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BACHELOR  
THESIS

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR KUOPION PALLOSEURA



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## I. INTELLECTUAL CONTENT

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This work or any part thereof has not previously been presented in any form to Hogeschool INHolland or to any other educational body neither for assessment nor for other purposes. Except for all the expressed acknowledgements, references and/or bibliographies cited in the work, I confirm that the intellectual content included into this thesis is the result of my own efforts and research.

signed

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Cedrick van der Aar

## II. PREFACE

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This individual research project (IRP) has been written for Hogeschool INHolland Diemen<sup>1</sup>. It represents the student's ability to carry out independent research as part of the International Business and Management Studies. The main focus of this thesis lays on the international management and marketing competences acquired through-out the four years of studies.

The objectives of this thesis are not only to demonstrate skills on studied subjects and on the application of used theories. An important function of the IRP is to test the student in terms of planning and organizing the research project; time management, achieving deadlines, collecting and analyzing large amounts of data and other challenges faced in a real life international business world.

This Bachelor thesis has been commissioned by and written in cooperation with Kuopion Palloseura (KuPS)<sup>2</sup>, a professional football club acting on the highest professional level in Finland, the Veikkausliiga<sup>3</sup>. The main objective of this thesis is to provide the commissioning client, KuPS, as well as any other institutions closely related to Finnish football with a widely researched document that will study some of the problems the client is faces in its business. Thorough research and theoretical analysis will lead to clear recommendations on how the addressed issues can be dealt with.

Various different sources have been used during the writing of this thesis, all of which can be found in the bibliography. Before going into more detail concerning the content of this thesis I would like to thank my educational supervisor, Andy Denz; my practical supervisors Tero Taipale and Jarmo Heiskanen; interviewee Job Dragtsma, my always helpful friend Petri Oravainen and all the fans of KuPS that have taken the time to fill out a questionnaire as part of this thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.inholland.nl>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kups.fi>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.veikkausliiga.com>

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The topic of this Bachelor thesis is the examination of the current situation in Finnish football and the way KuPS can create itself a sustainable position for the future.

Firstly, an introduction to Finnish football, as well as a short overview on the history of KuPS are presented, to give the general reader a fair amount of background information, after which the research questions and methodology will be presented. The main research methods used are both primary and secondary, as a questionnaire, an interview with an expert as well as theory from literature and documents have been used in the process of answering the research questions.

Secondly, the questionnaire, filled in by 272 KuPS fans, and the interview with Dutch football trainer Job Dragtsma give a clear insight in the problems that KuPS and many other Finnish football clubs are currently facing. The questionnaire included various sections including basic information, the image of KuPS, the facilities and services in and around the stadium and the link between the fans and the partners of the club.

Relatively low fan satisfaction in the areas of game-day entertainment and merchandising sales, combined with low spectator numbers and a lack of a real football fan culture are the main problems Finnish clubs currently have to deal with. Next to that, also the commercial utilization can still be drastically improved.

Then, the first two chapters focusing on theory related to the subject, following on the questionnaire and the interview, include the product life cycle projected on a football club, the way the value of the product football in a certain country affects a club, as well as the importance of co-marketing and partnerships in the long run.

The virtuous circle of a football club, as discussed in chapter nine, defines the way a football club and its success are built up. The core elements; people interest, image and brand, and company interest, are the three elements that no club could operate without. Next to that, this thesis especially focuses on how the virtuous circle applies on Finnish clubs and the way one weak link can completely hinder

the development of a club. Good examples of what can go wrong when one of the links in the circle gets damaged are found from inside Finland as well. Some of the examples are discussed and analyzed to give a clear insight in how a damaged link can bring down a whole club.

In the next chapter, the research focuses on the way clubs cooperate with all the parties involved in the daily running of the club. The attraction of a football club, as binding force that brings together many different individuals and organizations, is called football convergence, and discussed in the same chapter. More and more parties become involved with football, and clubs will need to find a way to deal with all the parties in order to keep general satisfaction and public interest on a high level.

Before drawing up the recommendations, football facilities are discussed, as they form an important role in fan satisfaction, image of the club and growth opportunities. Firstly, some examples from Europe's biggest leagues are discussed, after which the relationship between spectator numbers and on-field performance is discussed. This plays a big role in the decision making regarding facility improvement, and basically every other costly investment, and is therefore a very useful topic to take into account for every professional club.

Finally, the conclusion and recommendations form a guideline to KuPS that is applicable to many other Finnish clubs at the same time. It includes advice on how to deal with many different aspects of football management and club development. The key issues that definitely need to be focused on are:

- Fan satisfaction: improved entertainment and merchandising availability in and around the stadium
- Marketing strategy and advertising: some marketing content in local dialect, advertising through classical and new media, as well as outdoor.
- Local presence and identity: 'Kuopio is KuPS, KuPS is Kuopio' campaign to link the city and the club in the minds of the locals. Getting the youth involved and being present at events in and around Kuopio.

## 2. TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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**B2B** - Business-to-business

**B2C** - Business-to-consumer

**Bundesliga** – German premier division

**FIFA** – Fédération Internationale de Football Association. International football association

**Kakkonen** - Finnish Second Division.

**Kuopio** – City in East-Finland from which KuPS operates.

**KuPS** - Kuopion Palloseura, the commissioning client, a professional football club from Kuopio, Finland.

**Savo** – Region in East-Finland in which Kuopio is located.

**Veikkausliiga** - Finnish Premier Division. Veikkaus, a state-owned betting agency, is the sponsor of the Premier Division.

**Ykkönen** – Finnish First Division.



### 3. INTRODUCTION

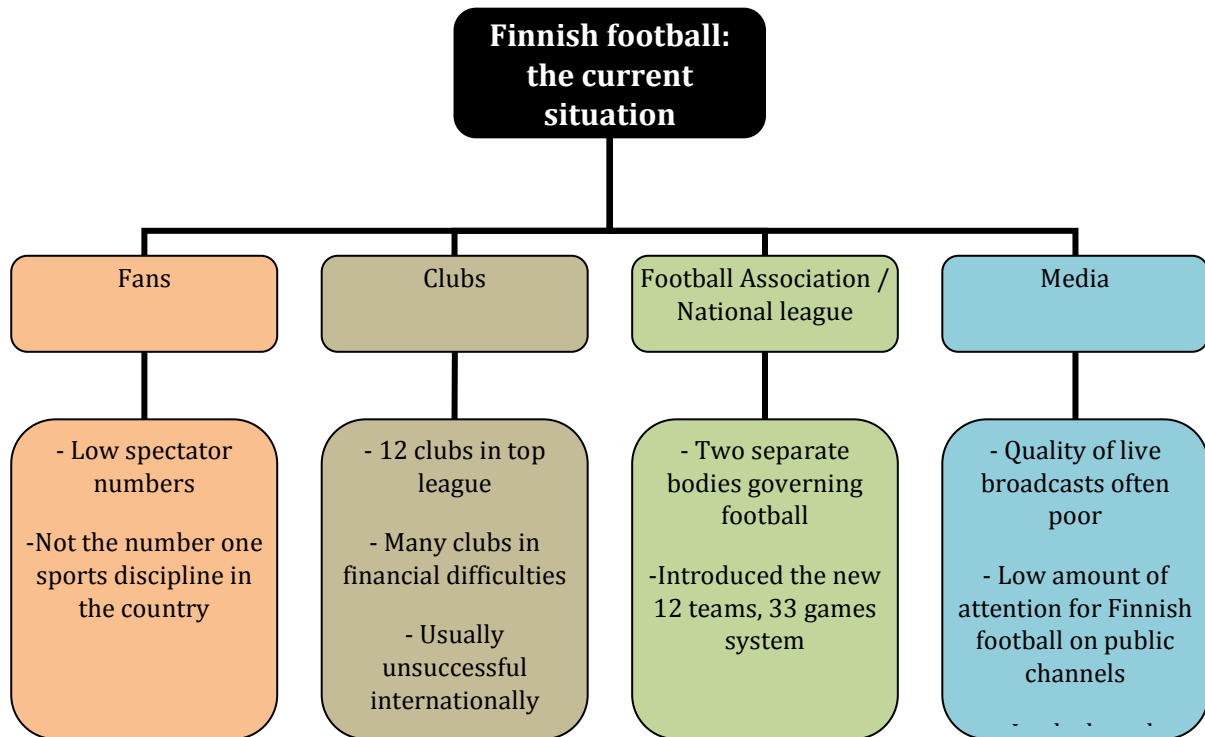


FIGURE 1: FOUR PILLARS OF FINNISH FOOTBALL

#### 3.1 FINNISH FOOTBALL, AN INTRODUCTION

Football, a sport that is being watched, played and followed worldwide, is not the number one sport according to the average Finn. While 715 million people worldwide watched the final of the World Cup 2006 in Germany<sup>4</sup>, most Finnish sports fans prefer watching icehockey over visiting a football match. With an already relatively small population of approximately 5.4 million people<sup>5</sup>, this does not leave a very big amount of potentially interested people and it forms an interesting challenge to both clubs, the football association as well as Finnish media involved in football.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/marketing/factsfigures/tvdata.html>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2010/vaerak\\_2010\\_2011-03-18\\_tie\\_001\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2010/vaerak_2010_2011-03-18_tie_001_en.html)

The structure and regulations of Finnish football are governed by the Finnish Football Association, SPL-FBF<sup>6</sup>, and the top division is controlled by Veikkausliiga ry<sup>7</sup>.

Football in Finland is based on one professional league, one semi-professional league and three amateur leagues with their own sub-ordinate leagues. The premier league, called Veikkausliiga, is a professional league, exists out of twelve teams and all teams play each other three times during one season. The league below Veikkausliiga, called Ykkönen (first division), is semi-professional and consists out of thirteen teams, with all teams playing each other twice. Below the first division is a second division, Kakkonen, which is an amateur division, separated in three geographic areas, all including fourteen teams that play each other twice.

All games played in Veikkausliiga are streamed online, through a pay-per-view server, and two or three games of every round are broadcasted live on television through pay-tv sports channels called UrhoTV<sup>8</sup> and Canal Plus<sup>9</sup>. The opinion of football fans about the streams and broadcasts is quite negative, with video quality and football expertise of the commentators being below the standards of football broadcasting in other European countries. The public broadcasting channel, called YLE, usually does have the sources to provide quality broadcasting, but does not focus on Finnish football, and only broadcasts games from the UEFA Champions League<sup>10</sup>.

To get further background knowledge of the topic, a brief introduction and history overview of KuPS is provided next.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.palloliitto.fi/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.veikkausliiga.com/Document.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.urhotv.fi>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.canalplus.fi/>

<sup>10</sup> [http://yle.fi/urheilu/lajit/jalkapallo/mestarien\\_liiga/](http://yle.fi/urheilu/lajit/jalkapallo/mestarien_liiga/)

### 3.2 BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO KUPS

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KuPS was founded on March 16th 1923 as Kuopion Palloseura (KPS) and after having played friendly games for several years, the club finally joined the national league right after the second world war, in 1945. By that time the club had introduced its current yellow-black outfit, along with the name change from KPS to the current KuPS.

The club won its first national championship in 1956 and ended up winning four more national titles between 1958 and 1976. Next to that is ended on the second spot in the premier division nine times, of which the latest one was last season, in 2010. KuPS managed to win the Finnish cup on two occasions and the club's attendance record currently stands on 6787, which was achieved during the KuPS – Elo game played on 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1969.<sup>11</sup>

The club currently exists out of a board of directors, daily management, a professional first team and a complete youth academy ranging from A (under 18) to F (under 8). The club plays its home games in Kuopion Keskuskenttä, which has a seating capacity of 2700 seats on the main stand and approximately 1500 seats on the opposite side and behind one of the goals.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

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Finnish football is having a really hard time at the moment. The league does not seem to pull the interest of a lot of sports-minded Finns and just recently two teams who normally would have appeared in Veikkausliiga got into such bad weather financially that they were not allowed to compete in the league during the 2011 season.<sup>13 14</sup>

The spectator numbers are low, the financial situation of many teams is precarious and the national football league is generally not taken very serious. When asking a Finn about why he or she does not support a Veikkausliiga-team, the answer will often be that the level is poor and he/she would much

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.kups.fi/2009/fi/historia/index.php>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.kups.fi/2009/fi/stadion/index.php>

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.palloliitto.fi/mp/db/file\\_library/x/IMG/185080/file/Valitusvaliokunta\\_Paatos3\\_2011.pdf](http://www.palloliitto.fi/mp/db/file_library/x/IMG/185080/file/Valitusvaliokunta_Paatos3_2011.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.yle.fi/urheilu/teksti/lajit/jalkapallo/kotimaa/2011/04/veikkausliigan\\_otteluohjelma\\_julki\\_2546401.html](http://www.yle.fi/urheilu/teksti/lajit/jalkapallo/kotimaa/2011/04/veikkausliigan_otteluohjelma_julki_2546401.html)

rather support a local ice hockey team than sit in a half-empty football stadium on a rainy Friday night.<sup>15</sup> Many football-fans in Finland support Barcelona, Liverpool or Manchester United, but very hardly do you hear someone proudly say that they are a fan of FC Honka or MYPA.

KuPS is heavily influenced and affected by everything that happens in and around Finnish football, which also makes the wider perspective highly relevant to the club and its management. The goal of this thesis is to answer the primary research question through various sub-questions, which then eventually results in clear recommendations to the client, KuPS, as to how it can create a sustainable position for the future.

### 3.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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Taking in consideration both cultural and commercial factors, the goal of this thesis is to get an answer to the main question arising regarding the way KuPS should position itself in the market;

“How can a professional football club like KuPS realize a more sustainable situation for the future?”

Sub-questions fitting to this issue are:

“What is the opinion of the fans and how can KuPS improve fan satisfaction?”

“How does on-field performance affect spectator numbers?”

“What can be done to improve the facilities and when should this be done?”

“How can KuPS attract more partners/sponsors?”

“How can KuPS make use of media to attract more spectators?”

“Should KuPS cooperate with other teams in the league?”

“What type of further research is recommended to be conducted?”

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.kihu.fi/faktapankki/faktaalueet/tulostus.php?id=110&otsikko=Kansallinen%20kiinnostus>

#### 4. METHODS

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To be able to answer the research questions stated earlier and linking these answers to several recommendations, three different research methods are to be used. Next to theories from respected and widely known sports marketing literature, a questionnaire to be filled out by the fans of KuPS, as well as an interview with a professional in the football business will be used as basis to answer the research questions.

Fans are the core base of every football club and therefore it is important to know their opinions. The fans are the ones that most of the activities of a football club are focused at, so when being in the process of creating a new strategy or development plan, it is important to know what the fans think of the current situation.

Because of the fact that not a big amount of research is available on Finnish football, it is important to make a good selection of theories applicable to football in Finland. The theory, together with the results of the questionnaire and the expert interview should result in enough information available to answer the research questions sufficiently.

The questions that eventually form the questionnaire have been designed in close cooperation with the client, KuPS. Main goal of the questionnaire is to get an insight in the ideas and suggestions, as well as the overall level of satisfaction of the KuPS fans. Several factors in fan satisfaction are supposed to be covered by the questions. These include; market positioning, merchandising range, stadium facilities and ticketing. Other issues that would be needed to get information about are; KuPS marketing content and efficiency, sponsor recognition and affinity as well as basic information like age, gender and monthly income.

In order to make sure the questionnaire is of relevant quality and contains questions and answer possibilities that will make a clear analysis of the answers possible, certain literature on survey creation will have to be used. The program used to create the questionnaire should be easily accessible and be able to produce graphs and analytical data of the answers, to limit the amount of work to be

done manually. E-lomake<sup>16</sup>, offered through Metropolia Business School, offers all of the mentioned options and is a suitable piece of software to use.

To make sure that the fans of KuPS will be interested in answering the questionnaire, the client decided to link a lottery to the questionnaire. A free KuPS-hat will be awarded to five people that have answered to the questionnaire. These people will be picked randomly from all respondents. A total amount of respondents of at least two hundred will be needed to make sure that the questionnaire has enough reliable data.

The questionnaire, once finished and checked by both the client and an external person without extensive football knowledge, is to be posted on the KuPS website as well as on the club's own Facebook page<sup>17</sup>. Mentioning the fact that KuPS-merchandising will be drawn amongst the people that filled out the questionnaire is important, as it will motivate people to participate. Two weeks should be enough time for all interested fans to fill out the questionnaire, after which the form will be closed and final data can be collected in both MS Excel as well as SPSS.

It is important that the interview with a professional in the Finnish football business takes place before selecting the exact theories from relevant literature in the field of sport marketing. The outcome of the interview, together with the results from the questionnaire will give an insight in the areas that both KuPS as well as Finnish football as a whole need to improve upon.

The choice to interview an experienced professional football coach from abroad comes from the fact that foreign managers usually have a different view on Finnish football than managers that have never actively worked as managers abroad. With their international football experiences, they are more likely to be able to judge about what is needed to improve the quality as well as the economic situation of football in Finland.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://e-lomake.fi/web/briefly-in-english/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kuopion-Palloseura/122353991161045>

After both the questionnaire and the interview have been conducted, the right theories can be selected to fit the needs of both KuPS as well as Finnish football as a whole. The decision to include theory that applies to both KuPS as well as to Finnish football in general is based on the assumption that KuPS is, for a certain part, dependent on the general situation of football in Finland. The club is part of a league which does enables KuPS to enjoy certain privileges, but also limits KuPS in the way it does business.

## 5. SUPPORTER SATISFACTION

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

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As part of this thesis, a questionnaire was designed. This questionnaire was published on the website and social media pages of Kuopion Palloseura (KuPS) and was answered by 272 KuPS fans. The English translation of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1 of this document and the detailed answers follow in Appendix 2 and 3. The main goal of the questionnaire was to get an idea of what the KuPS fans think of the current situation and if their answers could lead to clear recommendations and various areas of improvement for KuPS.

Interestingly enough, most clubs have a hard time defining their typical supporter. Who are they really welcoming to their stadium? To whom do they show their sponsors advertisements? It surely is not easy to exactly define the type of people that call themselves fans and visit the club's games, but it is well worth the research for every single club, as sponsors and investors will be very interested to know that kind of information.

KuPS now has the possibility to, in quite some detail, define their average fan. He is a 25-year old young man and comes from the Northern Savo-area. He has an average income of 1500€/month after taxes and is studying at / has graduated from a university of applied sciences. All these facts and figures help the club to define their target group and present themselves to sponsors and investors.



## 5.2 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

### 5.2.1 BASIC INFORMATION

KuPS has fans from all ages, but a very big part of its fans (77,57%), as figure 2 shows, is between 18

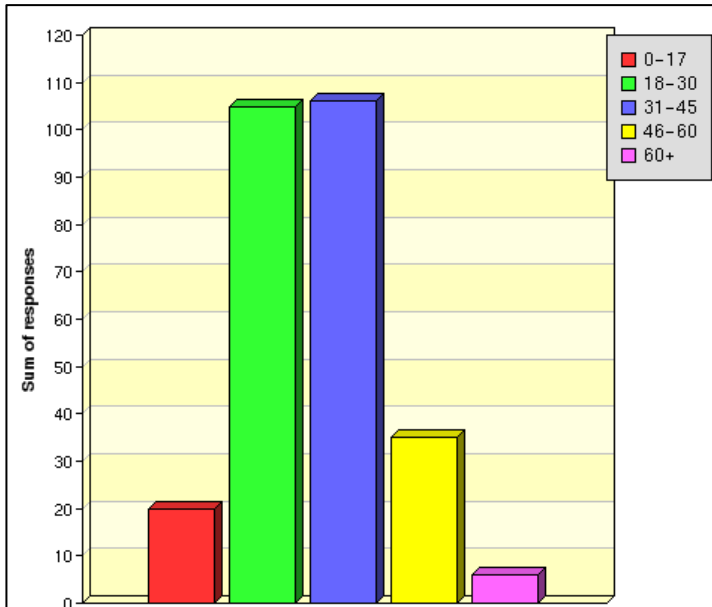


FIGURE 2: RESPONDENTS BY AGE GROUP

and 45 years of age. This means KuPS has quite young audience compared to clubs in, for instance, England. The average visitor of a club in the English Premier League is 43 year old<sup>18</sup>, whereas the average KuPS fan is only 25. This kind of information is very valuable as the age of the target group is an important factor in determining the most suitable marketing strategy and communication style.

One of the possible reasons behind the big age difference could be the price of a ticket. The cheapest possible ticket to a KuPS home game, for adults, costs 15 euro, whereas students can already purchase a ticket for 10 euro.<sup>19</sup> In England, due to sales restrictions and the high amount of interest towards football, tickets are too expensive for students and people with a lower income. The cheapest possible ticket at Arsenal, for instance, already costs 48 pounds while relegating team West Ham's home games can be visited for 36 pounds.<sup>20</sup>

As the age versus game visits cross tabulation graph in Appendix 3.19 shows, even though the youngest age group has the second smallest number of respondents, they do tend to be more loyal. On

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/columnists/ian-winwood/2008/10/24/why-aren-t-young-football-fans-watching-games-at-premier-league-grounds-115875-20835132/>

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.kups.fi/2009/fi/liput\\_ja\\_kausikortit/index.php](http://www.kups.fi/2009/fi/liput_ja_kausikortit/index.php)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.whufc.com/page/MatchTickets/0,,12562,00.html>

average 75% of all visitors under the age of eighteen visits more than five games a season, whereas of the respondents in the age group 31-45, only 38% does the same.

Not very surprising is the rate of male supporters. Football has always been known as a male sport, but female football is becoming more and more popular, especially in Finland, as the number of girls playing football doubled between 1998 and 2006<sup>21</sup>. One on twelve supporters of KuPS is female and the number will most likely increase over the next coming years, together with the increasing number of female football players. This will offer KuPS the opportunity to focus part of its marketing on a new segment and also attract sponsors whose products/services are mainly targeted on women.

KuPS, in comparison to many other Finnish clubs, has a very wide-spread fan base with 33,09% of its fans not living close to Kuopio. This certainly limits the amount of supporters that will be able to come and watch home matches on a regular

basis, but it ensures that KuPS will have fans supporting them during away games all over the country. Next to that, the KuPS fans that cannot visit home games because of the travel distance to Kuopio are likely to follow the team online or via television.

More than half of all KuPS fans have or are

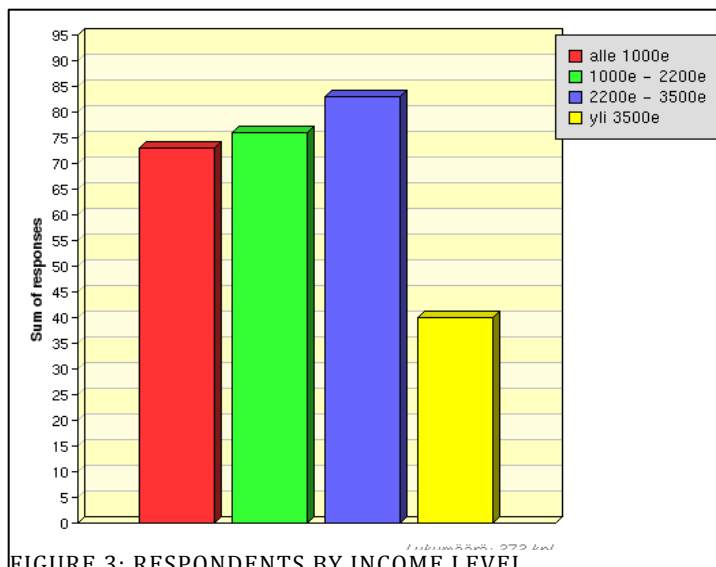


FIGURE 3: RESPONDENTS BY INCOME LEVEL

currently studying at a university or university of applied sciences, which can also be concluded from the income of the KuPS fans. The red bar, indicating a monthly income of 1000 euro or less, shows that the number of students that supports KuPS accounts for about 27% of all fans. The lowest wages<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> [https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/19614/URN\\_NBN\\_fi\\_jyu-200902151065.pdf?sequence=1](https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/19614/URN_NBN_fi_jyu-200902151065.pdf?sequence=1) (page 91)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.tyosuojele.fi/fi/workingfinland/>

(based on a 37,5 hour work week) in Finland easily exceed the 1000 euro limit, so it can be assumed that a very big part of the respondents earning less than 1000 euro per month are students.

87% of all people that filled out the questionnaire have visited at least one home game, while 50% of the respondents have visited at least five games during the 2010 season. Fans living far away from Kuopio, like in Helsinki, do usually not have the possibility to come to Kuopio to visit a game, which explains the 5% of fans that has only visited away games during the previous season. A big group of fans (37%) only came to a home game several times. This group, along with trying to recruit new fans, offers a big potential and when approached in the right way can result in a more stable and higher average number of spectators.

### 5.2.2 ADVERTISING AND TICKETING

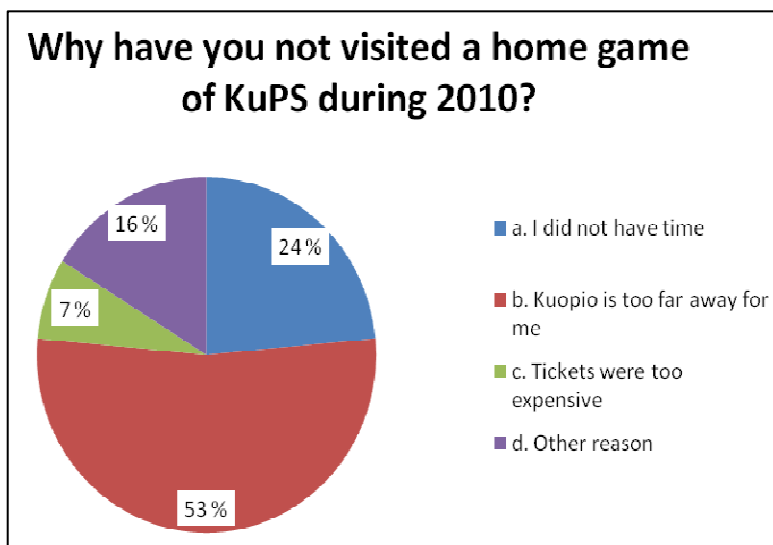


FIGURE 4: REASONS FOR NOT ATTENDING A HOME GAME

A good way to attract people that live in or close to Kuopio, but don't visit games regularly, is by advertising on spots that are visible to people that do not usually visit places or websites related to KuPS. This gets underlined by the answers of the respondents to question seven, as they believe that advertisements in

regional and local newspapers are most effective. Savon Sanomat, a regional newspaper read by approximately 160.000 people every day<sup>23</sup>, is probably the best possible advertising channel, as the paper already is one of the main partners of KuPS.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.savonsanomat.fi/uutiset/talous/sanomalehtien-lukijam%C3%A4%C3%A4r%C3%A4t-ennallaan/538167>

As mentioned before, the price of the tickets is not a real issue for most people interested in visiting a game, as only 7% of the fans that did not visit a home game complained about the price of a ticket. The assumption that most fans that did not visit a KuPS game did this because of the fact that they live far away from Kuopio, gets proven by the answers given to question two of the questionnaire. 52% of the respondents that did not visit a home game gave as reason that Kuopio was simply too far away for them. This might seem like a big disadvantage, as these fans do not currently have an impact on the matchday income, but it also offers commercial possibilities. Sponsoring or becoming a partner of KuPS is not just interesting for companies acting in and around Kuopio, as the club is followed and supported by people that live all over Finland.

### 5.2.3 PARTNER AFFINITY

Other remarkable data that KuPS should definitely use when trying to attract new sponsors and partners is the fact that, according to the answers to question 8, 68,75% of all respondents knows which companies are sponsor/partner of KuPS, either through in-stadium

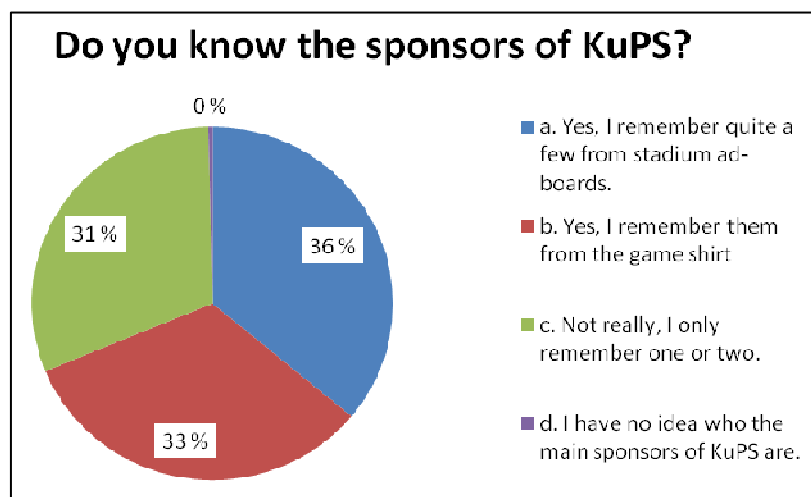


FIGURE 5: SPONSOR AFFINITY

advertisement or from advertisements placed on the game shirts of the players. This data on itself does not have too much value, but when combined with the answers to question 9, KuPS has some very valuable and interesting data to present to possible partners.

75,37% of all respondents to that question, admit that they would rather buy something from a sponsor of KuPS than from a company that does not have a link with the club. 43,75% of all respondents states that even when there is a price difference, they would still buy the product or service from the organization linked to KuPS, whereas 31,62% says that it will only do so if the price

difference is not too big. The combination of the high percentage of fans that remembers which firms sponsor KuPS, together with the even higher number of people stating that they would prefer to buy from a firm like that, makes KuPS a very interesting partner for any kind of company that has the same target groups as the club.

#### 5.2.4 GAME-DAY EXPERIENCE

When asked to rate the facilities and services in and around Kuopion Keskuskenttä, the football stadium of KuPS, most supporters are of the opinion that especially the overall quality and quantity of entertainment around matches is poor. To make sure that people enjoy the games and return home with the idea of visiting another game in the near future, the whole experience and overall impression is very important.

The availability and offering of merchandising products has been rated slightly below average, but KuPS has already taken a big step in the right direction by opening up a fan store in the city centre of Kuopio and offering a wide range of products in the stadium on game days. This, together with taking in consideration the suggestions from the fans about the particular products they would like KuPS to add to its merchandising range, should make sure that the rating for merchandising sales should will go up during the 2011 season.

The answers to question five of the questionnaire also show that even though 57% of all respondents are satisfied with the current merchandise offering, 30% would like new, different products to be added to the current product range.

Seating, visibility and atmosphere are rated relatively positively by the KuPS fans and from this season onwards a new stand has been taken in use opposite of the main stand<sup>24</sup>, improving the atmosphere and visibility on both sides of the pitch.

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<sup>24</sup> Information acquired from personal conversations with KuPS general manager, Jarmo Heiskanen

All in all, the KuPS fans grade the complete game-day experience with a 3,06 out of 5, which is in the 'OK' scale, but still leaves lots of room for improvement in several of the areas discussed before. Especially entertainment around the game and merchandising sales are currently below par.

### 5.2.5 THE IMAGE OF KUPS

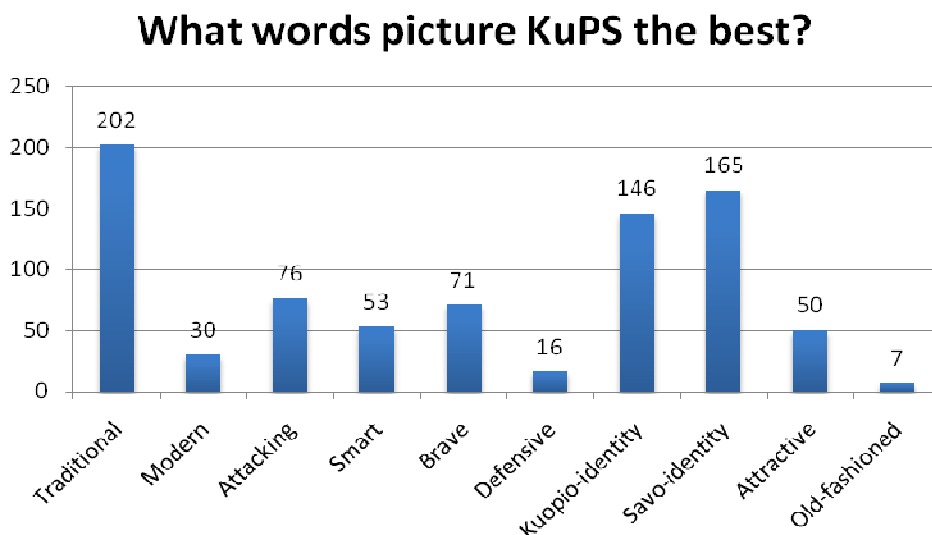


FIGURE 6: WORDS THAT PICTURE KUPS THE BEST

An important factor when determining market positioning and marketing strategies is the image of the club according to the fans. On the question "What words picture KuPS the best in your opinion?", three answers clearly came up on top.

Traditional, Savo and Kuopio are the three words that fit KuPS the best in the opinion of the respondents. Most fans seem to be very proud of the local and regional identity of the club, the long tradition in Finnish football, as well as the history of both the club and the region most of the fans were born in.

The link between tradition, local/regional affection and the wish for new merchandising products could well be combined, by for instance designing some sort of retro clothing line. Next to that, the identity of the club is a good starting point for new marketing campaigns.

When asking the fans if the identity and cultural background of KuPS is easily recognizable, most people (72%) are of the opinion that KuPS currently already puts in a decent amount of effort to show its roots. Most of them are of the opinion that the more KuPS focuses on the Kuopio/Savo identity, the better it is, while 5% of all respondents would like to see even more effort from the club.

## 6. FINNISH FOOTBALL ACCORDING TO AN EXPERT: JOB DRAGTSMA

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FIGURE 7: FC INTER HEAD COACH JOB DRAGSTMA

An interesting and reliable way to find out what differs Finnish football from the way things are dealt with in other countries, is to interview people that have also worked abroad or are foreigners working in Finland at the moment.

A good example of a person like that is Dutch football trainer Job Dragtsma. After several coaching jobs in Holland and Turkey (assistant-manager at AZ Alkmaar, head coach at FC Volendam, and coaching coordinator at Fenerbahce), he moved to Finland in 2007 to become head

coach of FC Inter Turku. This turned out to be a successful move, as the team managed to win the Finnish double (League cup and Veikkausliiga) in 2008<sup>25</sup>.

During an interview held in April 2011, Dragtsma shined his light on what should be improved to make Finnish football more attractive, competitive and also more profitable on the commercial side of the picture.

According to Dragtsma one of the big problems in Finland is the identity of the clubs and the way fans link themselves to the club. "There is no real loyalty here when it comes to being a supporter. There is a small group, but most visitors just come to see a match instead of going to the cinema or doing some other activity. They don't come because they have a link with the club, they just come because they have nothing else to do on a sunny afternoon." This in a way is not a bad thing, because it means there are a lot more visitors than when only the real hard-core fans would come and watch a game, but of course a wider span of supporters would bring more income and would also be a more stable base for growth and for the image-building of a club.

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<sup>25</sup> [http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veikkausliiga-kausi\\_2008](http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veikkausliiga-kausi_2008)



One reason why the Finnish stadiums are very poorly filled during games is, according to Dragtsma, the minimal commercial exploitation of the possibilities. “Clubs simply do not seem to understand that you need to really put in an effort to grow and that being satisfied with the current situation does not help when looking to the future. If we play a home game against a team that does not really attract a lot of fans, why not make some sort of offer and sell every second ticket with a 50% discount?” This would mean that more people come to the stadium, and even though the profits from match tickets won’t be high, we should not forget that most people will also buy a drink and some food, which also brings in extra money. Next to that, fans will be able take their friends to the game because of the cheap ticket prices, and this might even increase the hard-core fan base on the long run, as new people will be tempted to come and watch.

On events like these however, the club should make sure that everything is arranged really well and a good first impression is created for the new visitors. Entertainment before the game, good prices on drinks, food and merchandising as well as the possibility to, for instance, take part in a lottery, will also bring a boost to the whole game day experience.

“The right thing to do, in my opinion,” Dragtsma states, “is to make sure that we involve the young kids more and more in football. Just to make sure that they get a feeling with the game and will get used to coming to watch a game as well as being interested in playing football themselves. It’s all about getting the kids involved from a young age, only then there really is a future for Finnish football.”

Dragtsma already had several suggestions of his this could be achieved as well. “A good example of how to get in touch with local kids is by arranging football clinics and trainings in cooperation with primary schools. Give them the opportunity to talk with some of the players and feel the link between them and the club or the sport. After such a session, free tickets could be given out to the kids, so they can also follow-up and watch a game straight away the upcoming weekend.”

All in all a fairly easy thing to conclude is the fact that football has a serious potential in Finland, but in many cases both clubs and media don’t seem to put in enough effort to really get it all out. A better link

between clubs and fans, as well as a more cozy environment in and around the stadium, would already be a nice step in the right direction. To finish off, Mr. Dragtsma gave a good example of the cold and uninviting facilities most of the Finnish football clubs have: “When I arrive to an away game, one-and-a-half hour before kick-off, the guys go to the dressing room and I just walk around the stadium for 45 minutes, simply because there is nothing else to do. It’s boring, it’s lonely and I can imagine fans don’t feel at home in most of the stadiums either. Just having a nice small cafeteria or lounge in the stadium, which is open several hours before kick-off, would already be an improvement. Make people feel at home at your club!”

## 7. FOOTBALL AS A PRODUCT

While many people might not think of football as a product and while many others highly dislike the fact that football clubs have turned into profit-oriented businesses, it is a fact that can simply not be denied. Money plays a bigger role than ever and football is no longer only about the love for the game. It has grown to a stage in which aiming for high profits next to the biggest possible sportive achievement is the main aim.

Not only does it change the landscape and meaning of a football club, it also turns running a football club into a very tricky and challenging task. Managers of a club are not just expected to please fans by contracting players that can take the club higher football-wise. Instead, they have seen their job descriptions change a whole lot over the years, nowadays including the same sort of duties and responsibilities that a manager of any big company has.

### 7.1 PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE

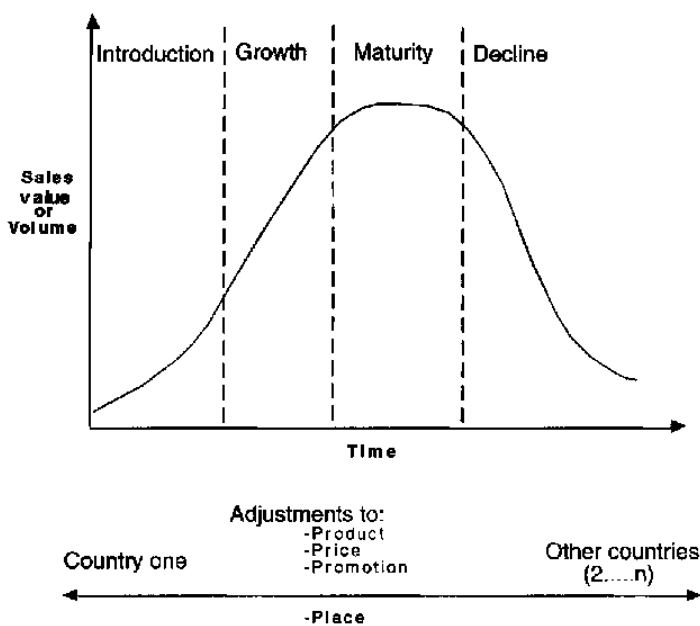


FIGURE 8: PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE

SOURCE:

[HTTP://WWW.FAO.ORG/DOCREP/W5973E/W5973E0A.GIF](http://www.fao.org/docrep/w5973e/w5973e0a.gif)

Like with every product, football is also applicable to the product life cycle theory. The stage in which football is currently in, on a national scale, forms the basis for any kind of strategy to be adopted by clubs, national leagues and media.

Football has passed the introduction stage in almost every country in the world as FIFA currently has 208 member associations which all have their own national football team.<sup>26</sup> The introduction stage would mean

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/organisation/52/00/10/fs-120\\_01a\\_ma.pdf](http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/organisation/52/00/10/fs-120_01a_ma.pdf)

that the product is still rather unknown and is slowly getting adopted as it seeks awareness, which is not the case in any FIFA member country.

The growth stage however is a stage that still applies to football in quite a lot of countries all over the globe. In many of these countries, football is not the number one sport discipline, but still has a big potential market. Good examples of such kind of countries are India, USA, Australia and China.<sup>27</sup> Football as a product is actively trying to increase its market share in competition with other sports disciplines like cricket, American football, basketball etc.

The maturity stage is the stage all the major European football countries are in. The high growth rates are not present anymore, but football just carries on being a well-selling product. Maximizing profit, while trying to keep the market share high, is the key in this stage. In countries in which football is in the maturity stage, clubs and other football-related parties will try to be creative in how to achieve maximal profit. New TV channels entirely focused on the national league, new merchandise products, exciting new tournaments or a total revamp of the national league structure, all of these are an example of new creative input to get football as a product growing again.

Marketing managers of football clubs have the tough duty to search for a possibility to stretch their market. This can be done in two ways:

1. Increasing the number of consumers via new marketing targets, such as:

New populations (women, kids, etc.) and new geographic territories with high potential

2 Increasing the utilization rate by:

Multiplying consumption possibilities and improving consumption level for each opportunity<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Grochels, Linda; The Product Manager's Handbook : The Complete Product Management Resource (2000)

<sup>28</sup> Desbordes, Michael (2006), Marketing and Football

Maximizing profit does not just happen by trying to increase the number of consumers, also trying to increase the income coming in through the current amount of consumers, by increasing the utilization rate, is a serious option.<sup>29</sup>

Decline is something that is clearly visible in some countries, as financial problems, scandals, bad performances and many other issues that have a negative effect on one or more clubs can bring down the whole image of football in a particular country, bringing football into the decline stage. Due to the fact that football is a sport people will always be passionate about, the decline stage usually does not mean that football will not be played or watched anymore in a certain country. The main result of the decline stage normally is a few year dip in both interest as well as overall quality/level, after which people will pick-up on football again to bring it back into the growth stage.<sup>30</sup>

## 7.2 THE PRODUCT CALLED FINNISH FOOTBALL

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One might argue that in Finland football is still in the stage of growth, but when looking at the spectator numbers and money going around in the world of football, it can be concluded that Finnish football is currently in the maturity stage. Spectator numbers don't grow much and are currently at the same level, as they were eight years ago. The spectator numbers have gone down by approximately 20% in five years time, which is a decline in numbers of 600 people per game, on average.<sup>31</sup>

Finnish football does not seem to attract any international attention, so the only market that both the league as well as the clubs should focus on is Finland. Bringing in Finnish players from abroad seems to be a good option to attract fans, as FC Lahti saw an increase in spectator numbers of about 15% in 2010, mainly due to the fact that Jari Litmanen<sup>32</sup> played for FC Lahti that season. Many fans expect a lot from players that have international playing experience, and are therefore more likely to believe that their club will do well with help of the player that has also played abroad.

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<sup>29</sup> Desbordes, Michael (2006), Marketing and Football

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.quickmba.com/marketing/product/lifecycle/>

<sup>31</sup> see Appendix 5

<sup>32</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jari\\_Litmanen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jari_Litmanen)

Something needs to be done to get Finnish football back into the growth stage, before it will fall into decline and an even bigger gap with neighboring countries becomes inevitable. Currently the Finnish level of football, spectator numbers, as well as the financial situation are quite far behind the levels of the Swedish Premier League, even though Sweden really finds itself in an extreme decline of spectator numbers.<sup>33</sup>

Finnish football will need more connection with its followers, better use of commercial opportunities and a stronger common brand to make sure its value goes up. This will automatically increase interest from both companies as well as individuals. There are several ways of trying to increase the value of the product called Finnish football and the most suitable theories to apply on the issue will be discussed in the following chapters.

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.kihu.fi/faktapankki/faktaalueet/tulostus.php?id=137&otsikko=Tapahtumat>

## 8. FOOTBALL CO-MARKETING

### 8.1 PRODUCT AUGMENTATION AND STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Co-marketing, as a concept, derives from two separate marketing practices: product augmentation and strategic alliances. Product augmentation is about adding extra value to an existing product or service through non-tangible benefits. This, in retail store cases, could be a longer warranty or special after-sale services, whereas in terms of football clubs this could be that a partner of a football club gets to use a popular player in its commercials.<sup>34</sup>

Strategic alliances are becoming more and more popular in the business world and as can be concluded from figure 9, a big amount of companies already is part of a strategic alliance in a certain way. Firms form alliances in order to produce cheaper, reach markets it would not be able to reach on its own or too



FIGURE 9: STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

make use of the knowledge of the partner.<sup>35</sup> The last two factors are very useful for many football clubs as both knowledge and a wider market reach can offer them an advantage over other teams as well as the possibility to gain extra income.

A strategic alliance between a football club and an organization has become very popular nowadays. Companies do not longer just sponsor the club, but in most cases become partners or co-operational companions. This shows that the importance of what used to be called a sponsor has increased a lot over the years, and clubs now seek to expand their possibilities not just through getting more money

<sup>34</sup> Kotler, Philip (2007), Principles of Marketing

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.1000ventures.com/business\\_guide/strategic\\_alliances\\_main.html](http://www.1000ventures.com/business_guide/strategic_alliances_main.html)

from sponsors, but also through expanding their knowledge and market access in cooperation with their strategic partner.

## 8.2 CO-MARKETING IN PRACTICE

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Co-marketing is a type of partnership which aims to gain value for all parties involved and aims for long-term cooperation. It is important that the marketing objectives of the partners are compatible, even when the organization does not have anything to do with football in the sense of product and service offering. The ultimate objective of a co-marketing partnership is to increase customer satisfaction and interest through cooperation of the partners.<sup>36</sup>

Co-marketing can be applied on various different marketing areas, varying from event organization and promo-advertising campaigns to market research and technical collaborations. The value of these cooperations is often underestimated, but building up a strong link with a certain company that really adds value to the club, through knowledge or wide-spread public attention, can be very profitable for the image and brand of the club. Picking partners should however be done discretely and only after thorough research, as becoming partner of a company that receives a lot of negatives media attention or goes bankrupt will bring up bad publicity for the club as well.<sup>37</sup>

A good example of an existing strategic alliance is the one between KuPS and Sportia, a Finnish chain of sports stores, of which one is located in the centre of Kuopio. Sportia provides KuPS with clothing, shoes and accessories, while KuPS' players visit the store on regular basis for autograph-sessions, football shoe advice to Sportia customers or other promotional activities. Sportia benefits from the attention the players attract, while KuPS benefits from the sports clothing, shoes and accessories provided by Sportia.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Amis, John M.; Cornwell, T. Bettina (2005), Global Sport Sponsorship

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.thesportjournal.org/article/sponsorship-management-status-report>

<sup>38</sup> Information acquired from personal conversations with KuPS-player Petri Oravainen.



A study focused on German Bundesliga champions Borussia Dortmund shows that one of its main sponsors, Signal Iduna, benefits strongly from the success of the team, proving the fact that long-term partnerships are beneficial for both parties. The club is assured of certain income and/or benefits for a longer period of time, while the organization linked with the club gets the chance to show itself to everyone following the club. Instead of being partners for just one or two years, both the club and the partner organization should look for a long-term partnership in which strong cooperation and co-hosted activities and events are included.<sup>39</sup>

In Canada, Budweiser and the Vancouver Whitecaps, a team that just has joined the MLS<sup>40</sup> (Major League Soccer) in 2011, have teamed up and signed a five-year partnership agreement. The partnership deal entitles Budweiser to be the official beer supplier of the club, as well as the stadium the team plays in. Next to supplying beer, Budweiser will also sponsor a post-game 'Man of the Match' award, to enlarge its involvement in the game.<sup>41</sup> It is important, especially for the main partners of a club, to engage in game-related events, to increase awareness of the fans and show that it is involved in the club and the game.

### 8.3 MEDIA PARTNERSHIP

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The TV rights of the Veikkausliiga games, including the ones of KuPS, are currently sold collectively as part of a media partnership between Veikkausliiga, Urho TV and Canal Plus. Due to this partnership KuPS does not have the possibility to sell its TV rights independently. This is understandable, as clubs do not have a sufficient amount of interested followers and are not strong enough financially to offer a valuable package of TV rights on their own.

Selling the TV rights as a complete league-package might not be very profitable for the clubs in the current stage, but should definitely improve the broadcasting possibilities as well as its quality and

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<sup>39</sup> <http://economicsnewspaper.com/policy/german/football-sponsorship-signal-iduna-benefits-from-bvb-success-25097.html>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.mlssoccer.com/>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.goal.com/en-us/news/1110/major-league-soccer/2011/01/27/2325253/budweiser-signs-multi-year-sponsorship-agreement-with>

availability, a lot of which depends on the way the national league sets up its marketing strategies. Clubs, together with Veikkausliiga ry, should continuously demand high quality broadcasts, as this was one of the agreements made when signing the deal with the broadcasting organization.

Savon Sanomat fits in both the classical (newspaper) as well as in the new media (website) category, and is one of the main partners of KuPS. Both parties have been partners for a long period of time and Savon Sanomat usually has the right to be the first news source to publish important news about the club.<sup>42</sup>

Advertisements on local or regional radio channels is one of the options as well, but due to the low number of people listening to the local channel (52.000 listeners per week<sup>43</sup>), this is not considered as a serious advertising opportunity.

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<sup>42</sup> Information acquired from personal conversations with KuPS' general manager Jarmo Heiskanen

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.oikeaasema.fi/showpage.php?id=10>

## 9. THE VIRTUOUS CIRCLE OF A FOOTBALL CLUB

### 9.1 WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Football clubs are required to serve two markets at the same time: business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B). The markets are very different, but are still not able to be dealt with separately. They must be synergistic in order to enable the development of a significant virtuous circle.

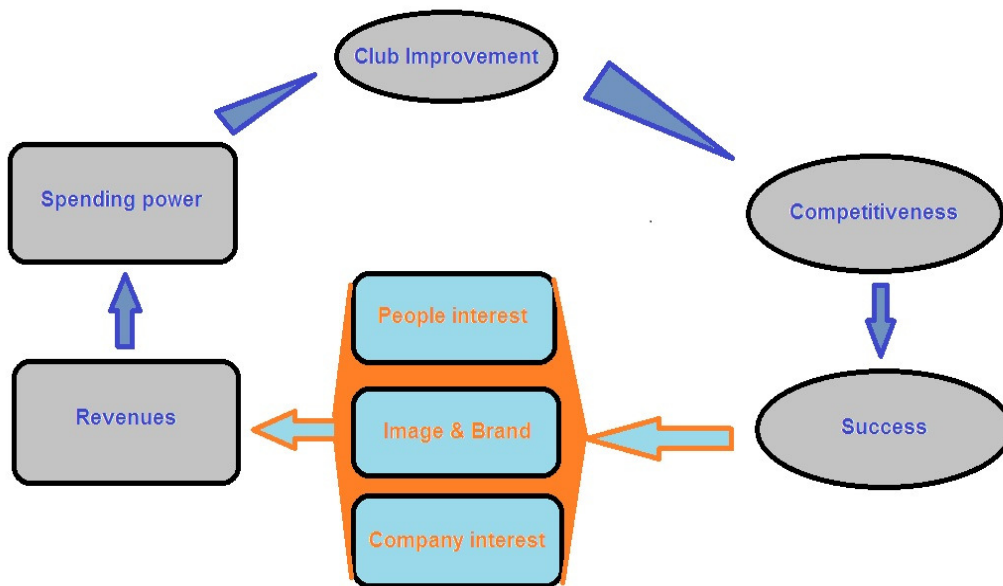


FIGURE 10:THE VIRTUOUTS CIRCLE OF A FOOTBALL CLUB

Everything is based on the three bottom factors: people interest, image & brand and company interest. Without these three being in order, not a single professional football club will be able to continue acting on a professional level in the long run. Many clubs that went bankrupt or relegated from professional football leagues simply did not have sufficient support from one or more of the three core parts of a football club.<sup>44</sup>

When people and companies are interested in a club, this often leads from success both recently and in the past. The image of the club improves and the brand gets more value due to the fact that more and more people and firms are interested in becoming part of what is called 'the family'. This, through

<sup>44</sup> Desbordes, Michael (2006), Marketing and Football

sponsor deals, ticket sales and merchandising profit, leads to higher revenues, offering the club more power on the player market as well as the opportunity to improve its services, staff and youth academy. Being able to spend money and looking to improve through investment sounds easy and many people like to think that with the use of sufficient money, any club can become successful.<sup>45</sup>

## 9.2 THE WEAKEST LINK

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Interestingly enough, the switch on the left side of the virtuous circle, from 'spending power' to 'club improvement', has been the switch that has failed to deliver for many Finnish clubs, leaving some serious question marks about the quality of club management and the realism of the budgets prepared year after year. As can be seen in Appendix 1, the clubs seem to find it difficult to prepare a realistic budget, as many of the budgets are not stable and vary a lot from one year to another.

TPS, a highly rated team from Turku, had a budget of quite a stunning three million euro in 2009. The budget turned out to be highly overestimated and the club has, mainly due to enormous stadium rental costs, had to screw down their budget to 900.000 euro in 2011. TPS has quite a solid core, as for Finnish standards the club welcomes a fairly high amount of spectators every week. This brings the club a good bit of income from sold tickets and other game-day activities, and makes sure that the club is able to survive and perform well in Veikkausliiga, finishing on the third place in the 2010 season.

KuPS currently has a budget that has increased 33% in comparison to the budget of 2010.<sup>46</sup> The club is growing steadily and the second place achieved during the 2010 season obviously had its effect on the amount of companies interested in becoming a partner of KuPS.<sup>47</sup>

Every euro in the budget of Finnish clubs has to be used smartly and responsibly, as a waste of money will automatically lead to financial problems in the long run, as we can see at clubs like Tampere United and AC Oulu. Many other clubs have a hard time keeping their feet dry financially and, even

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<sup>45</sup> Desbordes, Michael (2006), Marketing and Football

<sup>46</sup> see Appendix 4

<sup>47</sup> Information acquired from personal conversations with KuPS' General Manager, Jarmo Heiskanen

though the success of the club is heavily influenced by small things such as missing a chance for open goal or an arbitrary oversight, it all starts by having a solid and well-funded core. Long-term plans should be created, decreasing the amount of last-minute decisions to be taken. Financial security and steady growth is safer than going for high risk betting and increasing the budgets too rapidly. Playing with money and getting into debts several years in a row is life-dangerous for a big part of the professional teams in Veikkausliiga, especially for the ones that already have relatively low spectator numbers and depend completely on their relationship with sponsors and investors.

The main reason behind the fact that in many cases a higher budget does not automatically bring footballing success and club improvement is the way the money is used. Instead of contracting expensive players from outside the EU, like has happened at RoPS, Haka and several other clubs that have performed poorly and have had financial difficulties, clubs should use the money to increase their youth setups. Enabling youth players to grow and develop is a lot cheaper than contracting a player from outside the EU, as the club has to cover for a lot of their expenses and has to pay them a higher salary than it pays to EU-players.<sup>48</sup> Contracting a player is no direct guarantee for better performances, whereas investing in the youth academy enables the club to create a good basis for the future. Finns, as can be stated based on the answers given to question 6, are very proud of their home town and region and will definitely feel a stronger link with their local team when they see several young local talents break through into the first team.

### 9.3 YOUNG CLUBS, SHORT LIFE-SPAN

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The virtuous circle is quite a simple process in theory, even though in practice things are a lot harder and more complicated. The theory mainly focuses on clubs that already have their image and branding in order and do not need to start from scratch, but this is not a model we can directly apply on most clubs in Finnish football. Five of the fourteen clubs that acted in the Veikkausliiga during the season of 2010 were established during the 1990s, and even though some of them were mergers of two longer existing teams, it is quite clear to see that just those clubs are often the ones to struggle. AC Oulu and

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<sup>48</sup> Information acquired from personal conversations with KuPS player Petri Oravainen

Tampere United, established respectively in 2002 and 1998, have not been granted a license to play in Veikkausliiga during 2011, offering a great example of two young clubs not succeeding in building up a long-term sustainable core.

In earlier times, clubs like AC Allianssi, FinnPa and Jokerit had the same problems and either went bankrupt or voluntarily decided to withdraw from the national league. Many of the clubs that did not manage to survive either had one big investor that it completely depended upon, or showed clear signs of mismanagement in the sense of preparing unrealistic budgets including income estimations that could only have been achieved in the best possible scenario.

FinnPa is a good example of a club that completely depended on one investor, airliner Finnair. The club was founded in 1965 and managed to reach the Premier League in 1993. The club acted on the highest level for five years and even decided to build a big stadium just a year before the club relegated from the Premier League. This turned out to be the deathpunch for the club, as Finnair announced it was no longer willing to financially support the team. Not much later the club announced it would no longer be active and its place was taken over by FC Jokerit. Jokerit, together with traditional club HJK, decided to buy the stadium, but this club did not see a long life either as in 2004 it already decided to withdraw itself from professional football.<sup>49 50 51</sup>

KuPS, in comparison to the clubs mentioned earlier, has a long football tradition and does not suffer from a lack of interest or a bad image. The fans generally feel very much connected to the club and have a great deal of respect for the owner (and main shareholder<sup>52</sup>) of KuPS, Ari Lahti, as he was the one to financially support KuPS when the club was in difficult weather.<sup>53</sup> The future for KuPS, financially, seems to be secured and now is the time to slowly start building up a stronger core, which

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<sup>49</sup> <http://puoliaika.wordpress.com/2011/04/15/suomalaiset-jalkapalloseurat-ovat-kuolevaisia/>

<sup>50</sup> [http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnairin\\_Palloilijat](http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnairin_Palloilijat)

<sup>51</sup> [http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/FC\\_Jokerit](http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/FC_Jokerit)

<sup>52</sup> <http://kymppipaikka.fi/2011/04/20/ss-kups-hakee-12-miljoonaa-euroa-suunnatulla-osakeannilla/>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.viikkosavo.fi/pdf//200693/11VISA0210P0.pdf>

is something that should be easier for KuPS than for a club that has only been a professional club for several years.

#### 9.4 IMAGE ISSUES

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The image of Finnish football, and especially the image of young clubs without a lot of tradition, got very badly affected when AC Allianssi, a club acting in Veikkausliiga from 2002 to 2006, got involved in one of the biggest betting scandals football has ever seen. The club filed for immediate bankruptcy after former Allianssi director Olivier Suray admitted that the 8-0 loss Allianssi led to FC Haka was fixed by a Belgian-Chinese betting cartel. Finnish police have never been able to collect enough evidence to prove this, but it is widely believed that Suray spoke the truth.<sup>54 55</sup>

Just recently, Rovaniemen Palloseura (RoPS) became center of attention for Finnish press when five of its players got arrested by Finnish police. They were accused of having accepted big amounts of money from a Singaporean betting cartel that tried to influence Finnish football matches. RoPS, in contrast to AC Allianssi, actually received sympathy from quite a lot of football-following Finns for the nonsense policy the management held on to during the process. RoPS management terminated all the contracts of players that were in any way linked to the illegal activities of the Singaporean firm, and decided to start from scratch rather than backing up the accused players.<sup>56 57</sup>

It is important for the image of Finnish football that cases like this get prevented from happening again, as it can heavily damage the interest from both sponsors and fans. Partners and sponsors will not want to be linked to a club that has gotten involved in any kind of ethical issue or betting scandal, this because the image of the company linked to the club is also very likely get damaged.

By adopting a common zero-tolerance policy towards illegal betting activities and by publishing a league-wide supported statement in which all clubs distance themselves from players and officials that

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<sup>54</sup> [http://www.bookmakersreview.com/c/News/22-07-2005\\_Finnish\\_police\\_to\\_investigate\\_fixed\\_match/](http://www.bookmakersreview.com/c/News/22-07-2005_Finnish_police_to_investigate_fixed_match/)

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Football+manager+Olivier+Suray+admits+Finnish+match+fixing/1135219182484>

<sup>56</sup> [http://yle.fi/uutiset/news/2011/03/more\\_detentions\\_in\\_football\\_match-fixing\\_probe\\_2436360.html](http://yle.fi/uutiset/news/2011/03/more_detentions_in_football_match-fixing_probe_2436360.html)

<sup>57</sup> [http://yle.fi/uutiset/teksti/news/2011/03/five\\_rops\\_players\\_now\\_remanded\\_in\\_custody\\_2445861.html](http://yle.fi/uutiset/teksti/news/2011/03/five_rops_players_now_remanded_in_custody_2445861.html)

are involved in any illegal betting activities, the image and credibility of Finnish football can be secured. Finnish clubs should team up and show that illegal betting activities do not belong to the world of football, meaning that players and/or officials that do get involved in those kinds of activities will be sacked.



## 10. THE PARTIES INVOLVED

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### 10.1 FOOTBALL CONVERGENCE

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A club being a meeting place where many different types of interested parties can be identified. Ranging from players and fans to sponsors and media, that is what the business side of football is all about. Football clubs are more and more trying to progressively create a football convergence by bringing the different types of interested parties together. That is the practical explanation of what the theory behind football convergence ultimately strives to achieve.

The ideal way for football clubs to operate according to many US sports organizations is on a 'cooperation and competition' (coo-petition) basis. Clubs can in such a case bundle their strengths and knowledge to improve as a footballing nation and perform better internationally, but still compete amongst each other in the national league.<sup>58</sup>

Football is all about emotions and entertainment for the supporters, with the offering being available in the stadiums as well as through both classical (radio, television) and new media (internet, mobile phones). Supporters are the ultimate core for a football club and they play a very active role in football convergence, as in many other service-driven markets. A football club provides a service to its fans and spectators (the ability to watch and enjoy a game) as well as various products linked to that service (merchandising e.g.).

Social media plays a big role in new-generation communication and is one of the channels football clubs should use to reach a big share of their fans. KuPS, as mentioned earlier, already has its own page on Facebook, currently (on May 21, 2011) followed by 949 people. To enlarge the amount of followers and to make sure that more and more people start to connect themselves actively to KuPS, more interactive marketing and social media activity will be needed. Social media has the features to

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<sup>58</sup> Graham, S.; Neirotti, L. D.; Goldblatt, J. J. (2001), *Ultimate Guide to Sports Marketing*

increase club affinity while at the same time a large number of people can be reached through one channel.<sup>59</sup>

Creating and updating club accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube does not cost clubs a whole lot of effort nor does it cost a lot of money, and with focusing the content on the major target groups (e.g. based on age) a very cost-effective way of advertising and communicating is found. The digital home of the club, along with the accounts on social media networks, also offers a very valuable option to enlarge advertising possibilities for partners. Digital advertising is the fastest rising type of advertising and optimally utilizing the digital advertising opportunities will also increase the possibilities of gaining profit from online activities.<sup>60</sup>

Next to focusing on its fans, the club also has to keep in mind the services and products it provides to its sponsors (the ability to show its advertisements through the club, access to business clubs and VIP areas e.g.). Supporters, in this case are pro-sumers, a combination of producers and consumers. They are an enormous asset for a club regarding opportunities in terms of sponsor and investor attraction, while at the same time being consumers interested the clubs services and products. <sup>61</sup>

KuPS enables its partners to advertise on the players' and staff's outfits as well as on ad-boards around the field, behind the goals and on the stands of the stadium.<sup>62</sup> Next to that, KuPS' partners can become linked to a certain player, which gives them the right to invite the player for certain promotional activities.<sup>63</sup> Other initiatives, like Partners Pool membership<sup>64</sup>, banners on the KuPS.fi website, various different levels of partnership and also short term sponsorship possibilities (for particular games or tournaments) are offered.

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.slideshare.net/T3CONNECT/smbyeg-presentation-t3-connect-sports-marketing>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.slideshare.net/coylep/how-sports-teams-can-increase-digital-sponsorship-revenues-presentation>

<sup>61</sup> Desbordes, Michael (2006), Marketing and Football, first edition, Elsevier Ltd, Oxford.

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.kups.fi/2009/fi/yritystuotteet/ottelunakvyys.php>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.kups.fi/2009/fi/yritystuotteet/kummipelaaja.php>

<sup>64</sup> [http://www.kups.fi/2009/fi/liput\\_ja\\_kausikortit/kausikortti.php](http://www.kups.fi/2009/fi/liput_ja_kausikortit/kausikortti.php)

Companies that are not (yet) a partner of KuPS can rent a VIP box for one or more games. The hospitality package includes food, free entrance to the game, as well as a game analysis by one of KuPS' old players.

## 10.2 FOOTBALL STAKEHOLDERS

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For many reasons, a lot of people and organizations all over the world are interested in the sport. This creates a lot of opportunities, but also brings a certain commitment to respect the various football stakeholders. These stakeholders, current as well as potential ones, must first be identified before any club or organization is able to manage them in an appropriate way.

Professional football clubs need to adopt an attitude linked to a corporate social responsibility, as they play a significantly influential role they have in the community. Kids playing all around the country will try to imitate what they have seen on television, both good and bad. Next to that many amateur clubs will look at the professional clubs and try to copy the most valuable or best-working strategies. A club does not just account for itself, it accounts for all its stakeholders, varying from local (in case of a small amateur club) to global (like FC Barcelona).<sup>65</sup>

As can be seen in the figure below, football clubs have an enormous amount of stakeholders and carry a certain responsibility to all of them. Logically, some of the protagonists have more influence on the performance of the club than others, and the club also carries more responsibility to some of these stakeholders than to others, but because of the big influence a club can have, none of the stakeholders should be neglected by a professional club.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Senaux, Benoit (2008), A stakeholder approach to football club governance

<sup>66</sup> Desbordes, Michael (2006), Marketing and Football

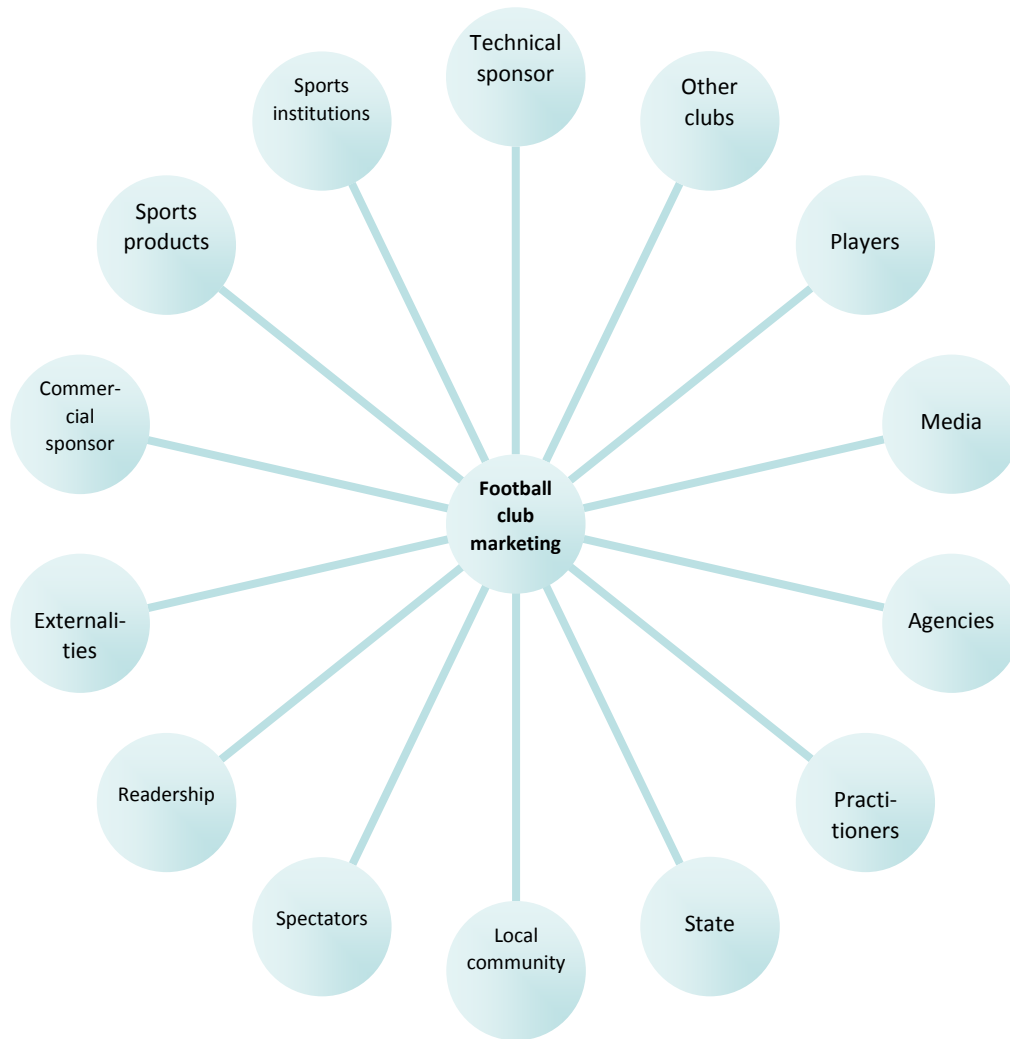


FIGURE 11: PARTIES INVOLVED IN FOOTBALL CLUB MARKETING

### 10.3 THE FINNISH APPROACH TO FOOTBALL CONVERGENCE

Football convergence already happens on a very practical scale in Finnish youth football. A good example is a team joining a strong international tournament and inviting talented players from rivaling teams to join their squad for the particular tournament. This is a good initiative because the team otherwise would not be able to compete on a serious level and the invited players get a chance to learn and improve themselves.

Of course the example in this case is very practical and does not apply to professional football, but a closer cooperation is needed as Finnish clubs don't have the power and knowledge to really stand out

on their own. With a widely supported and less self-centered approach, including marketing strategies as well as media plans, Finnish football as a whole does have chances to grow and play a role in international football.

Veikkausliiga ry, as governing body of the premier division, has a major role in the marketing of the league and the common image of Finnish football. By involving all the parties and creating a strong league-wide supported marketing strategy, Veikkausliiga ry can help the clubs to build a more sustainable position enabling them to focus more on club-related issues. The clubs should confront Veikkausliiga ry with the poor spectator numbers and other problems occurring to put more pressure on the activities of the organization. When showing willingness to cooperate and demanding a more centralized marketing campaign, the clubs can all benefit of the actions taken by Veikkausliiga ry. Clubs are much more likely to develop and improve if all parties are willing to cooperate and share their ideas.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> <http://www.veikkausliiga.com/Document.aspx?id=32>

## 11. FOOTBALL FACILITIES

### 11.1 MAJOR DIFFERENCES IN EUROPE

As both the survey results as well as the interview with Job Dragtsma have already pointed out, facility management, and in particular the services and atmosphere at football stadiums are an important link between simply attending a match and feeling home at a club. For many clubs, as shown in the chart below, the income from matchday-related products and services accounts for a crucial share in the total budget of a club.

Another important part of the budget, the commercial one, also depends a lot on the facilities and marketing strategies of the club. If a sponsor/partner is not happy with the way its advertisements are shown inside the stadium and if there are not enough possibilities for spaces like VIP lounges and restaurants, less potential partners and investors, the club will lose money and will not be as attractive as other clubs that do have the facilities to cover the needs of the interested parties. <sup>68</sup>

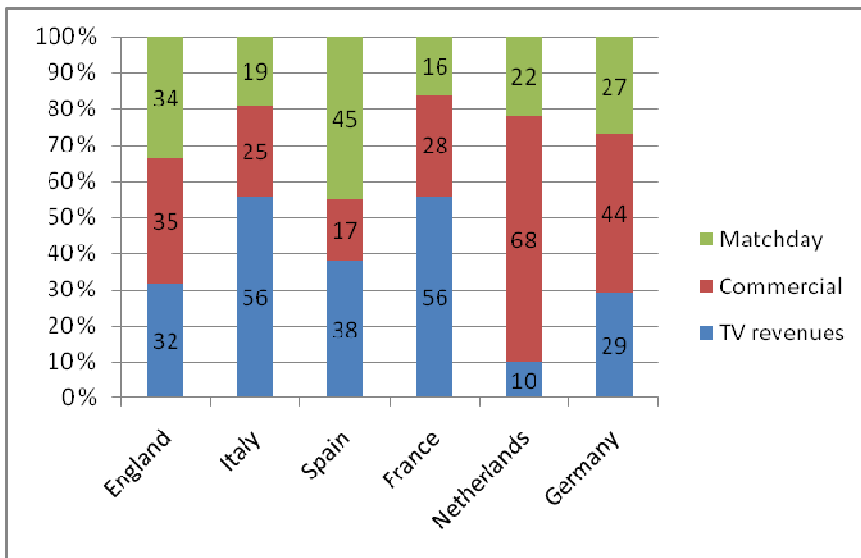


FIGURE 11: AVERAGE CLUB INCOME SOURCES

In a country like Italy, profit from the cession of TV rights and sponsorship have reached saturation level. It is not expected that those will grow much more in the near future and therefore it is advisable that clubs shift their focus to the issues that would enable the matchday income to grow. The range of

<sup>68</sup> Smith, Aaron; Westerbeek, Hans (2003), Sport Business in the Global Market Place

goods and service available to fans, the quality and accessibility of the stadium, as well as other facility-related factors.<sup>69</sup>

## 11.2 SPECTATORS COME AND GO

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In Kuopio, and in whole Finland in general, the spectator number is highly linked to performance. While in some real football minded countries people still come to the stadium to support their team in a tough period, Finnish football fans don't seem to be very interested to watch a team that has just lost two games in a row. If a club does well, like KuPS did in the previous season, the spectator number will be higher than expected, whereas with poorer performances the number of visitors will drop respectively.

An interesting example is the fact that the first game of the 2010 season, against arch rival HJK Helsinki, was watched by 2789 visitors, whereas the last home game of the season, against mid table ranked Jaro FF, was visited by 4326<sup>70</sup> KuPS supporters. These numbers, combined with the ones from previous seasons, prove that the number of spectators is highly related to the ranking and overall performance of KuPS. Even though certain marketing strategies and different ways of trying to recruit new fans can definitely have its impact on the average number of spectators, the actual performance of the team will eventually still be the main factor.

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<sup>69</sup> Foster, George; Greyser, Stephen A.; Walsh, Bill (2006), *The Business of Sports*

<sup>70</sup> [http://www.veikkausliiga.com/ennatykset\\_index.htm](http://www.veikkausliiga.com/ennatykset_index.htm)

## 12. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

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After thorough research, both primary and secondary, it is not difficult to conclude that there still are a lot of issues and weak spots in Finnish football. Many clubs don't have the financial possibilities to make a big impact on their own, as their budgets are tight and getting into debts can be fatal. An active role of the league's governing body, Veikkausliiga ry, is essential to strengthen the position of the clubs.

The recommendations to KuPS on how the club can ensure itself a safe and long-term planned future are divided into several areas: fan satisfaction, link between on-field performance and spectator numbers, facility management, partners and sponsors, marketing strategy, media, club cooperation, and recommended research. All of which results in a clear answer to the primary research question:

*"How can a professional football club like KuPS realize a more sustainable situation for the future?"*

### 12.1 FAN SATISFACTION

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As fans are the core business and a big source of income for every football club, it is extremely important to keep the fans satisfied. By enabling them to have a close connection with the club and by creating a feeling of solidarity, fans will be more likely to be satisfied and visit games regularly.

It is important for fans to feel at home in the stadium of their team and to feel a certain emotional connection with the club, staff and players. Both facility management and the image of the club have a big influence on fan satisfaction and spectator numbers.

As already came clear from the results of the questionnaire filled out by 272 KuPS fans, the complete game-day experience gets rated as a 3,06 out of 5, with the entertainment on match days and merchandising sales in and around the stadium being rated below the average. These two definitely will need to be improved, as getting ratings of at least 3,0 is crucial in improving and sustaining fan satisfaction. A more detailed elaboration on the possibilities that KuPS has to improve the two weaker rated features will be given in the facility management section.



The tie between fan satisfaction and spectator numbers, disregarding on-field performance, has not been widely proven and elaborated by theories, as opposed to on-field performance related to spectator numbers. Therefore, further research on the issue is recommended.

## 12.2 LINK BETWEEN ON-FIELD PERFORMANCE AND SPECTATOR NUMBERS

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A factor that has proven to be even more influential on fan satisfaction than any of the features stated in the questionnaire is on-field performance. As concluded from chapter 11 section 2, performing well and above expectation of both the fans and the media, will automatically mean an increase in spectators. This however also means that when on-field performance is below expectations, spectator numbers are very likely to drop. In that case the effort put into facility management and fan satisfaction improvements are subordinate to and less influential than the on-field performances.

## 12.3 FACILITY MANAGEMENT

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Investing in improving the facilities according to the opinion of the fans is an important step in the process of fan satisfaction improvement, but can only happen in case the club has assured itself a secure and sustainable position financially and performance-wise.

Because of the fact that spectator numbers and performance are so closely related to each other and the link between spectator numbers and fan satisfaction through facility management has not yet been proven by thorough research, it is important to build up the club in such a way that its performances are stable and the club is sure to remain a Veikkausliiga club and build a strong squad. Only once this has successfully been achieved and KuPS' budget has increased, the club can use part of its budget to improve its facilities and services that make a big impact on the level of fan satisfaction.

Next to that, KuPS could start planning to expand the stadium even further or replace the current temporary stand, on the opposite side of the main stand, with a permanent stand. This will increase the maximum number of spectators and therewith also the atmosphere and visibility.

## 12.4 PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

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As many of the theories used in the research process already showed, long-term partners deals account for a very big part of the income of Finnish clubs. Next to that, long-term partnerships form the basis to a solid and well-funded future, as the club is assured of a particular income or benefit for a longer period of time, making it possible to look ahead. This is why the term sponsors, which KuPS has already taken out of use, should be replaced by the term partners, as it emphasizes the importance of the cooperation and puts both the club and the organization hierarchically on the same level.

In the current economical situation not every organization might have the possibilities to engage in a long-term partnership agreement, but KuPS should always aim for an agreement that lasts several years. The main reason behind this statement, is the fact that one-year deals don't offer a sustainable basis and make it difficult to plan investments and make other decisions that influence the budget of the club in the long run. Clauses can be included in the partnership agreements that make it possible for both parties to terminate the contract in case the situation around the club or the organization changes dramatically (e.g. relegation or bankruptcy). This will help the potentially interest organization to limit the risk of losing visibility or getting into financial difficulties in case the company will need to economize.

When going into negotiations with both current as well as new potential partners, KuPS should point at the data acquired from the questionnaire. The number of respondents that are aware of the organizations that are a partner of KuPS is relatively large and more than 75% of the fans said that they would rather buy from a KuPS-partner than from a different company offering the same product or service. This data, combined with a detailed overview of the age, gender, level of education as well as the monthly income of the respondents are a real asset when facing potential partners with a target group matching with the demographics of KuPS' fan base.

## 12.5 MARKETING STRATEGY

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Due to the limited amount of money available, KuPS and all other Finnish clubs, have to be quite creative and selective when it comes to designing a marketing strategy. Media, as explained in the

following section, forms a big part of the strategy, but there are many more things that can help KuPS to enlarge their presence in the Kuopio-region.

As we have seen, the age group in which most KuPS fans can be placed is between 18 and 45, while especially the youngest age group contains a relatively low amount of fans. This means that, even though a continuous marketing campaign without regard of the age groups should be carried out to increase the games per fan ratio (amount of games the average fan visits per season), there should be a big focus on attracting people from under the age of 18 and above the age of 45. This especially because of the fact that the youngest supporters tend to visit matches on a much more regular basis than people over the age of 18.

In order to reach the lowest age group successfully, KuPS should fully utilize the opportunities to cooperate with local primary and high schools. Arranging football clinics, sports tournaments or just going around school giving presentations about healthy living, the importance of physical activity and other football-related topics will automatically increase the awareness of KuPS amongst the average 'Kuopiolainen'<sup>71</sup>.

Free tickets or special merchandising discount vouchers could be handed out to make sure the kids get a chance to visit an upcoming game for free. Usually younger kids will not come on their own, taking at least a few friend or a family member with them, giving KuPS an extra opportunity to also attract the interest of other potential regular visitors.

Next to activities focused on kids, Kuopio should emphasize more on their Savo and Kuopio background, producing marketing material and pre-game advertising posters in the local dialect, for instance. This would, next to the fact that it pulls people's attention, create a feeling of hegemony and increase the possibility that people from Kuopio will feel sympathy for the club. In case any special events are arranged in and around Kuopio, especially in the summer time when festivals and markets

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<sup>71</sup> translates to: Inhabitant of Kuopio

are arranged, KuPS should be present, selling their merchandising and tickets for upcoming matches alike.

## 12.6 MEDIA

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Both classical as well as new media are needed to build up a successful marketing campaign. As can be concluded from the answers to the questionnaire, 45% of all respondents is of the opinion that advertising through classical media, in the form of Savon Sanomat and other regional newspapers, is the best idea, closely followed by the open-air advertisements in and around Kuopio. Because of the visibility of the open-air advertisements and the amount of people reading Savon Sanomat on a daily basis, these two ways of advertising are efficient and fit well with the traditional and Kuopio/Savo image of the club. The existing partnership between KuPS and Savon Sanomat should also make it possible for KuPS to advertise regularly for a lower price.

To make sure that people get reminded to, for instance, an upcoming game, online advertising is a cost-effective and wide reaching add-on to the advertising done through classical media. Pre-game interviews as well as training reports and other video material can be uploaded to all digital sources of KuPS, to pull the attention of the visitors.

KuPS does not have a whole lot of impact on the way their games are broadcasted and TV rights are sold, as this is all done collectively through Veikkausliiga and its partners. The collective sales of TV rights is a good example of practical club cooperation, which is an essential factor in Finnish football.

## 12.7 CLUB COOPERATION

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Co-operation is the term many US clubs and organizations use to indicate a competition in which teams compete while at the same time trying to cooperate to increase public interest and create a more sustainable future for the league and its clubs.

Veikkausliiga ry and the Finnish Football Association, as governing bodies, carry the responsibility to bring the clubs together and make sure that all clubs compete fairly. Next to that, together with the

clubs, it should do more to create a real common marketing strategy including a common brand, a clear schedule with set game days instead of matches being played all around the week and good promotion material to make sure the league is attractive to general sports watchers as well as to fans of specific teams.

## 12.8 RECOMMENDED RESEARCH

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On the basis of the outcome of the questionnaire and the theory applied, it would be useful to do more research on the relation between the number of spectators and the fan satisfaction regarding facilities in and around football stadiums.

Also, a league-wide questionnaire with similar questions as the one linked to this document would be very helpful in locating the weak spots of Finnish football in even more detail. When conducting research that is based on league-wide data, it will be very easy to spot the areas in which most of the clubs need improvement, making it easier for the clubs to cooperate and ask support from the governing bodies.

## 12.9 OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Entertainment on match days needs to be improved. This can be done on various ways, including the introduction of certain games or challenges, as well as by inviting a band or artist to perform. KuPS can do this in cooperation with partners, to limit the costs related to this.
- Improving the rating fans give for the sales of merchandising on game days depends on two factors: First, the range of products offered. Second, the location from where merchandising is sold. Products should be available in all sizes and, according to the results from the questionnaire, especially retro-items such as t-shirts, scarves and hooded sweaters as well as the KuPS game shirt are very popular amongst the fans.
- Improving services and facilities that are more costly should not yet be done. The new, temporary, stand opposite of the main stand is a good initiative, but the results of this stand and the way it influences atmosphere and number of spectators should be investigated before deciding to spend a

large amount of money to turn the temporary stand into a permanent one or making other costly improvements in and around the stadium.

- Long-term partnership is the key word in building a sustainable future. Partnerships based on confidence, mutual trust and extensive cooperation in setting up events, exchanging knowledge and combined advertising. KuPS now has sufficient data to show the demographics of the average KuPS fan and is able to prove that KuPS' fans also really value the support of its partners. To hold on to the Kuopio and Savo background of the club, locally and regionally based partners are needed, but due to the nation-wide visibility and fan-base, KuPS should also be attractive to partners that are not from Kuopio.

- A 'KuPS is Kuopio, Kuopio is KuPS' campaign focusing on the local background and tradition of the club would, taking the answers to the questionnaire in consideration, be a potentially successful campaign. It could include advertisements in the local dialect and presence of KuPS on events and public places in and around Kuopio. School visits and special activities for youth are needed to increase the amount of visitors under the age of 18.

- These advertisements should especially be placed in regional newspapers, like Savon Sanomat, and at easily visible places in the Kuopio-area. Bus stops, market squares and at the entrance of well-visited stores and other public buildings. Social media should also not be forgotten, as it is an easy and cost-effective way to reach a wide audience.

- KuPS, together with all other clubs, should demand a more active attitude from Veikkausliiga ry and the Finnish Football Association towards league-wide cooperation and a common marketing policy. The image of the league still needs to be brushed up and by making things more recognizable and patterned, people will be more likely to get interested. Especially the need for a set game day, like in Holland where games are, in most cases, played on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon, is urgent, as games are currently played on random days all around the week.

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## 14. APPENDICES

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### 14.1 APPENDIX 1: KUPS FAN-QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **KuPS Fan-questionnaire**

If you want to be in the running to win the game shirt / season ticket, please fill in your email address.

#### **Basic info:**

Age:

Sex: male/female

Born in area: Uusimaa, Savo, etc.

Current living area: Uusimaa, Savo, etc.

Level of education:

Income level (monthly basis):

Email:

#### **1. Have you visited home games of KuPS during 2010?**

- a. Yes, more than five (skip question 2)
- b. Yes, a few (skip question 2)
- c. No, only away games (answer question 2)
- d. No (answer question 2)

#### **2. Why have you not visited a home game of KuPS last season?**

- a. I have not had time
- b. Kuopio is too far away for me
- c. Tickets are too expensive
- d. other reason: ...

#### **3. Please rate the facilities in and around the stadium**

(1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = ok, 4 = good, 5 = very good)

- a. Merchandising sales
- b. Food and drinks
- c. Entertainment before games and in half time
- d. Available seats and visibility
- e. Atmosphere

#### **4. Which words fit the best to your own image of KuPS (pick 3)?**

- a. Traditional
- b. Modern
- c. Attacking
- d. Smart
- e. Strong
- f. Defensive
- g. Kuopio
- h. Savo
- i. Attractive
- j. Old-fashioned

#### **5. What do you think of the KuPS-merchandising range?**

- a. Great, no changes needed
- b. Nice, but expensive
- c. I would like some more/different products (please specify below)
- d. It is too difficult for me to order/buy any KuPS-merchandising
- e. I have no idea what KuPS-merchandising there is

**6. Do you think that KuPS shows enough of its Kuopio and Savo background/culture?**

- a. Yes, the more the better
- b. Yes, but it should not relate to the Savo-culture too much
- c. No opinion
- d. No, KuPS should do a lot more to show its roots (please specify below)

**7. Which is the best way for KuPS to advertise its home games in your opinion?**

- a. On the KuPS.fi website
- b. In Savon Sanomat and other regional newspapers
- c. Via advertisements in Kuopio (bus stops etc.)
- d. By having a stand on Kauppatori
- e. In the Junique fanstore

**8. Do you know who the main sponsors of KuPS are?**

- a. Yes, I remember quite a few from stadium ad-boards.
- b. Yes, I remember them from the game shirt
- c. Not really, I only remember one or two.
- d. I have no idea who the main sponsors of KuPS are. (skip question 9)

**9. Are you more likely to buy something from a main sponsor of KuPS than from a company that is no sponsor of KuPS?**

- a. Yes, I like to support companies that support KuPS
- b. Yes, but only if the price difference between the sponsor and non-sponsor is small
- c. I never really thought about that
- d. No, I just buy the cheapest possible product/service, no matter from what company.

**10. On what place do you expect KuPS to rank this season?**

- a. 1
- b. 2-4
- c. 5-8
- d. 9-11
- e. 12

## 14.2 APPENDIX 2: RESULTS OF THE KUPS QUESTIONNAIRE IN NUMBERS

Total submissions: 272

### Age:

- a. 0-17 (7,35%)
- b. 18-30 (38,6%)
- c. 31-45 (38,97%)
- d. 46-60 (12,87%)
- e. 60+ (2,21%)

### Sex:

male: 91,54% - female: 8,46%

### Born in area:

Pohjois- Savo: 83,82%  
Uusimaa: 6,25%  
Others: 9,93%

### Current living area:

Pohjois-Savo: 66,91%  
Uusimaa: 15,81%  
Keski-Suomi: 2,94%  
Others: 14,34%

### Level of education:

Primary school: 7,35%  
High school: 19,49%  
Vocational school: 20,96%  
University of applied sciences: 26,47%  
University: 25,74%

### Income level (after taxes, per month):

below 1000e: 26,84%  
1000-2200e: 27,94%  
2200-3500e: 30,51%  
above 3500e: 14,71%

### **1. Have you visited home games of KuPS during 2010?**

- a. Yes, more than five (50%)
- b. Yes, less than five (36,76%)
- c. No, only away games (5,15%)
- d. No (8,09%)

### **2. Why have you not visited a home game of KuPS last season?**

- a. I have not had time (5,88%)
- b. Kuopio is too far away for me (13,24%)
- c. Tickets are too expensive (1,84%)
- d. Other reason (4,04%)

### **3. Please rate the facilities in and around the stadium**

(1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = ok, 4 = good, 5 = very good)

- a. Merchandising sales (average rating 2,97)
- b. Food and drinks (average rating 3,01)

- c. Entertainment before games and in half time (average rating 2,51)
- d. Available seats and visibility (average rating 3,35)
- e. Atmosphere (average rating 3,44)

**4. Which words fit the best to your own image of KuPS (pick 3)?**

- a. Traditional (24,75%)
- b. Modern (3,68%)
- c. Attacking (9,31%)
- d. Smart (6,50%)
- e. Strong (8,70%)
- f. Defensive (1,96%)
- g. Kuopio (17,89%)
- h. Savo (20,22%)
- i. Attractive (6,13%)
- j. Old-fashioned (0,86%)

**5. What do you think of the KuPS-merchandising range?**

- a. Great, no changes needed (30,15%)
- b. Nice, but expensive (26,84%)
- c. I would like some more/different products (30,51%)
- d. It is too difficult for me to order/buy any KuPS-merchandising (5,88%)
- e. I have no idea what KuPS-merchandising there is (6,62%)

**6. Do you think that KuPS shows enough of its Kuopio and Savo background/culture?**

- a. Yes, the more the better (61,76%)
- b. Yes, but it should not relate to the Savo-culture too much (28,31%)
- c. No opinion (4,41%)
- d. No, KuPS should do a lot more to show its roots (5,51%)

**7. Which is the best way for KuPS to advertise its home games in your opinion?**

- a. On the KuPS.fi website (10,55%)
- b. In Savon Sanomat and other regional newspapers (45,36%)
- c. Via advertisements in Kuopio (31,43%)
- d. By having a stand on Kauppatori (12,03%)
- e. In the Junique fanstore (0,63%)

**8. Do you know who the main sponsors of KuPS are?**

- a. Yes, I remember quite a few from stadium ad-boards (36,03%)
- b. Yes, I remember them from the game shirt (32,72%)
- c. Not really, I only remember one or two (30,88%)
- d. I have no idea who the main sponsors of KuPS are. (0,37%)

**9. Are you more likely to buy something from a main sponsor of KuPS than from a company that is no sponsor of KuPS?**

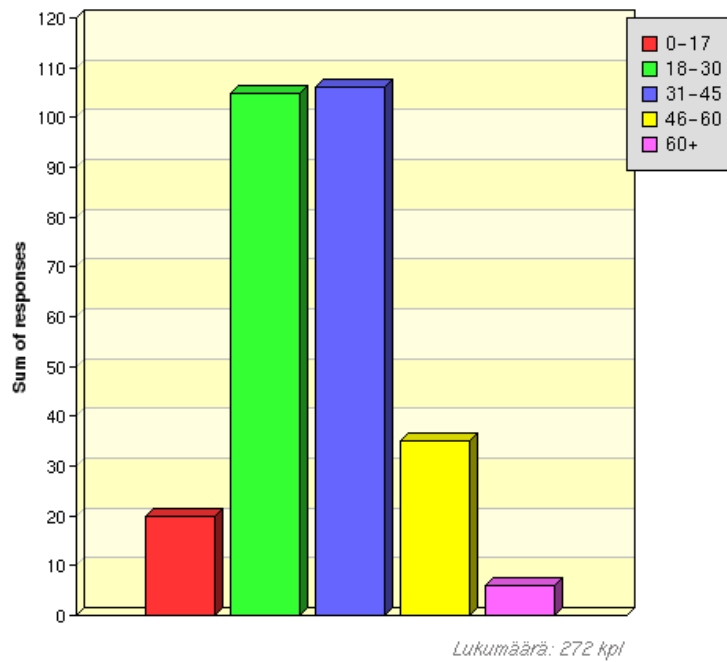
- a. Yes, I like to support companies that support KuPS (43,75%)
- b. Yes, but only if the price difference between the sponsor and non-sponsor is small (31,62%)
- c. I never really thought about that (19,49%)
- d. No, I just buy the cheapest possible product/service, no matter from what company (5,15%)

**10. On what place do you expect KuPS to rank this season?**

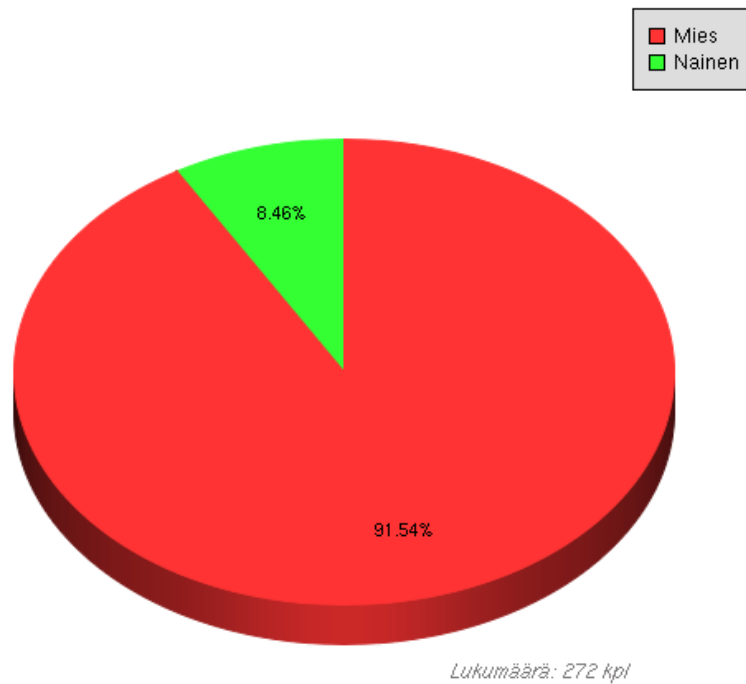
- a. 1 (12,87%)
- b. 2-4 (63,24%)
- c. 5-8 (23,53%)
- d. 9-11 (0%)
- e. 12 (0,37%)

### 14.3 APPENDIX 3: RESULTS OF THE KUPS QUESTIONNAIRE IN GRAPHS

#### 14.3.1 Respondents by age group



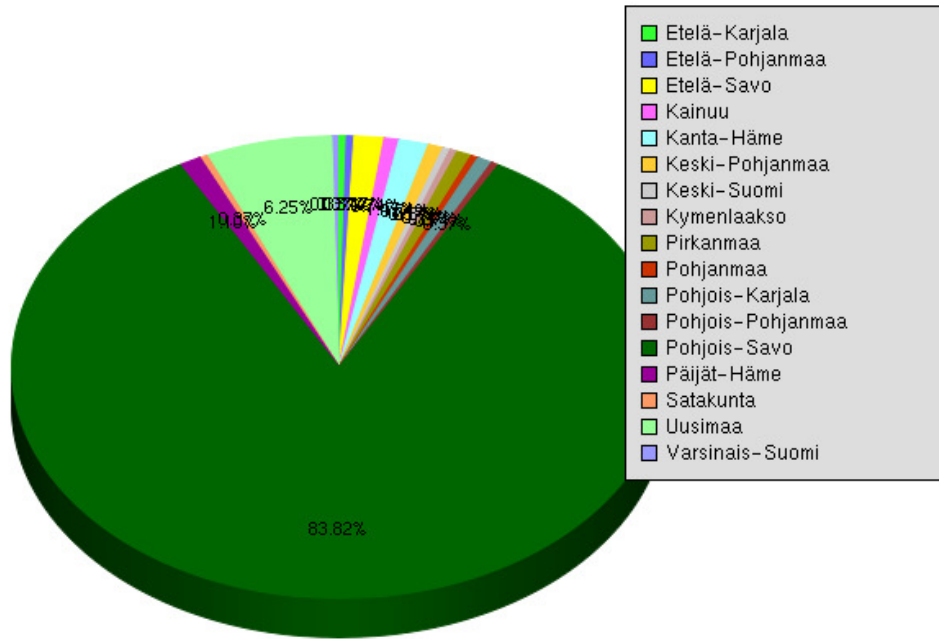
#### 14.3.2 Respondents by gender



*mies = male / nainen = female*



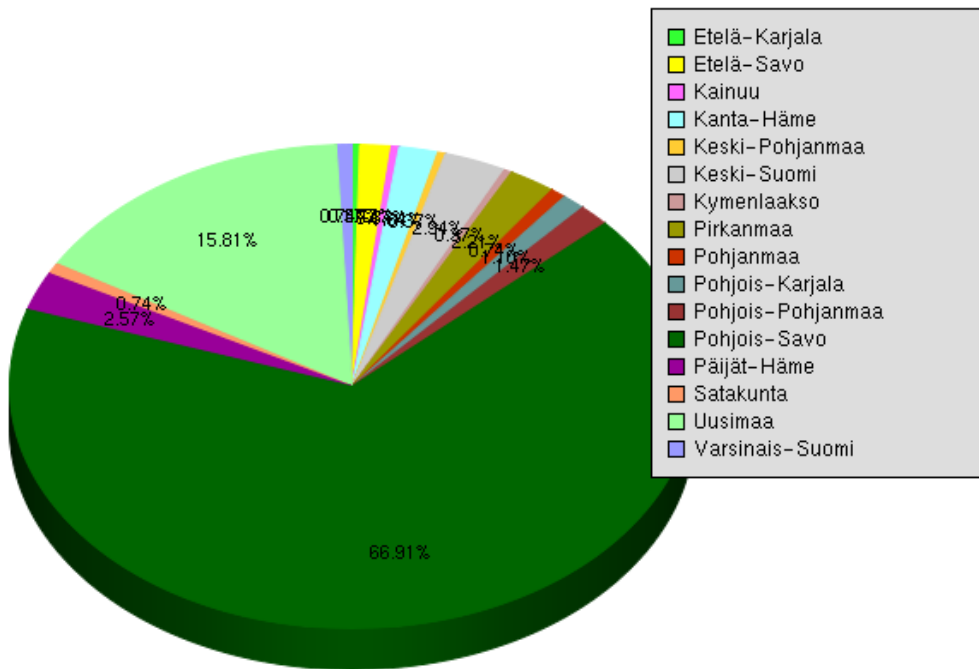
### 14.3.3 Respondents by province of birth



Lukumäärä: 272 kpl

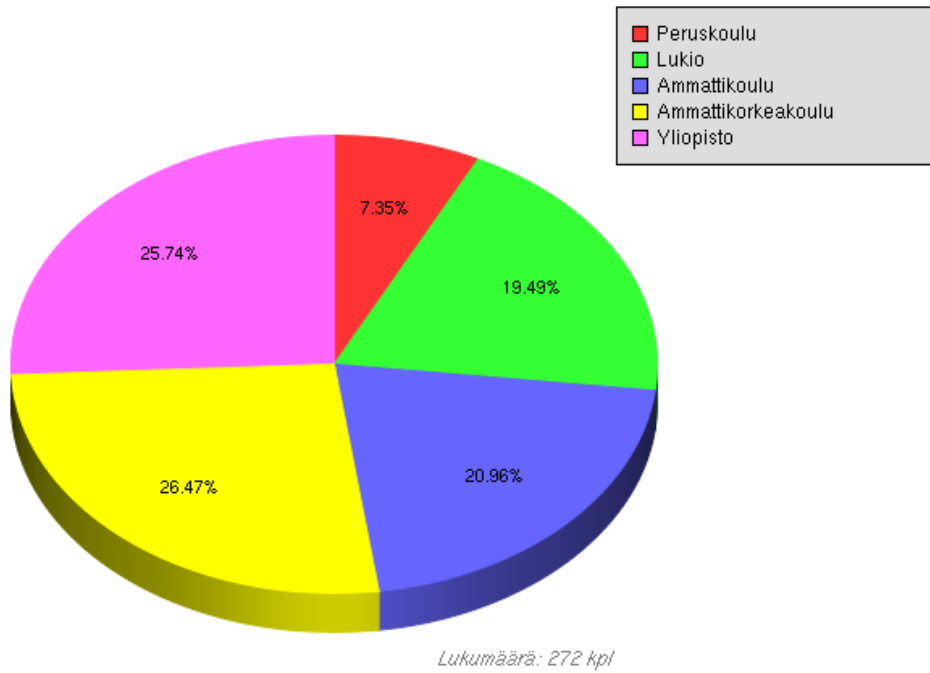
*Kuopio is located in the Pohjois-Savo area. Uusimaa is the area including Helsinki.*

### 14.3.4 Respondents by current province of living



Lukumäärä: 272 kpl

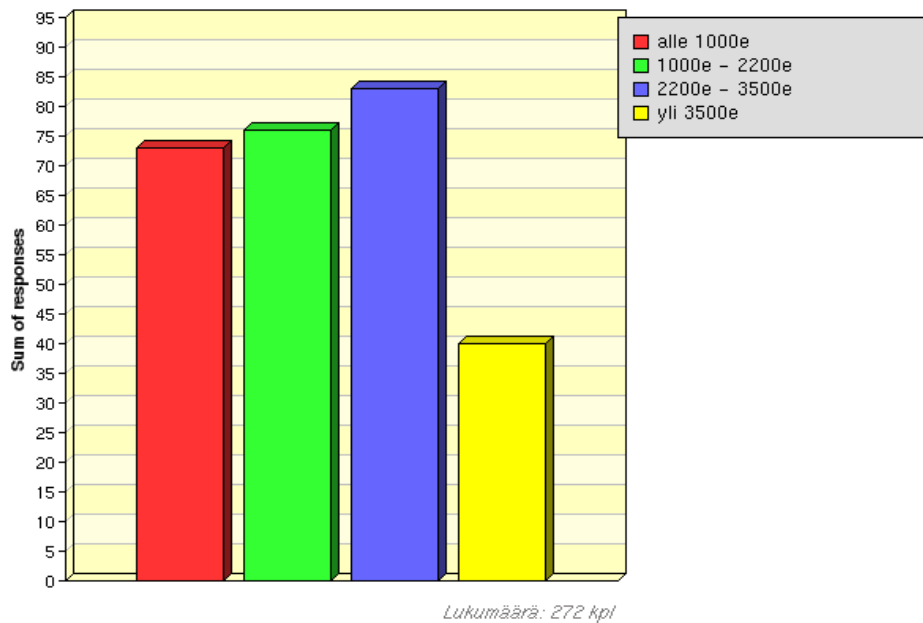
**14.3.5 Respondents by level of education**



*Peruskoulu = primary school / Lukio = high school / Ammattikoulu = vocational school /*

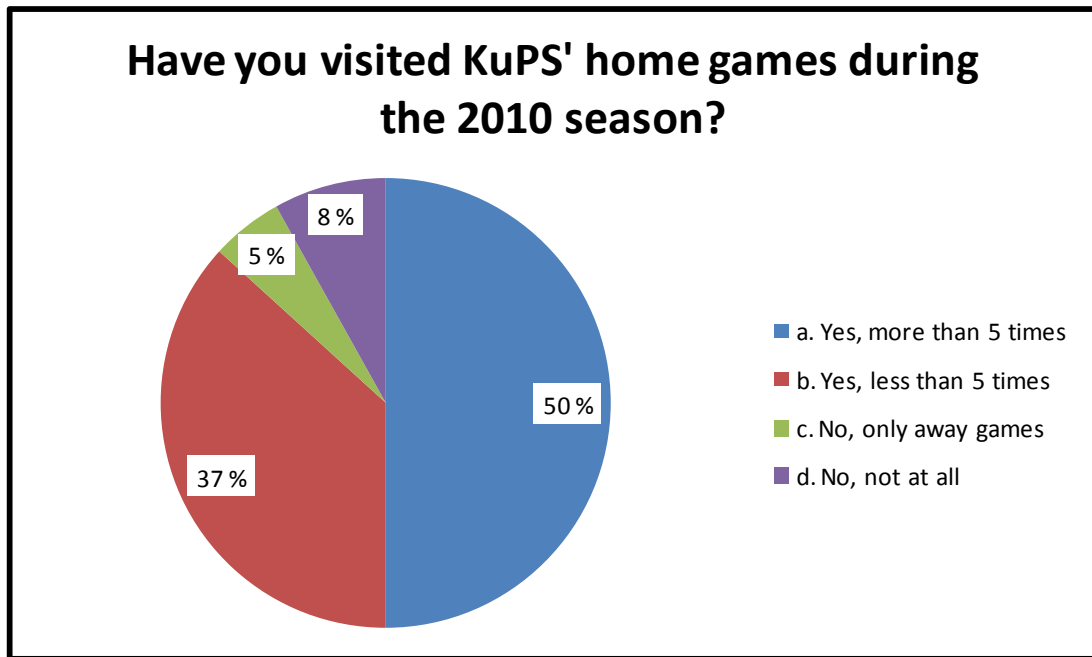
*Ammattikorkeakoulu = university of applied sciences / Yliopisto = university*

**14.3.6 Respondents by level of income (after taxes, per month)**

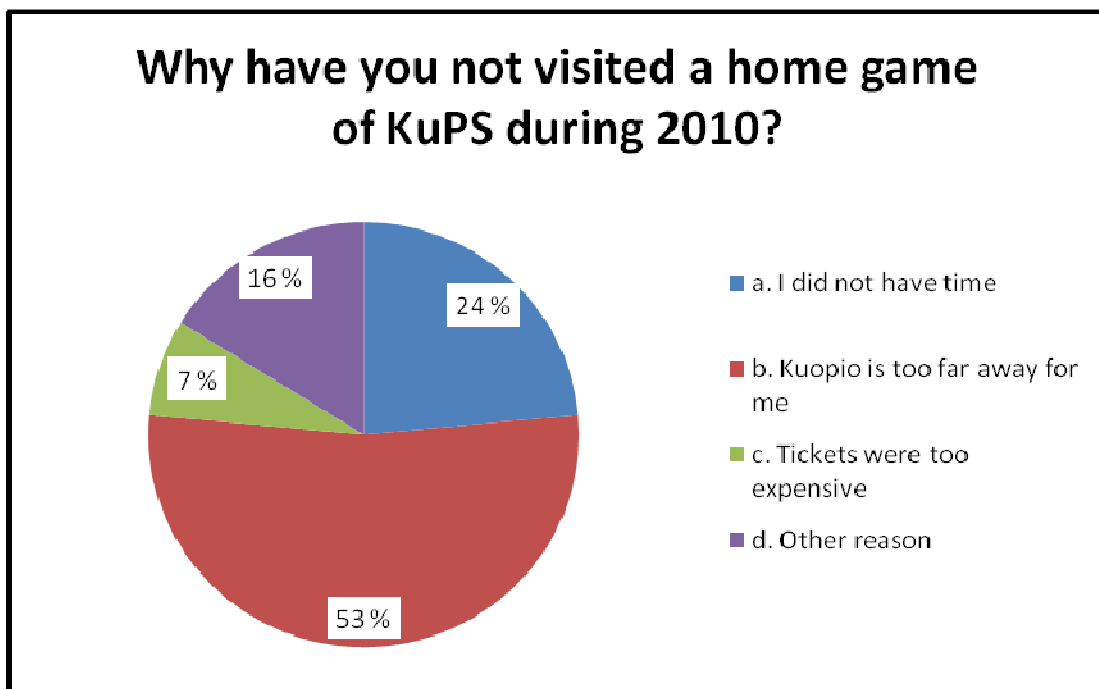


*alle = below / yli = above*

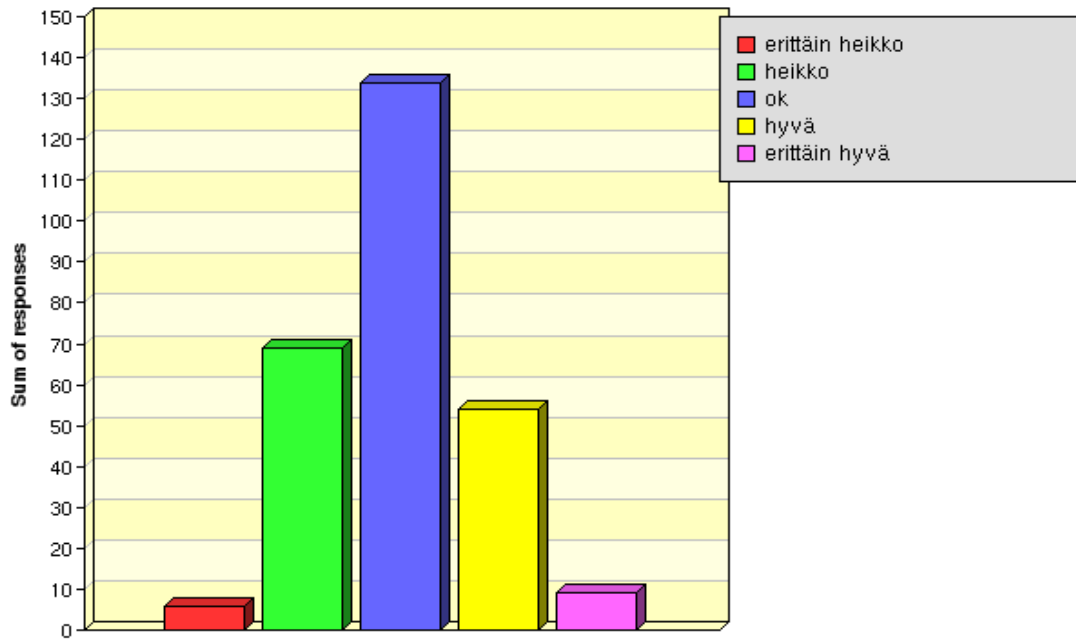
**14.3.7 Have you visited KuPS' games during the 2010 season?**



**14.3.8 Why have you not visited a home game of KuPS last season?**

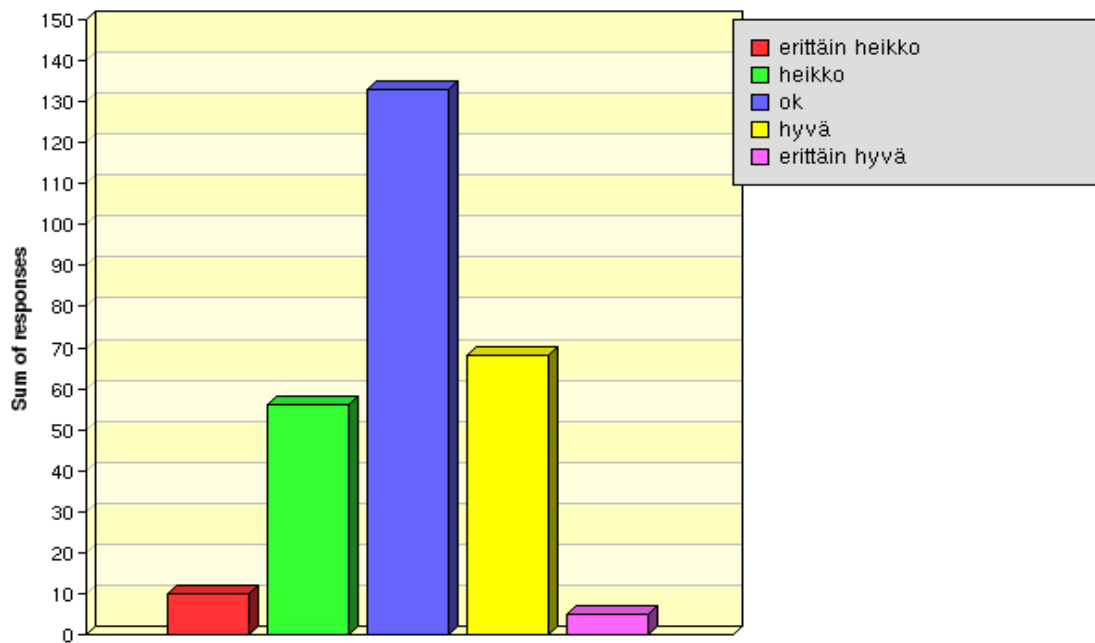


### 14.3.9 Merchandising sales in and around the stadium



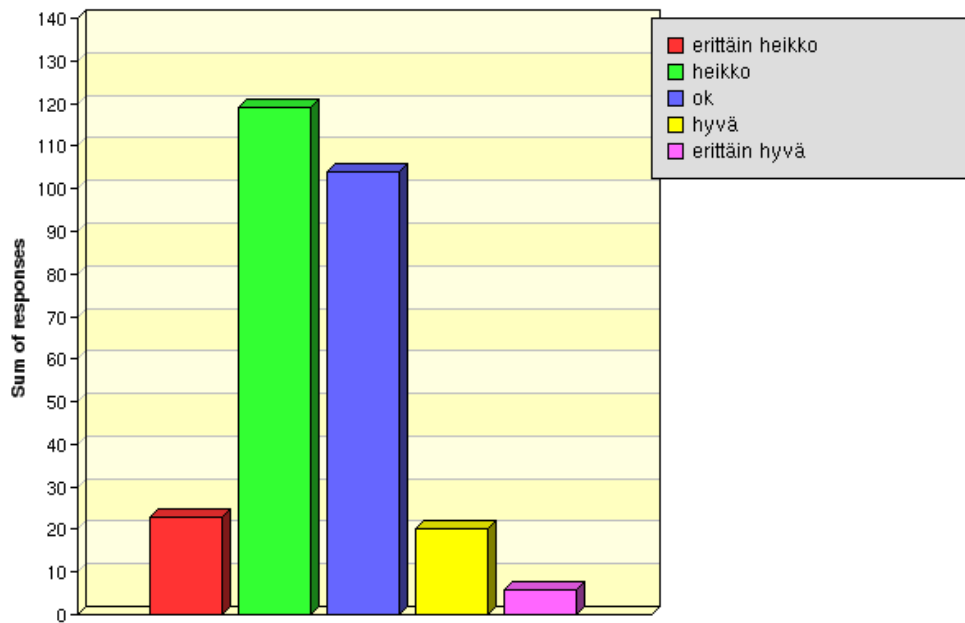
*erittäin heikko = very poor / heikko = poor / hyvä = good / erittäin hyvä = very good*

### 14.3.8 The quality and range of food and drinks offered in and around the stadium



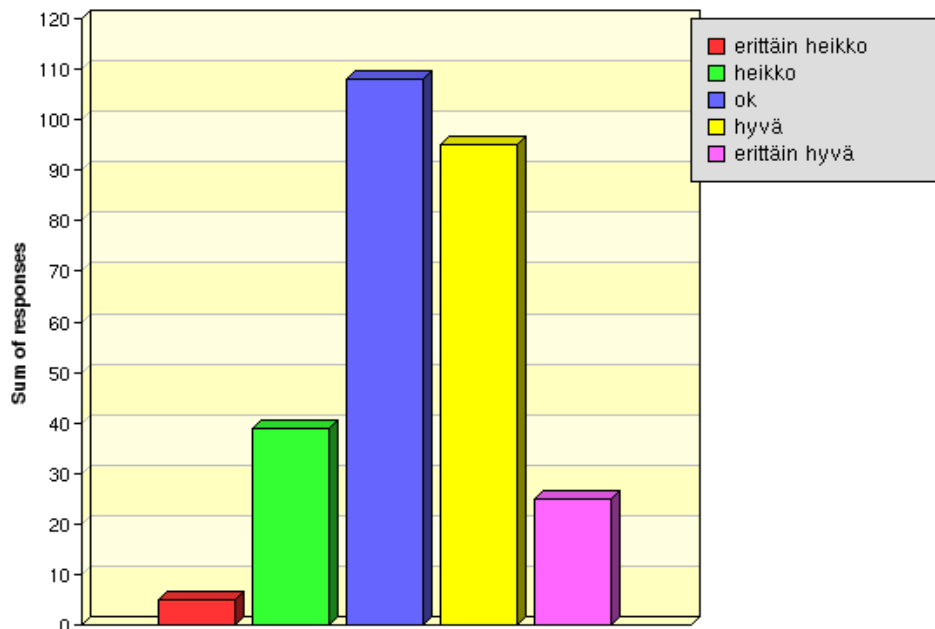
*erittäin heikko = very poor / heikko = poor / hyvä = good / erittäin hyvä = very good*

### 14.3.9 Quality and quantity of matchday entertainment



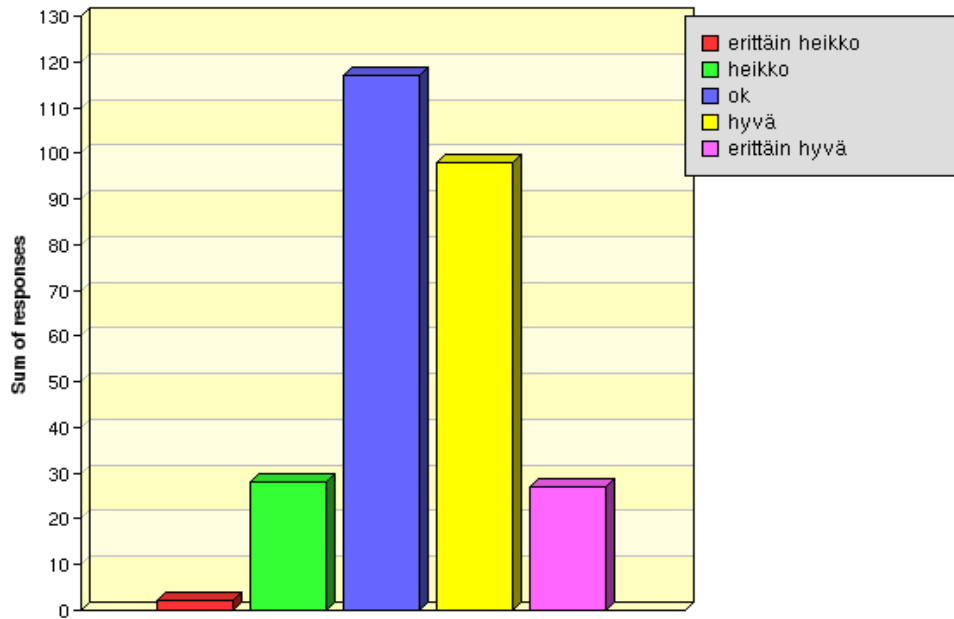
*erittäin heikko = very poor / heikko = poor / hyvä = good / erittäin hyvä = very good*

### 14.3.10 Seating and visibility in the stadium



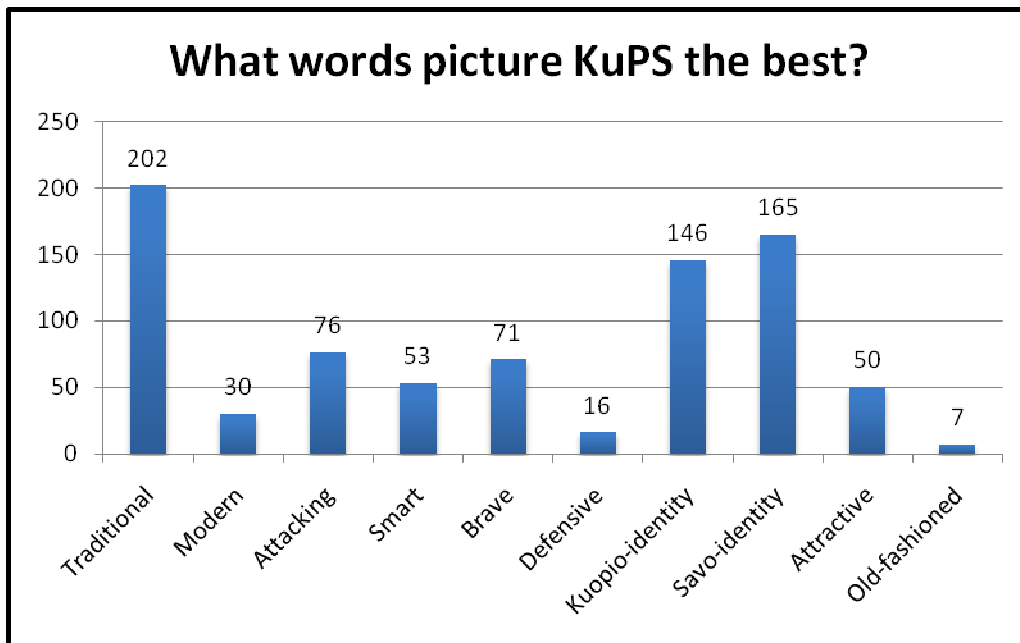
*erittäin heikko = very poor / heikko = poor / hyvä = good / erittäin hyvä = very good*

### 14.3.11 Atmosphere during KuPS games

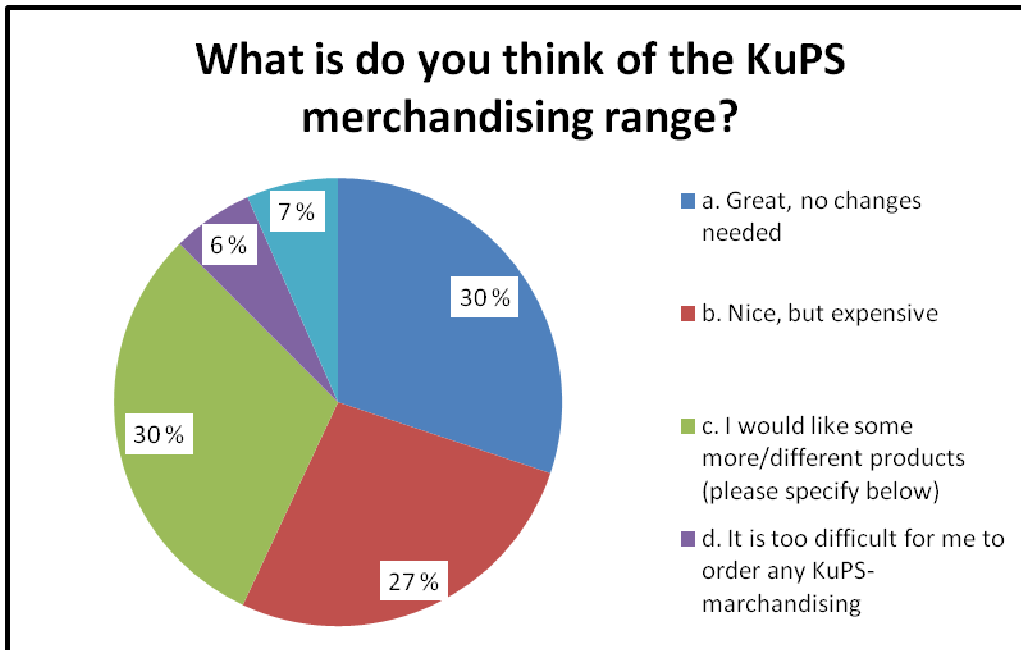


*erittäin heikko = very poor / heikko = poor / hyvä = good / erittäin hyvä = very good*

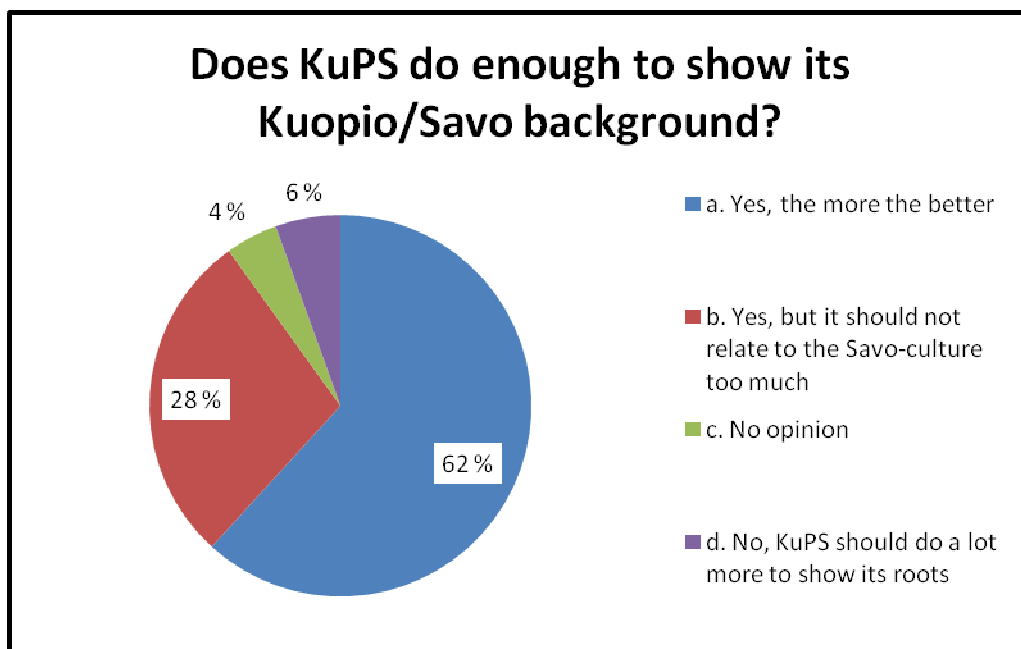
### 14.3.12 Which words fit the best to your own image of KuPS?



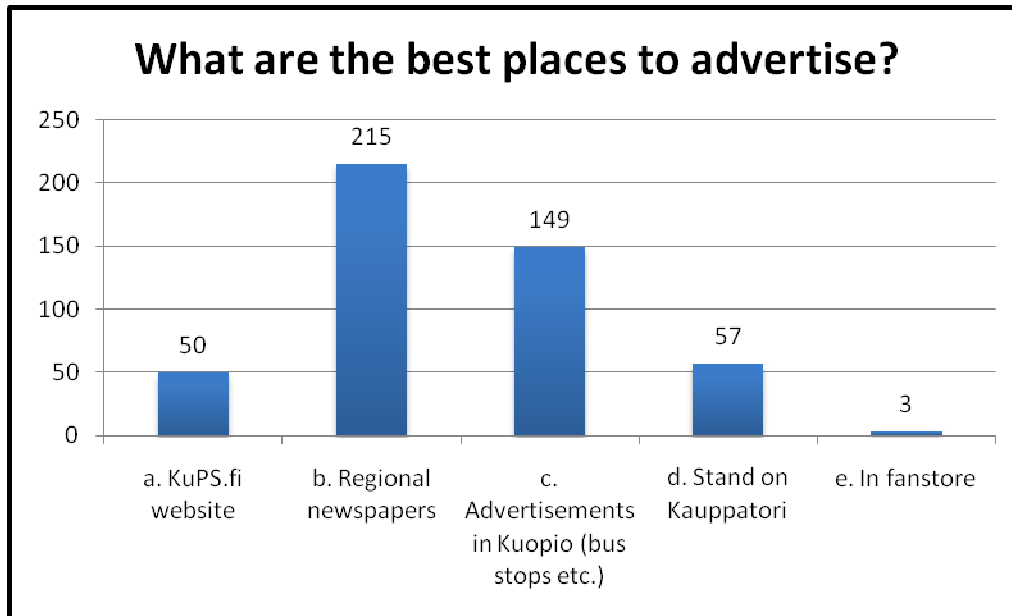
14.3.13 What do you think of the KuPS merchandising range?



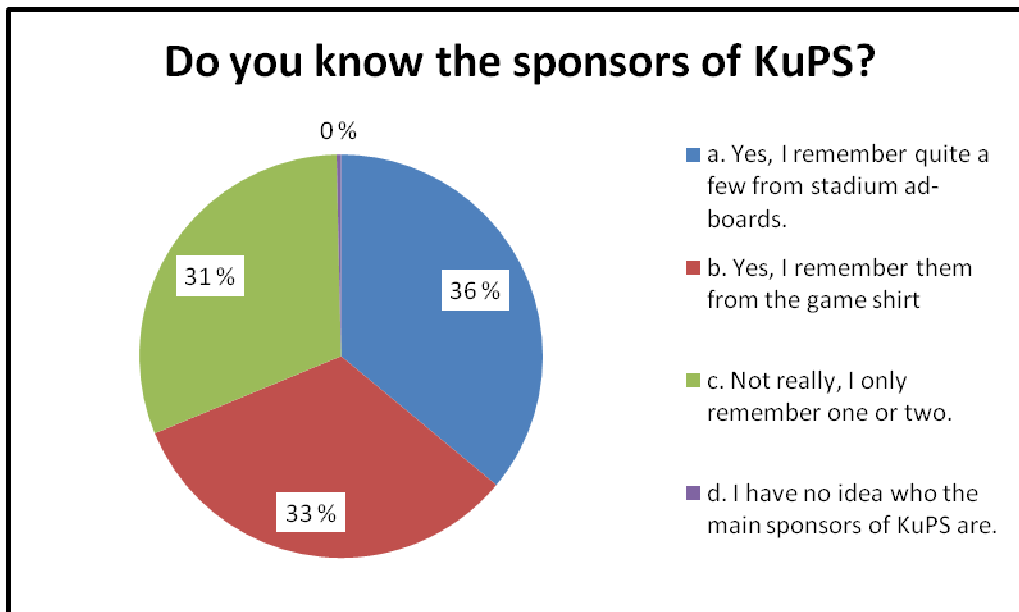
14.3.14 Do you think that KuPS shows enough of it's Kuopio and Savo background/culture?



**14.3.15 What is the best way for KuPS to advertise its home games in your opinion?**

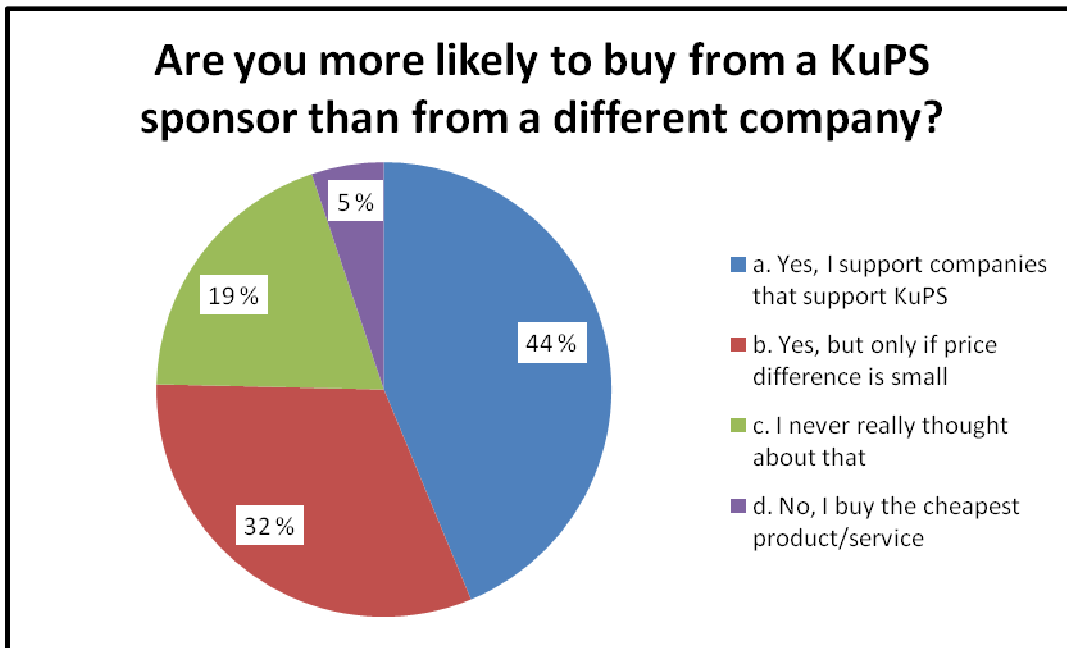


**14.3.16 Do you know who the main sponsors of KuPS are?**

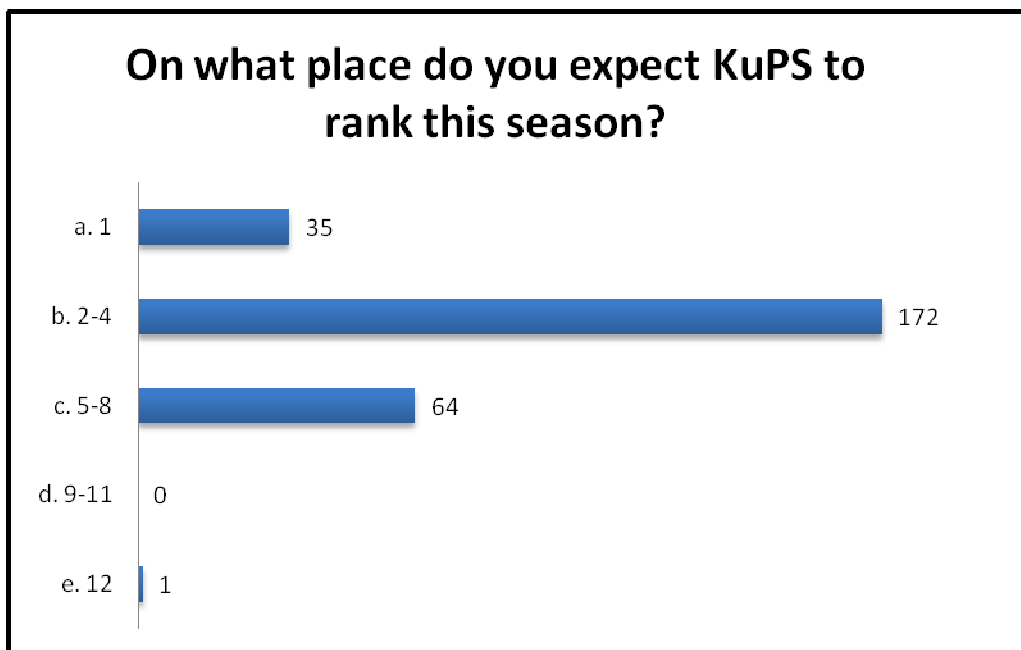




**14.3.17 Are you more likely to buy something from a main sponsor of KuPS than from a company that is no sponsor of KuPS?**

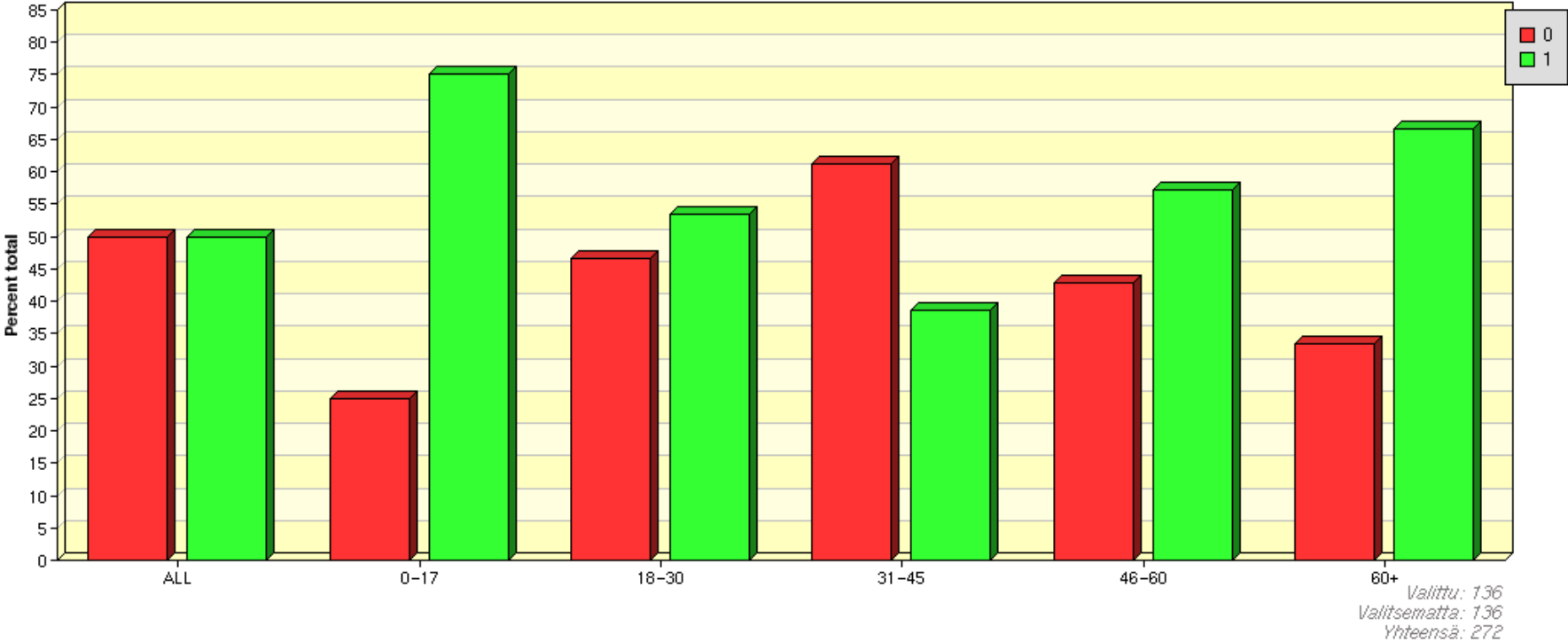


**14.3.18 On what place do you expect KuPS to rank this season?**



**14.3.19 Home game visits per age group (in percentage of age group total)**

Did you visit more than 5 home games during the 2010 season? green = yes / red = no

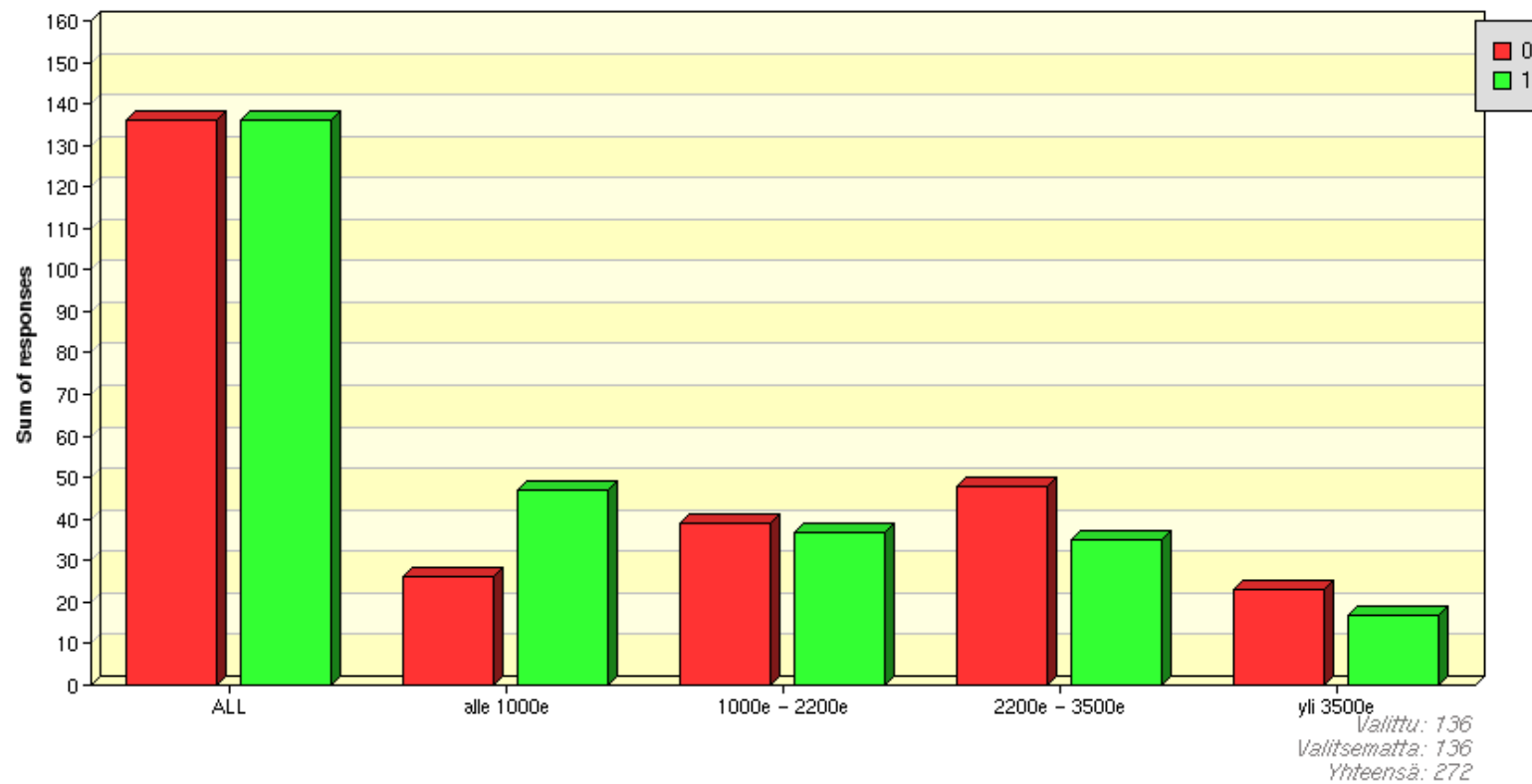


### 14.3.13 Home game visits per income level

Did you visit more than 5 home games during the 2010 season?

green = yes / red = no

alle = below / yli = above



#### 14.4 APPENDIX 4: VEIKKAUSLIIGA BUDGETS 2009 – 2011

Veikkausliiga budgets 2009 - 2011									
Team	2009 total	2009 salaries	2008 on 2009	2010 total	2010 salaries	2009 on 2010	2011 total	2011 salaries	2010 on 2011 (% of total)
AC Oulu	*	*		910 000	465 000	14,8 %	**	**	
FC Haka	1 550 000	700 000	30,0 %	1 400 000	700 000	-10,7 %	875 000	300 000	-60,0 %
FC Honka	2 100 000	984 000	0,0 %	2 100 000	670 000	0,0 %	1 650 000	550 000	-27,3 %
FC Inter	1 181 000	720 000	26,8 %	944 800	685 000	-25,0 %	944 800	685 000	0,0 %
FC Lahti	900 000	440 000	4,0 %	930 000	398 000	3,2 %	*	*	
FF Jaro	791 750	410 000	-1,0 %	936 400	410 500	15,4 %	945 000	419 000	0,9 %
HJK	1 800 000	670 000	0,0 %	1 750 000	830 000	-2,9 %	2 162 000	890 000	19,1 %
IFK Mariehamn	930 000	450 000	10,0 %	945 000	460 000	1,6 %	1 026 000	497 000	7,9 %
JJK	985 000	470 000	46,0 %	1 184 000	520 000	16,8 %	1 200 000	650 000	1,3 %
KuPS	850 000	350 000	0,0 %	1 000 000	400 000	15,0 %	1 500 000	650 000	33,3 %
MYPÄ	1 120 000	700 000	-7,5 %	1 020 000	603 000	-9,8 %	1 006 000	655 000	-1,4 %
RoPS	650 000	250 000	-12,0 %	* * *	* * *		700 000	400 000	7,1 %
Tampere United	1 656 630	796 800	-3,0 %	1 280 000	590 000	-29,4 %	***	***	
TPS	3 000 000	900 000	0,0 %	1 215 000	750 000	-146,9 %	900 000	570 000	-35,0 %
VPS	1 202 500	598 285	11,0 %	1 080 100	539 000	-11,3 %	1 187 000	546 000	9,0 %
Total	18 716 880	8 439 085		16 695 300	8 020 500		14 095 800	6 812 000	
Average per club	1 336 920	602 792	8,0 %	1 192 521	572 893	-12,1 %	1 174 650	567 667	-3,7 %
* = Playing in First Division (Ykkönen)									
** = Not granted Premier League license (playing in Ykkönen instead)									
*** = Not granted Premier League license (not playing professional football in 2011)									

Sources: <http://www.mtv3.fi/urheilu/futis/uutiset.shtml/2009/04/854123>

<http://www.mtv3.fi/urheilu/futis/uutiset.shtml/2010/04/1096459/hongalla-lihavin-budjetti-hjklta-paksuin-setelitukko>

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#### 14.5 APPENDIX 5: VEIKKAUSLIIGA CLUB INFORMATION

Veikkausliiga club info	Founded in	Budget	Season 2010		Final ranking
			(to 2009)	Spectator average	
AC Oulu	2002	910 000	14,8 %	1991	358*
FC Haka	1934	1 400 000	-10,7 %	1449	-551
FC Honka	1975	2 100 000	0,0 %	2265	33
FC Inter	1990	944 800	-25,0 %	1853	-542
FC Lahti	1996	930 000	3,2 %	2405	323
FF Jaro	1965	936 400	15,4 %	1904	254
HJK	1907	1 750 000	-2,9 %	3544	-117
IFK Mariehamn	1919	945 000	1,6 %	1444	-379
JJK	1992	1 184 000	16,8 %	2922	-316
KuPS	1923	1 000 000	15,0 %	2628	791
MYPÄ	1947	1 020 000	-9,8 %	1172	-188
Tampere United	1998	1 280 000	-29,4 %	1775	-481
TPS	1922	1 215 000	-146,9 %	3658	-1246
VPS	1924	1 080 100	-11,3 %	2132	-283
		1 192 521	-12,1 %	2224	-2702
* = Played in Ykkönen (first division) in 2009					

Sources: [http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veikkausliiga-kausi\\_2009](http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veikkausliiga-kausi_2009)

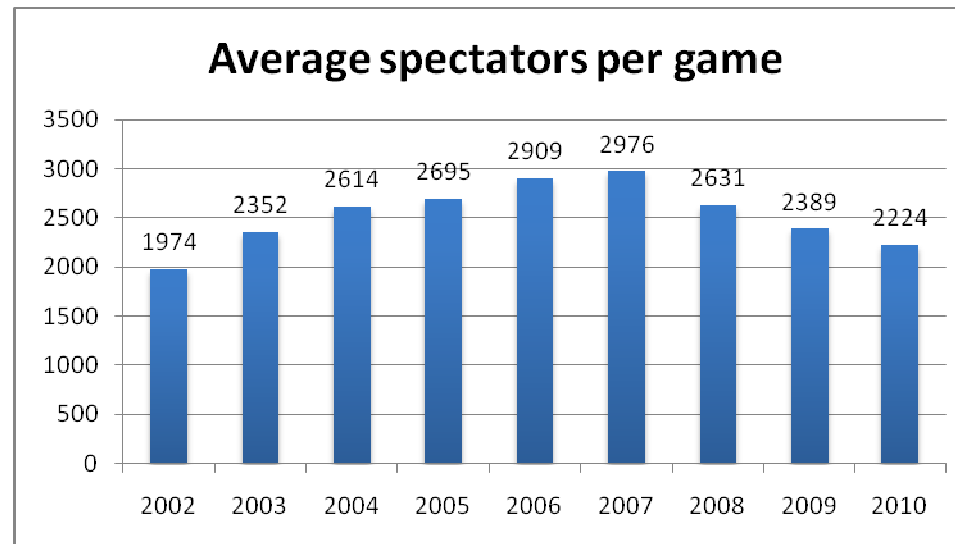
[http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veikkausliiga-kausi\\_2010](http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veikkausliiga-kausi_2010)

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## 14.6 APPENDIX 6: VEIKKAUSLIIGA SPECTATOR NUMBERS 2002 - 2010

### Veikkausliiga spectator numbers 2002-2010

Season	Average Spectators
2002	1974
2003	2352
2004	2614
2005	2695
2006	2909
2007	2976
2008	2631
2009	2389
2010	2224



Source: <http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/veikkausliiga>

# Research proposal

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## KuPS Development Plan

**Cedrick van der Aar**

**St nr. 439787**

**03.02.2011**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

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Because of the fact that Finnish club football is having a very hard time to compete with other European countries, concerning spectator numbers, income through sponsors and competitive participation in continental football competitions, it would be good to find out what is missing in the current model and football culture of Finland. Compared to Sweden, which has spectator numbers around an average of almost 6.500 per game<sup>72</sup> in the Allsvenskan (the Swedish Premier League), Finland barely reaches an average of about 2.200 visitors per game<sup>73</sup> in Veikkausliiga (the Finnish Premier League) and that. This is just one example of the situation in Finland, a country that really should have potential for growth when it comes to public interest towards football.

Football, with about 500.000 (2006<sup>74</sup>) people actively following football in Finland, is the second biggest sport in Finland, after ice hockey, and even though the sport has been played on a professional level for many years already in the Finnish premier league, most people interested in football support teams from Spain or England, rather than a team from their home town, for instance. Why is this the case and what has to happen in order to get Finnish people more interested in domestic football? How do we make games more attractive and how can we create stronger ties between club and fans? Those are the questions that I will try to answer through thorough research and by using the literature stated in the literature review.

Because of the fact that this dissertation is written for and based on KuPS (Kuopion Palloseura Oy), big part of my dissertation will focus mostly on issues directly related to KuPS, with certain areas relating to Finnish football in general as well. A good example of this is that I want to try and find out how KuPS is positioned within Savo, the region of which Kuopio is the capital of, and the way the club is part of the Savo culture. The regional culture is very important to the locals and Savo is probably one of the proudest areas of Finland. Finding out what is needed to integrate KuPS more and more into the Savo culture is therefore another main issue that I would like to address.

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<sup>72</sup> [http://transfermarkt.fr/en/allsvenskan/besucherzahlen/wettbewerb\\_SE1.html/](http://transfermarkt.fr/en/allsvenskan/besucherzahlen/wettbewerb_SE1.html/) (6 December 2010)

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.veikkausliiga.com/Statistic.aspx?id=6> (6 December 2010)

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.palloliitto.fi/viestinta/?num=95273> (6 December 2010)

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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One of the main issues in Finnish football is the missing link between the clubs and the fans. While in many countries football and especially a certain club, are an important part of the life of many people, in Finland football does not seem to be much more than a nice day-out. Instead of going to the cinema or going to shop for clothing, people decide to go and watch a football match every now and then. This surely is nice, but because of the fact that the fans are the core audience and business of a football club, the Finnish model is far from ideal.

With a stable fan base, loyal supporters and a certain amount of visitors every game (season ticket holders), the clubs would be able to build up a much higher profile and realize sustainable growth due to increase in ticket sales and sponsor money. Also the limited media coverage and a not-so-professional approach towards sports journalism and tv broadcasting are serious reasons of why the overall impression of domestic football is poor. Shortly said, the main problems regarding Finnish football seem to be fan loyalty and media attention.

The research question that I have therefore decided to construct are:

- How can fan loyalty in Finnish football be achieved?

Which can be answered through various sub-questions:

- What do the spectators think of the current situation and what would they like to see improved?
- What kind of role does the connection between sponsors and spectators play?
- How can branding affect the ties between club and fans?
- Compared to similar football nations, what opportunities for growth and improvement are there in Finland?

### 3. METHOD

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The main source of information, next to the literature mentioned earlier, will be a questionnaire handed out to the spectators of a home game of KuPS. The questionnaire will contain questions that will help answering certain areas of the research problem, such as the opinion of the fans about activities and happenings on game days, the level of engagement the spectators feel with the club and many other things that play a certain role in the way Finnish football can become more attractive for both spectators and sponsors.

In order to make the survey as good as possible and to make sure that the answers will be easy to analyze and will be relevant to the research, I will use '*Survey research: the basics*' by Keith Punch, as I have found it to be a very helpful book when it comes to creating a survey. To make sure that the spectators will be interested to help both the club and me with filling out the survey, some prizes will be drawn between the participants (free season ticket, merchandise etc.). It is hard to make an accurate estimate of how many people will be likely to answer but because the expected amount of visitors of a KuPS home game at the beginning of the new season is between 2500 and 3000 people, I would expect to at least receive about 1000 filled out surveys.

After having collected relevant data from the questionnaire and good background information from relevant literature, I will try to link theory and practice by drawing up recommendations and conclusions as to how KuPS can strengthen its relationship with its (potential) fans and its positioning within the Savo culture. Most of the literature on sports or football marketing is quite general and mainly focused on the bigger markets. This will often be in big contrast to the situation in Finland, and it is very important to get relevant data from the spectator survey, as that can really help to answer the research questions. Spectators are often potential sponsors as well, either currently or in the future, so they are the ones that KuPS has to rely on and satisfy.

#### TIMESCALE

January, February and March:

Thorough reading and collecting background information. It will be important to find relevant historical data about Finnish football to follow and understand the progress made. Drawing up the survey is another important part that has to be done during this period.

April :

The survey will be handed out during a home game of KuPS. Data collection and analysis are the main issues for this month, next to trying read and analyse literature, as well as to search for more.

May and June:

Drawing the conclusions and recommendations from both the survey analysis and the literature. The finishing touch should be done during June.

## PRELIMINARY CONTENT

### 1. Introduction to the subject

→ *Introduction on KuPS and Finnish football, more about the current situation and actual developments in Finnish football*

### 2. Research problem

→ *What is going wrong and what could be the possible reasons behind the problems, both for KuPS as well as for the Finnish league as a whole. How to build and maintain fan loyalty and how to create a serious increase in brand awareness for Finnish football clubs.*

### 3. Comparison to other countries & sports

→ *eg. Sweden and Holland. What can Finland learn from experiences of the clubs/leagues abroad.*

### 4. Findings from survey

→ *Analysis of the answers including the way they link to the theories.*

### 5. Possible solutions

→ *From various perspectives: on team level, league level and also media/sponsor related.*

### 6. Conclusion and recommendations

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

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Due to the fact that this dissertation will be a two-sided one and will contain both input from supporters and fans, as well as a lot of theoretical background and research on football and sports marketing, there are quite a lot of different types of literature that will play a big role in the collection of information and sources in the process of conducting research. The two main 'problems' therefore are the way long term marketing strategies are drawn up and laid out, as well as the way the football culture affects the clubs and league as a whole.

### LONG TERM MARKETING STRATEGIES

One of the problems in Finnish football, and in other countries with similar situations, is the way marketing strategies are laid out for longer terms, but never seems to have a lot of real impact on the development of the clubs or league. *'Marketing and Football'*, a book written by Michael Desbordes, gives a very nice insight in the different ways national football associations and specific national and international leagues have conducted their marketing strategies. The book gives a good view on the difference in marketing possibilities between the big leagues and the smaller ones, like Finland. Big part of the book is about example cases and does not always include a lot of theoretical background, but because of the fact that a book like *'Sport Marketing'* by Bernard Mullins, Stephen Hardy and William Sutton does have fairly detailed explanations of different theories and strategies, this actually fits really well together and makes it a lot easier to see the success factor or points of weakness in the cases presented in Desbordes' *'Marketing and Football'*. These books will be of serious help to find good answers to the marketing strategy problems.

Finnish football could, in the end, even profit from the knowledge of marketing strategies conducted in other sports disciplines. *'The Business of Sports: Text and Cases on Strategy and Management'* by George Foster, Stephen Greyser and Bill Walsh will be useful to a certain extent in that case. It has a lot of cases on other sports disciplines and some of them can be of real value when thinking about the fact that football is simply not the biggest and most popular sport in Finland and can therefore be placed in the same position as other sports abroad (Baseball in Holland or Icehockey in Germany). Even though the book touches quite a lot of interesting issues, I do not completely agree with some of the theories, as they are seen from a very American perspective and do not relate to how things are arranged in Europe, even though the writers sometimes seem to make it sound that way.

## FOOTBALL CULTURE

Football culture is something that only exists on a very small scale in Finland. Many people don't seem to feel a very tight connection between themselves and the club they support or simply visit on a regular basis. This might have to do with the Finnish mentality, but surely also leads from the poor football culture. To find out how football culture can be explained and to look over the border to see how football is lived in other countries, *'Football cultures and identities'* by Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti is a very good source. This book has its content structured in almost the same way as 'Marketing and Football', but focuses purely on the different football cultures and identities all over the world. From hooliganism in Southern America to the world-famous Swedish model of semi-professionalism in football, everything is well covered, which makes it a very useful collection of different views on football. Armstrong and Giulianotti, in this particular book, give a very good view over the different types of fans and cultural background that form the basis for football supporters. Even though my dissertation is only focused on Finland, it will be very valuable to gain information from abroad and compare the situation in Finland with the one in similar countries. This comparison material collected from foreign examples can then be used to build up the first bits of the recommendations and will help a lot when trying to find out what makes Finland so different from many other European countries that do have a very well developed football culture.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://transfermarkt.fr/en/allsvenskan/besucherzahlen/wettbewerb\\_SE1.html/](http://transfermarkt.fr/en/allsvenskan/besucherzahlen/wettbewerb_SE1.html/) (6 December 2010)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.veikkausliiga.com/Statistic.aspx?id=6> (6 December 2010)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.palloliitto.fi/viestinta/?num=95273> (6 December 2010)