey highlighted notable differences in fan motivations and attachment for supporters. Key areas have been identified and suggestions have been made for topics where the responses of all fans or specific fan segments suggest a need for improvement.

The incremental importance given to quality in less actively engaged fans highlights the need to change perceptions. Whilst comparatively speaking, the Veikkausliiga cannot keep up with the Premier League or La Liga for their footballing standard and quality, it can do more to define its' stature at the peak of the sport in Finland. This would point towards a demand for improved marketing directed at fans who specifically attend less often due to their perception of the poor quality. One such suggestion would be to highlight the ability of the players in the league through public engagement and competitions; challenging locals and fans to play against professionals in publicly arranged events or pop up campaigns in city centres, or perhaps filming unorthodox challenges to show how talented the players really are. This light-hearted approach would increase local engagement and bring wider exposure to the league in the context of Social Media exposure. The material could also be used for a marketing campaign titled, "We aren't as bad as you think".

Although the potential attendance of friends might not have had a direct influence on the decision whether or not to go to a match for all fans, there was a somewhat unanimous agreement that fans enjoy attending games when their friends are also present. With this in mind, the need to accommodate the value of friendship in sporting engagement should not be ignored in marketing strategies. For instance, clubs could introduce friendship season tickets when groups of young friends would get discount when they book season tickets in groups of four or more. Perhaps a fifth season ticket would be given free as a “Friends seat” to allow the group to donate the use of it to a friend of their choice for each game. Likewise, the involvement of groups of friends could be supported with outreach to loyal fans. Those, for example, who attend an away fixture could receive an additional friend ticket for a reduced fee or even free, as subsidised by the club. This would also encourage travel to away games and widespread increase in attendances nationwide. Free or discounted travel to away matches arranged by clubs would offer better opportunity too for those who stated that they would attend more away matches if affordable. Alternatively, packages for away matches which include budget transport and accommodation would save time and encourage a stronger travel culture of fans. Alternatively, Veikkausliiga clubs could partner with one another to offer away season tickets which would provide cheap tickets to all away games for fans throughout the league campaign and would be supported with systematic transport measures to increase active engagement.

The time and dates of fixtures are inhibiting engagement of some fans, the results show, so in order to understand the most undesirable times and dates, the attendances should be more thoroughly examined. Once the days and times of the least attended fixtures are identified, these weak spots in match accessibility or desirability can be made more encouraging through reduced ticket prices or alternative pull factors such as free refreshments or merchandise. The atmosphere at matches was something which was not unanimously agreed on in the respondent answers. The more frequent visitors gave more a positive indication of match atmospheres, and the more infrequent visitors felt the opposite. With this in mind, there is a suggested potential for widening public perspectives. Although we did not specifically investigate what good atmosphere meant to the respondents, we can assume that fans would like to have more experientially rich interactions with the sport at matches. Taking into account the lack of desire to include ice hockey style additional entertainment, the need to create an authentic football identity is key. One way to do this would be to connect with supporter’s clubs and the most loyal fans, and ask for desired suggestions to improve their experiences, and subsequently make the matches a more atmospheric and boisterous occasion for visitors, when considering the sense of noise and drama. The use of tifos, pyrotechnics and banners gives stadiums a more colourful and chaotic sense of occasion at matches in other leagues. The clubs could help

with the implementation of this, and rather than try to develop the club as a brand, develop the brand of the fans instead.

6.2 Future use regarding Branding

Some key suggestions of improvement regarding branding will be stated in the following part. The suggestions are based on the respondents' opinions regarding the support of their own club.

According to the research findings, values that regarded locality and pride of the club's home area were dear to most of the respondents. Bearing this in mind, clubs in Finland could attach more traditional elements regarding the city or area where they are based in. These elements could be linked to local landmarks, the residents' identity, local cuisine, local slang, etc. Clubs could build a brand for themselves that not only provides its supporters a sense of belonging but a sense of proud belonging. Clubs in the Veikkausliiga could incorporate some famous landmarks of their respective city or town to their advertisement. Local cuisine could also be incorporated in their food stands during matches. For example, RoPS from Rovaniemi could serve smoked reindeer as a traditional food from Lapland and Ilves from Tampere could serve its famous "mustamakkara". Local lingoes and accents could also be incorporated as a brand element in Finnish football, as the country is surprisingly full of them with different variations of the language. The two Helsinki-based clubs HJK and HIFK could translate their match day programmes and websites into local "Stadi slang". Same could be done with Kuopio, using the famous "Savo dialect" and Tampere with its "Tampere dialect". This kind of approach could not only regard already existing supporters and heighten their pride but also new potential supporters who are proud of their hometown or area. The objective would be to make the supporters simply proud of where they are from regarding their club.

Tradition and history were also in a strong position when it comes to values regarding the supported club in the Veikkausliiga. This can be strongly linked to the previous element of locality and local pride, as being aware of the club's traditions and history can bring a strong sense of belonging and pride towards the respective club. Having existed over a century, clubs such as HJK and HIFK have a clear advantage in incorporating their history to their brand. Clubs in the Veikkausliiga could bring awareness of their history and traditions through interesting historical writings of their past on their match day programmes, website and social media. But this does not mean that younger clubs would not be able to make use of their traditions and history. Fc Lahti could for example tell about their stories and history of their two older Lahti based clubs which the club emerged from; Lahden Reipas and Fc Kuusysi. Finding out about a Veikkausliiga club's connections with its town's

or nation's history could also bring some closer belonging to the club. For example, how was the club involved with the country's wars during the Second World War. Relating to historical events and the past could be great a way to make supporters prouder of their own club.

Another finding in this research was that the respondents seemed to value derbies and rivalries regarding their club. Obviously, the large favour of this element can be most likely possible because of the return of the derby match-up between the two Helsinki based clubs HJK and HIFK, and that a clear majority of the respondents were supporters of these two clubs. Club rivalry and derbies were still favoured by the supporters of RoPS and Inter Turku as it was in the top five of most favoured statements, so this means that rivalry and derbies are still valued outside of Helsinki as well. As other clubs in the Veikkausliiga do not share the same advantage as having another club from the same town in the same league, they have to rely on other measures to bring a sense of rivalry within their brand. For example, SJK and VPS could spark a sense of rivalry between them both being from the Pohjanmaa region. Even though derbies and rivalries can be very fierce and dangerous by nature, they could be a great way to bring a sense of belonging to one side when there is a common rival at the other side. Promoting the history behind a certain derby or rivalry could bring strong interest towards it. Giving a taste of a derby match to new potential spectators could also be a great way to strengthen the image of its excitement and build great interest to witness it themselves. For example, HJK and HIFK could promote their matches with short teaser videos of their fans cheering and putting up tifos at previous derbies. Promoting the excitement of the matches could be a great way to draw interest towards a certain club or, in general, Finnish football.

7 Segmenting the Finnish Football Fan

Finnish football fans, as we have found, are as diverse in their opinion as they are in their behavioural consistencies. Inspired by prior research and by our newfound knowledge of Finnish fan types, we have attempted to segment the domestic Finnish football fan base into several types of football fan. Each fan segment has been divided by the common agreement on certain variables. Shared interests and opinions within large numbers of the respondents formed heterogeneous groups, and allowed us to categorise all fans into segments.

The Backbone

These fans perhaps form the pinnacle of Footballing fandom. These are the fans who feel that the chances of their team winning play little to no part in their decision to attend games. They aren't affected by the weather and love Finnish football. They attend roughly 10-15 games per season or more. They impact greatly on the atmosphere of Veikkausliiga games and think they are providing plenty of noise. Although they enjoy attending with friends, they aren't dependant on their attendance when it comes to encouraging their own. The main reason that these fans don't go more often is because work commitments prevent them from doing so, or the time and dates of kick off clash with other responsibilities. The average Backbone supporter is between 18 and 35 years of age, male, and either working full time or a student.

For these fans, perhaps involvement or attendance at board level meetings regarding organisational issues could increase shared values between the clubs and their most loyal fans. Having input into pressing issues such as club signings and facility refurbishment plans, as well as co-creation of new marketing strategies and reward programmes would strengthen understanding.

The Dissuasive

These fans are the opposite end of the commitment spectrum to "The Backbone". If those in the former segment attend matches regularly and love atmospheres in Finland's top flight, these fans on the contrary, are much less emotionally attached. The Dissuasive are the fans who would only go more often if there was more at stake, and believe that entertainment can be found in better forms elsewhere, even though most prefer football to any other sport. They don't find football matches a tool for stress release, and only very few attend more than five games every season. Bad weather is likely to dissuade these fans from attending, and the lure of foreign football on TV gives more reason to stay on the

sofa. On average, the Dissuasive fan attends 0-5 matches in Finland each year. The regular Dissuasive fan is just as likely to be male or female and is 25 to 34 years old, working full-time.

This is perhaps the biggest headache for marketers. The need to activate the interest of these fans extends beyond the direct capabilities of traditional marketing outreach, and consequentially calls for more extraordinary means of communication. As suggested previously, guerrilla marketing campaigns aimed at changing perception may be the key. Engaging these *anti-fans* with fun pop-up competitions and events where the public are directly involved would at least increase awareness. Players challenging local residents to matches or viral media campaigns showing the skills of the players in unorthodox situations is one suggestion.

The Persuasive

The enjoyment of attending matches with friends is in universal agreement across Finnish football fans. A dependency on friends' attendance on the other hand is not as common, as we have read. Not all fans believe that their own attendance hinges on their friends'. However, the persuasive are the ones who do. For them, 'no friends' means 'no match'. These guys will only go if their pals are too. The 'Persuasive' fans are typically males between 18-24 years of age and are students or in part time employment.

The quality of football is important to these followers, and without their friends alongside, they do not see many genuine pull factors which can offer enough lure to make them attend alone. Veikkausliiga matches alone simply don't offer enough excitement. As a result, they only attend 3-5 Veikkausliiga fixtures on average per year. The games are social occasions where football is the by-product; a mere platform for fraternising. Ticket prices are not important to these guys and girls, nor is the weather. It's all about friendship.

One club strategy for luring these fans would be to create "friend tickets". This could be either in the form of a free 5th ticket when groups of four fans buy together, leaving one spare to invite a friend, or free tickets for season ticket holders to invite friends to one or two matches per season when the expected attendances are low.

The Needy

The competition between football and Ice Hockey for spectator numbers is helped by the mismatching of the fixtures calendar: The SM Liiga running through autumn and winter

months, and the Veikkausliiga during spring and summer. The fans however, can compare the different offering of experiences in match attendance at both sports. The so-called Americanisation of ice hockey match entertainment is what makes attending desirable for some, but a deterrent for others. Some football followers crave a migration of such entertainment into Football fixtures; they want additional entertainment. These we call, The Needy. Their relationship with football as whole is indifferent. Hockey is just as favourable as a sport, but they don't feel sufficiently entertained to attend regularly. If there was more at stake or if the comparative quality was as high as that of the domestic Hockey standard, they would attend more frequently. Whilst they do attend less than 5 games on average per year, these fans can be lured with cheaper tickets. This type of fan is equally as likely to be female as they are male, and on average are between 25-44 years old. They are mostly full time workers.

One way to encourage these fans to attend more matches would be to provide added entertainment in new and ground-breaking forms. As opposed to ostracising the regular fans with the unwanted introduction of surplus on field entertainment, perhaps affordable "Experience Packages" could be sold to the most experience-hungry fans. These could involve the use of google glasses to show player attributes and stats during the game, or include hospitality benefits which for example, could include access to a games room pre and post-match.

The Domestic Dodger

Football fans in Finland are exposed to other European football leagues through the plethora of televised coverage afforded, and many feel attached to foreign sides, for many reasons, not limited to the connection to Finland's past or present heroes or even socio-political alignment. Some Finns feel that the domestic league here cannot quite match that on offer abroad. These fans rarely attend Veikkausliiga matches as a result (0-2 times per year). They cite the low importance of Finnish football fixtures and poor atmospheres as reasons to not go, and whilst they disagree vehemently with any suggestion that there are better forms of entertainment than football, they do agree that the beauty of the game is not manifested in the domestic scene here in Finland. An improvement in quality and chance to go with friends is what would encourage these fans to go more. The majority of this fan group is aged between 25-34 years of age and comprise of both women and men in full time employment or studying.

Rather than attempting to out-perform or manipulate these fans' attitude towards perceived quality, the clubs could cater to the desire of these non-domestic followers by providing televised coverage of international league games, at the stadiums themselves.

For example, opening the stadium three hours prior to kick off, and hosting live televised coverage of a Premier League fixture may provide the perfect setting for these fans. Having the games shown in the hospitality area with food and drinks provided, before the fans move to the stands to watch the Veikkausliiga fixture would satisfy the desires of fans whilst proving post-match entertainment in the form of a live match experience in the stadium.

The Habitual

Like the first group of fans who we call the Backbone, this pool of followers attends matches as much out of habit as out of desire. Typically, they go 10-15 times per year to watch Veikkausliiga games. They don't feel the need for surplus entertainment at the matches. For these fans, planning their personal schedules around the fixtures list is a must, and the only thing that would see them attend more often is if away fixtures were more affordable to reach. These followers are less interested in the quality of football as they are the chance to escape from the indifference of their normal routines. They enjoy all football, foreign and domestic, and whilst an emotional connection to a non-Finnish team is often strong, their commitment lies with their local club or that of their birthplace in Finland. This a male dominated fan segment of mostly over 25's, the majority of which are in full time employment. Subsidising transport for these fans to access away matches would provide a philanthropic gesture to reward their otherwise unfaltering loyalty. Subsidised coach travel would allow the migration of large away followings to games and with added sales of food and drink on board, may be a way of recouping some of the cost outlay.

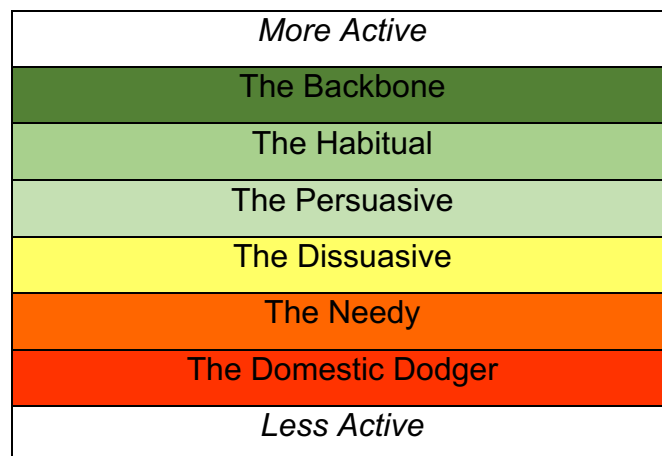


Figure 23. Finnish Football Fan Types

8 Conclusion

The increasingly widespread connectivity to supporters is dissolving the physical divide between the club and the fan. New technologies manifested through an increase in social media coverage brings transparency to club operations and players' lives. However, the opulent spending and mega rich statuses of the behemoths of the footballing world; both teams and players, is creating a polarisation in the emotional context between the same two entities. Although fans are closer physically to the club and players, the gulf between the wealth and lifestyle of fans and players is growing.

In relation to the theory of our study in Finland, this trend is manifested in the attitudes towards clubs' emotional proximity to the surrounding community. For example, the most successful domestic team HJK scored poorly in respondent attitude regarding closeness to their community. Could this mean the cost of success is a dissolution in Fan engagement? In the United Kingdom, some Manchester United fans who had become disenfranchised with the clubs' ownership, broke away and formed a new team, FC United of Manchester. This demonstration of discontent shows fan attempts at self-empowerment and increased involvement.

Whilst the importance of satisfying fan needs has, for most major clubs, become less relevant regarding financial stability; television and sponsorship income dwarves ticket receipts and shirt sales - the opposite is the case for smaller clubs, operating in less opulent environments. The need to combat the spiralling physical demands of 'nowness' for fan connectivity, with limited financial capability, adds to the insurmountable challenge of maintaining an equal "sex-appeal" to the mega rich and world renowned media-magnets for local fans. The thesis findings provide a call to action for clubs to adopt new frameworks not just for marketing, but for increased fan understanding.

The analysis and subsequent segmentation of fan types does indicate a disappearing "middle class" of football fan; those who attend with partial regularity, whenever possible. Instead, there seems to be a polarisation in the activity of fans. Time and financial constraints are the only obstacles preventing the most engaged fans from attending even more. On the other hand, a firm lack of interest in the Veikkausliiga is preventing the least active football follower from going at all.

What is clearly evident, is the importance of rewarding the loyal fans, which is more necessary than ever before. Furthermore, the need to disrupt the passive stance of the inactive footballing fan with exciting and experientially wholesome offerings.

Clubs must act proactively rather than retrospectively when considering future fan understanding and community development.

Our research, we hope, can provide newfound intelligence for Finnish football service providers, to give fans more impetus to activate their passive engagement to the game. We also hope it will help provide food for thought in the attempts to create unforgettable experiences for fans, and ultimately re-establish a sense of pride in clubs, and more profoundly, the surrounding community as a whole.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire in English

Factors Affecting Football Match Attendance

1. Gender *

- Male
- Female

2. Age *

- Under 12 years of age
- 12-17 years old
- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65 years old or above

3. Residency *

- I live in Finland
- I live outside of Finland

4. Occupation *

- Unemployed
- Student
- Part-Time Employment
- Full-Time Employment
- Retired

5. Please enter your postal code *

Post Code

6. Finnish football vs Foreign football *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
I prefer to watch foreign football instead of Finnish football (e.g Premier League, La Liga, Bundesliga)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	-
I support a foreign football team more closely than a Finnish football team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	-

7. Which Veikkausliiga team (if any) do you support? *

- FC Inter Turku
- FC Lahti
- HIFK
- HJK
- IFK Mariehamn
- Ilves
- KuPS
- PK-35 Vantaa
- PS Kemi
- RoPS
- SJK
- VPS
- None of the above

8. How many Veikkausliiga matches do you visit per season? *

- 0-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- More than 20

9. What is your favourite sport to spectate? *

- Football
- Ice hockey
- Basketball
- Salibandy (Floorball)
- Rugby
- Athletics
- Other winter sports
- None of the above

10. How important are the following factors when deciding whether or not to attend a Veikkausliiga match? *

	Not Important	Less Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Important	Very Important
Ticket price	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Travel/Accommodation costs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of football	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weather	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time/Date of fixture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stadium and facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Whether or not my friends are attending	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The chances of my team winning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Totally Agree
I prefer to watch football on T.V	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a genuine interest in Finnish football	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a belonging to a certain Finnish team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy attending matches with my family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I attend matches to release stress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I watch live football to escape from routine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think Veikkausliiga match atmospheres are good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy attending matches with my friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think there are better forms of entertainment than football	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I attend matches as a habit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to gamble on football matches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. What is/are the reason(s) you started supporting your favourite team? (max. 3 answers) *

- They're successful
- A certain player
- The fans are passionate
- My friend(s) supports them
- My family or family member supports them
- It's the local team where I live now
- It's the team from where I grew up
- Its image (colours, crest etc.)
- Its tradition or history
- The atmosphere at the clubs matches
- None of the above/I do not support a Veikkausliiga team

13. When considering the team you support, what are the first statements and words that come to mind? (pick max. 3 answers) *

- Rich tradition
- Unsuccessful
- Lack of ambition
- Club's rivals (e.g. derbies)
- Modern
- Entertaining matches
- Successful
- Close to the community
- Lack of progress
- Ambitious
- Progressive
- International
- Poor stadium/facilities
- Attractive playing style
- Boring playing style

14. I would attend more Veikkausliiga matches if: *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Tickets were cheaper	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was cheaper to travel to away matches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kick off times/dates were different	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local transport was free for match ticket holders on match days	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was safer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was more female friendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There was more at stake	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My friends came too	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family commitments didn't prevent it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was more family friendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The weather was better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The quality was a higher standard	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There was additional entertainment like at Ice Hockey matches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work commitments didn't prevent it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix 2. Survey questionnaire in Finnish

Vaikuttavat tekijät suomalaisen jalkapallo-otteluiden katsomisessa

1. Sukupuolesi *

- Mies
- Nainen

2. Ikäsi *

- Alle 12 v
- 12–17 v
- 18–24 v
- 25–34 v
- 35–44 v
- 45–54 v
- 55–64 v
- Yli 65 v

3. Asuinpaikkasi *

- Asun Suomessa
- Asun Suomen ulkopuolella

4. Ammattisi *

- Työtön
- Opiskelija
- Osa-aikainen työntekijä
- Koko-aikainen työntekijä
- Eläkkeellä

5. Postinumerosi *

5 merkkiä jäljellä

6. Suomalainen jalkapallo vs Ulkomaalainen jalkapallo *

	Vahvasti erimieltä	Erimieltä	En osaa sanoa	Samaa mieltä	Vahvasti samaa mieltä
Seuraan mielummin ulkomaalaista jalkapalloa (kuten Valioliigaa, La Ligaa, Bundesliigaa jne.) Suomalaisen jalkapallon sijaan.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kannatan ulkomaalaista jalkapalloseuraa enemmän kuin Suomalaista jalkapalloseuraa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Mitä Veikkausliigassa pelaavaa joukkuetta (jos ketään) sinä kannatat? *

- FC Inter Turku
- FC Lahti
- HIFK
- HJK
- IFK Mariehamn
- Ilves
- KuPS
- PK-35 Vantaa
- PS Kemi
- RoPS
- SJK
- VPS
- Ei ketään ylläolevista

8. Montako Veikkausliiga -ottelua käyt katsomassa kauden aikana? *

- 0-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- Enemmän kuin 20

9. Mikä on sinun lempiruuhelu seurata paikanpäällä? *

- Jalkapallo
- Jääkiekko
- Koripallo
- Salibandy
- Rugby
- Yleisurheilu
- Muut talvilajit
- Ei mitään ylläolevista

10. Kuinka tärkeitä ovat seuraavat vaikuttajat kun päätät mennä tai olla menemättä katsomaan Veikkausliiga-ottelua? *

	Ei tärkeää	Vähemmän tärkeää	Ei kumpaakaan	Tärkeää	Erittäin tärkeää
Lipun hinta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Matka/yöpymis-kustannukset	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jalkapallon laatu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sää	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ottelun aika/päivämäärä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stadionin puitteet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jos minun ystävät ovat myös menossa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Joukkueeni voittamismahdollisuudet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Kuinka samaa mieltä tai erimieltä olet seuraavien asioiden suhteen? *

	Täysin erimieltä	Erimieltä	Ei kumpaakaan	Samaa mieltä	Täysin samaa mieltä
Katson mieluummin jalkapalloa kotona	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Minulla on todellinen kiinnostus suomalaista jalkapalloa kohtaan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tunnen itseni kuuluvani johonkin tiettyyn suomalaiseen joukkueeseen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tykkään käydä katsomassa pelejä perheeni kanssa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Käyn otteluissa purkaakseni stressiä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Katson jalkapalloa paikanpäällä päästäkseni pois rutiineistani	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mielestäni Veikkausliiga-otteluissa on hyvä tunnelma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tykkään käydä katsomassa pelejä kavereitten kanssa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Minun mielestä on parempia viihdemuotoja kuin jalkapallo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Käyn otteluissa tavan mukaan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tykkään lyödä vetoa jalkapallosta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Minkä syyn/syiden takia sinä aloit kannattaa omaa jalkapalloseuraasi? (maks. 3 vastausta) *

- He ovat menestyneitä
- Tietty pelaaja
- Heidän kannattajat ovat intohimoisia
- Minun kaverini tai kaverit kannattavat heitä
- Minun perheeni tai perheenjäseneni kannattavat heitä
- He ovat paikallisseurani missä asun
- He ovat sieltä mistä olen kotoisin
- Heidän imago (värit, logo jne.)
- Heidän perinteet tai historia
- Heidän tunnelma kotiotteluissa
- Ei mikään ylläolevista/En kannata Veikkausliiga-seuraa

13. Kun ajattelet kannattamaa seuraasi, mitkä näistä lausunnoista tulevat mieleesi? (maks. 3 vastausta) *

- Rikas perinne
- Menestymätön
- Kunnianhimon puute
- Seuran kilpailijat (esim. derbyt)
- Moderni
- Viihdyttävät ottelut
- Menestynyt
- Lähellä yhteisöä
- Edistyksen puute
- Kunnianhimoinen
- Edistyksellinen
- Kansainvälinen
- Stadionin heikot puutteet
- Viehättävä pelityyli
- Tylsä pelityyli

14. Kävisin katsomassa enemmän Veikkausliiga-otteluita jos: *

	Vahvasti eri mieltä	Eri mieltä	Ei kumpaakaan	Samaa mieltä	Vahvasti samaa mieltä
Liput olisivat halvempia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Olisi halvempaa matkustaa vierasotteluihin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alkupotku-ajat/päivämäärät olisivat muina aikoina	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paikallinen liikenne olisi ilmaista lipunomistajille	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Se olisi turvallisempaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Se olisi naisille ystävällisempää	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jotain olisi enemmän vaakalaudalla	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Minun kaverini tulisivat myös	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Velvollisuudet perheen kanssa eivät estäisi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Se olisi perheille mukavampaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sää olisi parempi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Laatu olisi parempaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Olisi enemmän erillistä viihdettä, kuten jääkiekko-otteluissa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jos työvelvollisuudet eivät sitä estäisi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>