

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

CHAIR OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

**Co-creation of a distinctive identity:
the role of the supporters in the Juventus F.C. rebranding**

SUPERVISOR:

Prof. Valentina Pitardi

CANDIDATE:

Fabiano Santangelo

ID: 676191

CO-SUPERVISOR:

Prof. Silvia Romani

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Introduction

Sports societies, especially the ones operating at an elite level, have been becoming businesses and due to that are driven by commercial goals: sport is a business, with products and consumers, where clubs represent branded commodities. All things considered, it is undeniable that the growth of the business of sports has driven the rise in popularity and significance of sports branding.

At the light of this evidence, it appears clear that sport teams need to adopt a more professional approach to the way they operate in the modern business environment. Just like any other leisure venue, sports need to exploit the role of the marketing as a mean to remain competitive in a fiercely contested leisure industry. And, consequently, just like other recreative businesses, clubs are involved in retailing activities (merchandising and tickets) and hospitality business which all require an approach focused on customers' needs.

For these reasons, managers are treating clubs as brands: given that sport performances are uncontrollable, unpredictable and spontaneous¹, which means it cannot in isolation provide long-term benefits², management takes a long-term approach focusing on the sport experience and on the building of a sustainable relationship with customers to strengthen the brand rather than winning. The soccer clubs as brands must offer an experience which touch all customers' senses and make them feel proud of being part of that enlarged family.

The different teams are now considered as passion brands synthetizing the history of the club and the experiences of fans into a narrative. Soccer clubs represent an identity in which fans from all over the world recognize themselves. Furthermore, the attachment and the devotion toward a club transcend any success or failure on the pitch: the devotion of fans towards football

¹ Gladden, J. M., Milne, G. R. and Sutton, W. A., 1998. A conceptual framework for assessing brand equity in division I college athletics. *Journal of Sport Management* 12 (1), 1-19

² Ross, S. D. (2006). A conceptual framework for understanding spectator-based brand equity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 20(1), 22-38.

club engenders a level of loyalty far greater than in any other industry. However, this doesn't mean fans will positively perceive a weakening of their sense of moral ownership of the club due to the proliferation of diktats of concern for its competitive resources and financial health.

It follows that the implementation of a revolutionary strategy like the rebranding, which in the sport, and in the football, refers to change in name, logo, historic slogan or the uniform colors, allowing managers to intervene on the perception of the supporters towards the club, has to take into account that is dealing with something 'sacred' and managing a piece of community property, not a business asset: it is a repository of people's emotional associations.

Clubs need to promise an experience which is in line with what believed and appreciated about the brand by effectively involving fans and making them act as a "touchstone" in guiding what the brand does, respecting the consideration that clubs don't own their brands, consumers do.

In such an orientation, where the strategies adopted by the teams are fans-orientated, the success depends on the ability to commonly design brands that exactly suit particular functional and symbolic needs while conveying relevant meanings and experiences. The production and the exchange of value, previously solely dependent on the internal capabilities and expertise of the firm, now requires the active participation of formerly passive consumers³.

Nowadays, clubs, to be successful, need to generate as much value as possible by creating and delivering a collective value through the construction of a network where the team is the central actor around which interests rotate.⁴ It means that the key of the success resides in the interactions between company and consumers, referred to as value co-creation,⁵ where fans become co-producers of the core product⁶.

³ Lagace, M. (2004) *Your Customers: Use Them or Lose Them*, Harvard Business School Working Knowledge Series, 19 July. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School.

⁴ Zagnoli, P., & Radicchi, E. (2010). The football-fan community as a determinant stakeholder in value co-creation. *Sport in Society*, 13(10), 1532–1551.

⁵ Prahalad, C.K. and Ramaswamy, V. (2004a) 'Co-creation Experiences: The Next Practice in Value Creation', *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(3): 5–14.

⁶ Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68, 1–17.

Moreover, this strategical shift has been being driven by the proliferation of the internet: fans have access to information about clubs, players, transfers, merchandising, performances and other fans actions and reactions from around the world and can create supporters' communities, where sharing ideas and feelings. Then, it becomes necessary to clubs to conduct research on these virtual communities to catch fans' interests and values and to exploit the co-creative role by them played as stakeholders.⁷

After having deeply analyzed the rebranding in the sport, with a main focus on the football societies, and the cruciality of the fans' role in the development of new successful strategies, driven by a logic of co-creation, my attention will focus on the study of the Juventus F.C. case.

The "Old Lady" of the football, in fact, has just put another piece to its revolutionary plan of going beyond the football begun some years ago, which includes ambitious management of sponsorships, broadcast rights, merchandising and even a wholly-owned stadium. Hence, the "Bianconeri" have changed their logo in an attempt to become worldwide lifestyle brand that goes beyond the pitch and appeals to football and non-football fans. This idea subverts and expands the visual marketing in the soccer since we are not just talking of a new logo, but of the substitution of the logo to a crest. And, as it was expected, this rebranding has generated contrasting reactions among fans.

At this regard, my work, after having examined the way in which the rebranding will impact the evolution of the club's businesses, is finalized to inspect, through in-depth interviews and gathering thoughts on socials and different communities of Juventus' supporters, the impact this marketing strategy had on fans and which has been their role in the creation of this new logo.

⁷Schau, H. J., Muniz, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 30–51 (Sep.)

I. THE REBRANDING

1.1 What is the Corporate rebranding?

The word rebrand is a neologism made up of two terms: re and brand. Re is a prefix implying that a given action is made a second time (“again”, “anew”); while, brand is defined as “Name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers”.⁸ Due to that, it is easy to understand that the rebranding communicates the will to develop a differentiated position in the mind of stakeholders and a distinctive identity from competitors.⁹ The “corporate rebranding refers to the disjunction or change between an initially formulated corporate brand and a new formulation”.¹⁰ Such a strategical action undertaken by enterprises is finalized to improve operational efficiency and enhance brand equity.¹¹ It may involve brand repositioning, makeover renewal, refreshment, reinvention and renaming and its scope can stretch from relatively modest to major radical change.

Corporate rebranding is a necessary process systematically planned and implemented to create and maintain a new favorable image and, therefore, a favorable reputation of the company as a whole, by sending signals to all stakeholders and by managing behavior, communication and symbolism in order to pro-act or react to change.¹²

⁸ Lambkin, M., AND Muzellec, L. (2008). “Rebranding in the banking industry following mergers and acquisitions.” *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 26(5), 328–352.

⁹ Muzellec, L. and Lambkin, M. (2006), “Corporate rebranding: destroying, transferring or creating brand equity?”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 Nos 7/8, pp. 803-824

¹⁰ Merrilees, B. and Miller, D. (2008). Principles of corporate rebranding. *European Journal of Marketing*, 42.

¹¹ Sonenshein, S. (2010). We’re changing – or are we? Untangling the role of progressive, regressive, and stability narratives during strategic change implementation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53, pp. 477–512.

¹² Juntunen, M., Saraniemi, S., & Jussila, R. (2009). Corporate rebranding as a process. *Proceedings of the 5th Thought Leaders Conference on Brand Management*, Athens, Greece.

The need for the rebranding derives from a change incurred in the business mix which requires an evolution. And it's certain that at some point in the future a company needs to rebrand itself because the market it's characterized by an ever-changing nature. That is because corporate brands are expression of a combination of values and their creation is influenced by internal and external factors. Just like what happens for the humans, whose survival is influenced by the environment and the possess of particular heritable traits, at the same time the survival of corporates depends on the values they express and the need of being continuously chosen by customers. The corporate rebranding, hence, is fundamental to survive and thrive by adapting brands to the changing environment through a constant recombination of values.¹³

Duncan has highlighted several reasons driving this process¹⁴:

- To keep up with the times and keep pace with changing consumer needs (e.g. services, accessibility, convenience, choice, fashion and technology).
- Because a brand has become old-fashioned and is in danger of stagnation or is already in a state of erosion.
- Due to fierce competition or a fast-changing environment.¹⁵
- As a means of blocking or outmaneuvering competitors, or a way of handling increased price competitiveness.
- A change in customer needs.
- As a result of globalization.
- Because of mergers and acquisitions and divestitures.¹⁶

¹³ Tevi, A. C. & Otubanjo, O., Understanding Corporate Rebranding: An Evolution Theory Perspective. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*; Vol. 5, No. 3; 2013, pp. 88-89

¹⁴ Duncan, R., "The Dynamics Of Rebranding", Part One.

¹⁵ Boyle, E. (2002). The Failure of Business Format Franchising in British Forecourt Retailing: A Case Study of the Rebranding of Shell Retail's Forecourts. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 30(5), 251-263.

¹⁶ Stuart, H., & Muzellec, L. (2004). Corporate make-overs: can a hyena be rebranded. *Journal of Brand Management*, 11, 472-482.

- To generally improve a brand's competitiveness by creating a common sense of purpose and unified identity, building staff morale and pride, as well as a way of attracting the best talent or even a way of testing new markets or products.¹⁷
- To decrease business development and operational costs, or a way of countering declining profitability or consumer confidence.
- To signal a change in direction, focus, attitude or strategy.
- Where there are complex product portfolios, considerable advertising and branding clutter, media proliferation and subsequent audience fragmentation.
- To capitalize on new opportunities or innovative mediums such as the Internet

An important categorization of the reasons we just went through is made on the basis of their origin: we distinguish proactive (or internal) reasons, and so those deriving from the will to seize an opportunity or thwart potential threats in the future; and reactive (or external) reasons, those arisen by the need of an adaptation to a change in the surrounding environment that negatively affect the brand.¹⁸

Talking about rebranding, indeed, “from a CEO’s perspective, there are just two kinds of rebranding “have to and want to.”¹⁹ The former refers to predicted growth, the intention to open new lines of business or markets, new audience or when the company notices that its brand is losing consistency in the customers’ mind. The latter, instead, to situations where the company decides for a Merger or Acquisition of another one, when legal issues arise, or because of an increase of competitive pressure or for a negative publicity against the actual brand. Undertaking reactive strategies means adopting a conservative approach since the company would wait for external influences before of acting, avoiding wasting of money in unsuccessful

¹⁷ Causon, J. (2004). The Internal Brand: Successful Cultural Change and Employee Empowerment. *Journal of Change Management*, 4(4), 297-307.

¹⁸ Bradbury, T. and Catley, B. (2007). Committing regicide: rebranding the Football Kings. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 9, pp. 11–22.

¹⁹ Spaeth, T. (2005), "Rebranded and Reborn," *Across the Board*, 42 (3), 18-23.

investments. At the same time, relying too much on that action plan would also mean to lose new and emerging business opportunity, with the related first mover advantages, or, in the worst case, the inability to react properly to the market evolution would lead the company to succumb to more aggressive competitors with advanced offerings.

Furthermore, among the triggers of the rebranding we have to distinguish urgent and non-urgent case, where the first refers to the situation in which there is a determined launch deadline for the revised brand, while the second doesn't present the need to respect any deadline. The evidence shows that when organizational members make suitable time available to complete the rebranding initiative (non-urgent case), there are many possibilities of being successful. Considering the amount of resources required by a rebranding investment, it would be preferable for the organizations not to fix deadline and to invest more time in enhancing the potential for strong outcomes.

Rebranding means open up new opportunities while building on the strengths of the past. It breathes new life into businesses or products which is made necessary by change in internal or external factors. Fundamental is the communication made internally and externally, in order to create an appropriate perception and to transmit a global image of the company, based on quality and performance, that will establish it as "one company with one name and one vision"²⁰.

However, as any revolutionary strategy, also the rebranding presents some risks which need to be carefully assessed. In fact, it's important to take into account the possible gap arising between the actual brand image stakeholders have of the company and the one that may be perceived because of the rebranding²¹. This strategy implies a change in the company culture and the degree of this modification represents the discriminant between a modest change or a

²⁰ Businesscasestudies.co.uk

²¹ Davies, G. and Chun, R. (2002), "Gaps between the internal and external perceptions of the corporate brand", *Corporate Reputation Review*, Vol. 5 Nos 2/3, pp. 144-58.

complete disjunction from the initially formulated corporate brand. This decision is often function of the consumers' attitude towards the original brand elements, which requires the rebranding to preserve those elements seen by consumers as expressive of their values and identities: this aspect will influence their perception of the new formulated corporate brand and, if undervalued, may lead to the failure of the revolutionary strategy.

Furthermore, such a consideration acquires much more relevance if we consider the case when consumers understand attributes of a product or service (consumer product expertise):²² this confers them a greater ability in learning and processing information about the new product²³ and it will make them to consider the rebranding as favorable just if the new attributes are perceived as desirable.

The strength of the brand, hence, is also dependent on the public's perception of the quality about its products or services and, increasingly, its social and environmental credentials. Therefore, in order to avoid the "premature signaling trap",²⁴ the organization needs to have something new and crucial to say and to effectively communicate it.

The change pattern deals with several issues, which require rational and emotional aspects to work in unison to achieve satisfactory results.²⁵ The exploitation of this rationale in the combination of creativity, researches and feelings may be a secret for the success of the strategy, however there are some cases in which that is not enough. In fact, corporate rebranding is expensive, time consuming and there are several circumstances more likely to determine a failure rather than a success: revitalizing and repositioning a brand through gradual, incremental modification of the brand proposition and marketing aesthetics can be considered a natural and

²² Jamal, A. and Al-Mari, M. (2007), "Exploring the effect of self-image congruence and brand preference on satisfaction: the role of expertise", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 23 Nos 7/8, pp. 613-629

²³ Zuckerman, A. and Chaiken, S. (1998), "A heuristic-systematic processing analysis of the effectiveness of product warning labels", *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 15 No. 7, pp. 621-642

²⁴ Dowling, G. R. (1996), 'Corporate Identity Traps', Australian Graduate School of Management Working Paper 96 – 002, February.

²⁵ Kumar Singh, A., Tripathi, V., Yadav, P., Rebranding and Organisational Performance- Some Issues of Relevance, *American Journal of Sociological Research*, 2012, 2(5): 90-97

necessary part of the task of brand management in response to changing market conditions,²⁶ but it cannot leave risks, rationally conceivable, out of consideration. Speaking of that, we can refer to the presence of five major barriers impeding the rebranding process and inhibiting the success:

- *Autocratic rebranding approach*, when leaders impose the change with a little engagement of key stakeholders in the development of the revised brand;²⁷
- *Stakeholder tensions*, the presence of different interests among the key stakeholders linked, sometimes, to a different brand-orientation;²⁸
- *Narrow brand re-vision*, a revised corporate brand overly narrowed in scope, limits the potential to reach a compelling proposition of value;
- *Inadequate research*, inadequate research impedes the development of a distinctive brand;²⁹
- *Inadequate customer consideration*, scarce consideration to customers' preferences, which may result in an inability in addressing their needs and in a consequent detraction from the support of key stakeholders.³⁰

These barriers can be contrasted by promoting a participatory approach to internal branding activities³¹. The management must carefully assess all these factors affecting the rebranding strategy which determines the beginning of a new era. The move from one culture to another requires the corporate rebranding framework to respect some virtues:³²

²⁶ Kapferer, J.-N. (1998), *Les Marques*, Capital de l'Entreprise, Editions d'Organisation, Paris.

²⁷ Gotsi, M. and Andriopoulos, C. (2007). Understanding the pitfalls in the corporate rebranding process. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 12, pp. 341–355.

²⁸ Rhee, N.J. and Han, E.K. (2006). In practice: a new CI and rebranding experience using the SK brand management system. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 9, pp. 271–280.

²⁹ Sonenshein, S. (2010). We're changing – or are we? Untangling the role of progressive, regressive, and stability narratives during strategic change implementation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53, pp. 477–512.

³⁰ Finney, S. and Scherrebeck-Hansen, M. (2010). Internal marketing as a change management tool: a case study in re-branding. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 16, pp. 1–20.

³¹ Merrilees, B., Miller, D., Yakimova, R., Corporate Rebranding: An Integrative Review of Major Enablers and Barriers to the Rebranding Process³¹, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 16, 265–289 (2014).

³² Merrilees, B., Miller, D., (2008), "Principles of corporate rebranding", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 42 Iss 5/6 pp. 537 - 552

- explicit focus on how and to what extent the corporate brand should be changed;
- emphasis on justifying the brand revision – attention to both benefits and costs;
- greater sensitivity to potential internal resistance to the brand change and thus a need for a well-structured change management program to get brand buy-in;
- highlighting the need to alert all stakeholders to the new brand.

Hence, the secret for the implementation of a successful rebranding resides in the ability of combining a comprehensive assessment of potential benefits, clarity about what is being signaled, and checking that key stakeholders understand and support the proposed change.

1.1.1 Implementation of the rebranding strategy

The rebranding can take place on the corporate level, the business unit level or the product level³³ and entails two choices which are critical for its success: if the change, under a marketing aesthetics point of view, must involve all the elements or only some of them to be considered "rebranding" and if the strategy aims to the prosecution or the modification of the positioning (changing marketing communications) adopted until that moment.

Referring to the first aspect, Stuart and Muzellec³⁴ state that rebranding can be achieved with changes of brand identity, which can be categorized into three main types: Name, logo and slogan changes. Different combinations of changes in these elements create five types of rebranding: a new name and logo, a new name, a new logo and slogan, a new logo only, and a new slogan only. At this regard, we can identify the evolutionary rebranding which refers to a gradual renovation of the positioning and the symbol of the company that is barely recognized

³³ Muzellec, Laurent, Manus Doogan, and Mary Lambkin (2003), "Corporate Rebranding- An Exploratory Review" *Irish Marketing Review*, 16(2), 31-40.

³⁴ Stuart, H., Muzellec, L. 2004. Corporate makeovers: can a Hyena be rebranded?. *The Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 11, No. 6, pp. 472-82

by the customers and it is adopted by enterprises who constantly innovate themselves to keep up with the evolving environment.

Conversely, the revolutionary rebranding assumes a substantial and identifiable change of the positioning and the aesthetic. It usually concerns the change in name, which is the element that catch the most attention,³⁵ together with the logo, and which redefines the corporate³⁶: “To many people, corporations are nothing but a name”.³⁷ Particularly, the use of the evolutionary branding strategy is preferable in those cases in which the consumer attitude towards a firm’s original brand name is pleasant. In contrast, revolutionary rebranding is more suitable than evolutionary rebranding. In addition, it’s interesting to point out that expert consumers show similar responses towards the two rebranding strategies, while evolutionary strategies seem to be more effective than revolutionary ones in enhancing brand preferences in the case of novice consumers³⁸.

Differently to the barriers that we have presented before, there are six enablers which act as catalysts of the rebranding strategy:

- *Strong rebranding leadership*: leaders committed in the corporate rebranding, encourage key stakeholders to participate actively in brand re-vision and brand strategy implementation, to develop support for the revised brand;³⁹
- *Developing brand understanding*: managers conduct qualitative and quantitative researches to acquire knowledge about the market environment for the brand and catch

³⁵ De Chernatony, L. & McDonald, M. (2006). *Creating Powerful Brands*. Oxford, Elsevier

³⁶ Muzellec, L. and Lambkin, M. (2006), “Corporate rebranding: destroying, transferring or creating brand equity?”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 Nos 7/8, pp. 803-824

³⁷ Boddewyn, J. (1967). The names of U.S. industrial corporations: A study in change. *Names*, 15: 39-51

³⁸ Nhat Hanh Le, A., Corporate rebranding and brand preference - Brand name attitude and product expertise as moderators, *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*. Vol. 26 No. 4, 2014 pp. 602-62

³⁹ Mitchell, A. and Kirkup, M. (2003). Retail development and urban regeneration: a case study of Castle Vale. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 31, pp. 451-458.

the perceptions among key stakeholders.⁴⁰ The results of these researches will be also used by Leaders to develop winning elements and attributes of the revised brand;⁴¹

- *Internal branding activities:* adopt internal branding activities, like internal communications and training, in order to understand, encourage and support the revised brand;⁴²

- *Continuity of brand attributes:* In strong outcome cases, the revised brand maintains continuity with past brand meaning;⁴³

- *Stakeholder coordination:* Strong outcome cases develop and achieve coordination among stakeholders to implement the new brand strategy;⁴⁴

- *Integrated marketing programme:* An integrated marketing programme is important for effective implementation of the corporate rebranding strategy,⁴⁵ and the possibility to achieve such an integration depends on the ability of making all communications convey the meaning of the revised brand.

These are the essential drivers allowing to the phenomenon of the corporate rebranding to be successfully achieved. Thus, managers should attempt to adopt enablers to prevent or overcome barriers and promote strong rebranding outcomes.

The rebranding is an initiative to force you to focus, to better define and support your expertise in a clear and compelling manner⁴⁶ and its implementation can be broken up in three phases model introduced by Merrilees and Miller. Phase One, brand re-vision, consists of

⁴⁰ Herstein, R., Mitki, Y. and Jaffe, E.D. (2008). Communicating a new corporate image during privatization: the case of El Al airlines. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, **13**, pp. 380–393.

⁴¹ Melewar, T.C., Hussey, G. and Srivoravilai, N. (2005). Corporate visual identity: the re-branding of France Telecom. *Journal of Brand Management*, **12**, pp. 379–394.

⁴² Daly, A. and Moloney, D. (2004). Managing corporate rebranding. *Irish Marketing Review*, **12**, pp. 30–36.

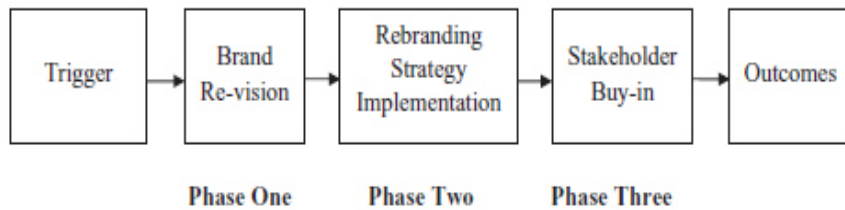
⁴³ Stuart, H. and Muzellec, L. (2004). Corporate makeovers: can a hyena be rebranded? *Journal of Brand Management*, **11**, pp. 472–482.

⁴⁴ Merrilees, B. and Miller, D. (2008). Principles of corporate rebranding. *European Journal of Marketing*, **42**, pp. 537–552.

⁴⁵ Easter, B.A. and Leoni, E. (2008). A collegiate athletic brand transformation: rebranding a native American brand identity. *International Journal of Sports Management and Marketing*, **3**, pp. 100–118.

⁴⁶ Iverson, R.D., McLeod, C.S. and Erwin, P.J. (1996), “The role of employee commitment and trust in service relationships”, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 36–44.

processes to define the revised corporate brand. In Phase Two, internal branding activities finalized to encourage stakeholders to buy into the revised brand. Phase Three is corporate rebranding strategy implementation through an integrated approach.



Picture 1. Corporate Rebranding phases

The convenience of the model, as we can see in the picture, is supported by the possibility of assessing the outcomes deriving by the rebranding process. In particular, it includes three indicators of success: the first one refers to increases in measures of business success, like profitability, sales and a favorable corporate reputation or corporate image; The second is whether the case achieved the stated objectives for corporate rebranding, and the third indicator is strong, positive references to the overall case or to specific aspects of the case. Based on the performance outcomes, it is possible to distinguish between strong outcome result (when one or more of the three positive indicators are present) and weak outcome result (none of the three indicators is present)⁴⁷.

Rebranding affects two dimensions of the corporate and its brand: the image (perceived-self) which refers to the external perception of the corporate brand and the identity (core-self) that is the internal perception⁴⁸.

The importance of the first dimension, touched upon before, is well expressed by the definition of rebranding as "affecting a change to a brand in order to stimulate a change in

⁴⁷ Merrilees, B., Miller, D., Yakimova, R., (2014). Corporate Rebranding: An Integrative Review of Major Enablers and Barriers to the Rebranding Process⁴⁷, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 16, 265–289.

⁴⁸ Rebranding and Organisational Performance- Some Issues of Relevance. *American Journal of Sociological Research* 2012, 2(5): 90-97.

consumer attitudes, perceptions and behavior with the end goal of generating positive market growth". About that, it is crucial to keep in mind what found by Merrilees and Miller, and so that marketers should not to eliminate some core or peripheral brand concepts during rebranding processes to preserve connections between the initial brand images and the revamped brand images. At this regard "changes will be tolerated by consumers as long as the changes are slight enough so that the new logo design falls within the consumers' latitude of acceptance".⁴⁹

Obviously, the loyalty of the customers plays a fundamental role: if it's true that the loyal customers are more tolerant towards rebranding of some aspects, those who are strongly committed toward it are more reluctant about profound changes, especially when they concern the logo redesign⁵⁰.

Obviously, if the rebranding strategy turns out to be successful it can improve customer-based brand equity in form of increased quantity purchased and frequency of consumption.⁵¹ On the other hand, consumers who were less brand committed are thought to perceive this change as a "novel" one leading to a more positive evaluation and more positive brand attitude.

As said before, to survive, thrive and grow change is necessary. However, this change must be conducted by granting the continuity with the element of success of the past. Designing a suitable brand vision for the corporate rebrand, by building a bridge from the existing corporate brand to the revised corporate brand⁵², should balance the need to continue to satisfy the core ideology of the corporate brand, yet progress the brand so it remains relevant to contemporary conditions. Obviously, don't forget to communicate the new brand: recognizing the effectiveness of interactivity between staff and customers in rebranding may just be the start in

⁴⁹ Pimentel, R.W., Heckler, S.E., 2003. Chasing the elusive butterfly curve, Persuasive Imagery: A Consumer Response Perspective, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

⁵⁰ Walsh, Michael F., Karen L. Page, and Vikas Mittal (2006), "Logo Redesign and Brand Attitude: The Effect of Brand Commitment" ACR 2006 Conference, September Orlando, Florida.

⁵¹ Keller, K.L., 1999. Managing brands for the long run: brand reinforcement and revitalization strategies. *California Management Review*, Spring, pp.102-24

⁵² Kapferer, J.-N. (1997), *Strategic Brand Management: Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term*, Kogan Page, London.

achieving greater involvement of stakeholders. In addition, in some cases the rebranding may be initiated or led from the consumer, where a two-way dialogue prevails upon a top down communication exercise⁵³.

The other dimension, instead, stresses the importance of the employees' perception of the rebranding process and the mechanisms used inside the organization in order to achieve it. The management may decide to adopt an 'autocratic rebranding approach' which reflects a top-down rebranding process, where leaders impose the new brand on key stakeholder, without, or with limited, consultation and participation. The alternative is represented by a top-led approach where the subordinated are a core part of the change: they are informed, motivated and possibly inspired in the rebranding process. Such an approach is termed 'strong rebranding leadership'⁵⁴.

Clearly, it is important for a manager driving the change to exploit his experience and commitment, even because leadership has gained prominence as an influence on corporate rebranding⁵⁵, but a participatory approach to internal branding activities is necessary to ensure the maximum dedication of each of the actors involved in the change and to minimize any type of internal constraint.

⁵³ Beverland, M. and Ewing, M. (2005), "Slowing the adoption and diffusion process to enhance brand repositioning: the consumer driven repositioning of Dunlop Volley", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 48, pp. 385-91.

⁵⁴ Corporate Rebranding: An Integrative Review of Major Enablers and Barriers to the Rebranding Process. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 16, 265–289 (2014).

⁵⁵ Vallaster, C. and de Chernatony, L. (2006). Internal brand building and structuration: the role of leadership. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40, pp. 761– 784.

1.2 Rebranding & the logo

This inversion of tendency with respect to the past might include the corporate image, the firm products, the font, and, sometimes, even the corporate or products name or the brand vision (in such a case it is referred to as brand revision). However, the most affected feature by this modification is generally the logo. The reason is quite intuitive: the logo is the first aspect of brand the potential customers come in contact with, it is the way to convey the right feeling to them and it is the most immediate and successful way to communicate the will to look at and to deal with the future from a different perspective. It is the most salient visual brand element for customers.⁵⁶ The brand is the much bigger picture constituted by the sum of all the touch-points reaching out current or potential customers (stationery, marketing material and websites, business premises, vehicles and even the staff when communicate with the customer base) but the logo is on the front line.

More specifically, “if a logo is changed, the change should be made in content, when it is warranted by a shift in brand strategy, or style, when the need for an update is felt.” And in creating effective logos, great attention must involve the choice of the content and the style since “a strong image may take a long time to build but an even longer time to shed.”⁵⁷

The instant recognition provided by the logo, on one hand, allows to transcend international boundaries and language barriers because they communicate visually but, on the other, requires marketing professionals to be able to create something so valuable to consumers that the brand can transcend the inherent differences between cultures.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Mininni, T. (2005), Marketing metrics and package design.

⁵⁷ Kohli, Chiranjeev, Rajneesh Suri, and Mrugank Thakor (2002), "Creating Effective Logos: Insights from Theory and Practice," *Business Horizons*, 45 (3), 58-64.

⁵⁸ de Mooij, M. (2005), *Global Marketing and Advertising: Understanding Cultural Paradoxes*, 2nd ed., Sage, London.

It is, hence, crucial to understand the connection between logo design, brand attitude and business value. Indeed, the first two are strictly interconnected and act as value creators for the last one. Brand name and logo design of the company equals reputation and that reputation is built over time. It is important for companies to decide the type of experience they want to create, so that their consumers can better understand what the brand stands for or is trying to communicate. It is fundamental to offer products and services in line with what is being communicated and to effectively drive customers' preferences through brands attitude and logo design which would permit to charge a premium price and higher margins equal profits.⁵⁹

⁵⁹Wee Eng Kim, V., Periyayya, T., Tan Ai Li, K., *International journal of Innovative Research in Management*, ISSN 2319 – 6912 (January 2013, issue 2 volume 1).

1.3 Meeting consumers' brand attitudes

Along with the considerations I have already done about the impact that the rebranding strategy may have on customers, we have to expose the model developed by Merrilees with the aim of underlying all the aspects characterizing demand and supply under a brand evolution perspective, with a particular orientation on the interpretation of consumers' behavior. This model concerning the implementation of the brand evolution is made of three stages: 'the front end' (brand vision), 'the middle' (brand orientation) and 'the end' (brand strategy implementation).

The front end regards the preliminary study (including market researches) which has to be done by the company to understand the consumers: being the brand vision a representation of the new distinctive features, values and positioning of the brand among competitors, it's fundamental to involve in this initial phase of the rebranding process existing clients, to better understand which are their needs and how to successfully address them.

The middle phase is aimed to grant the acceptance of the new vision among the components of the organization before the launch of the new brand: the approval should start from the internal stakeholders in order to ensure the total brand commitment, which is achieved when all the company's units are aware of and aligned with the new brand.⁶⁰

Finally, the last stage is the implementation of the rebranding strategy through the marketing mix. It is required a coherent communication of the radical revolution by means of all its components which would grant a stable and uniform brand vision.

In this context acquires relevance the definition of brand orientation as "an approach in which the process of the organization revolves around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving

⁶⁰ Upshaw, L., Taylor, E., (2000). "The Masterbrand Mandate." NewYork: John Wiley & Sons.

lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands.”⁶¹ Since the consumers’ valuation of the experience lived is intrinsically related to their expectations, the value creation depends on the ability of the company to make customers live an experience whose quality is greater than the expectations set out by brand through its communication instruments.⁶²

Another fundamental aspect affecting the success of the rebranding is the personality of the customers and their proclivity towards the innovativeness. Indeed, this personality’s trait expresses

represents an individual’s proneness to try new things. Innovative customers may have more favorable attitudes towards rebranding as they seem to be more receptive to new ideas and changes associated to the brand in contrast, conservative people may exhibit more resistance to brand novelty.⁶³

A successful rebranding strategy requires companies to takes care of its customers and to stimulate the presence of reciprocity and feelings of trust in the relationship⁶⁴, by gauging clients’ perception about the actual brand and allowing them driving your company in the creation of the new one.

⁶¹ Urde, M. (1999). “Brand Orientation: A Mindset for Building Brands into Strategic Resources.” *Journal of Marketing Management* 15, 1–3: 117–33.

⁶² Helm, C., & Jones, R. (2010). Extending the value chain - A conceptual framework for managing the governance of co-created brand equity. *Journal of Brand Management*, 17(8), 579-589.

⁶³ Salinas, E.M., Perez, J.M.P., (2009). Modeling the brand extensions' influence on brand image. *Journal of Business Research*, 62, pp.50-60

⁶⁴ Verhoef, Peter C., (2003), “Understanding the Effect of Customer Relationship Management Efforts on Customer Retention and Customer Share Development,” *Journal of Marketing*, 67 (October), 30–45.

1.4 Aspects driving sport rebranding

The soccer clubs operating at an elite level have acquired an increasingly market-centred approach to popular sport.⁶⁵ At the light of this consideration, soccer clubs' dynamics are driven by commercial agreements where players are treated and payed as professional athletes, and individuals and corporations invest in these clubs for earning financial returns: soccer is a business, with products and consumers, where clubs represent branded commodities. All things considered, it is undeniable that the growth of the business of sports has driven the rise in popularity and significance of sports branding.⁶⁶

Under this perspective, acquires importance the role of the marketing: make the financial success not to rely solely on team performance.⁶⁷ Soccer has been slow in understanding that supporters will not remain a captive and unquestioning audience in the face of competing leisure attractions and venues and to appreciate the role of marketing as a mean of remaining competitive in a fiercely contested leisure industry.

However, the increase in competition, not just from professional clubs' but from alternative providers of leisure and entertainment products and services, has highlighted the need for football clubs to adopt more professional approaches to the way they operate in the modern business environment.

At the same time, the need for a rebranding in the sport is linked to several challenges it has to face, which distinguish it from the other businesses. First of all, professional sports clubs have several very heterogeneous target groups: direct/indirect audience (fans, VIPs, day

⁶⁵ Walsh, A. & Giulianotti, R. (2001) This Sporting Mammon: A Normative Critique of the Commodification of Sport, *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 28(1), 53-71.

⁶⁶ Greyser, S. A. (2006). "The Business of Sports: A Perspective from Harvard." In Foster, G., Greyser, S. A. & Walsh, B.: *The Business of Sports: text & cases on strategy and management*. Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western. Pp. 11-24.

⁶⁷ Pierpoint, B. (2000), 'Head above Water: Business Strategies for a New Football Economy' in Garland, J., Malcolm, D., & Rowe, M. (eds), *The Future of Football: Challenges for the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 29-38). London: Frank Cass.

visitors/TV-audience), sponsors, licensees, marketers and media. Consequently, club management has to achieve a far-reaching brand integration in all these target groups⁶⁸ through a proper deployment of suitable marketing mix instruments.⁶⁹ Moreover, the services offered by professional clubs cannot be branded as such because of their intangibility, especially referring to the experience goods they offer. Finally, for professional sport teams there is another peculiarity affecting the performance: at least two organizations must be involved in a sporting event (team production). Because of the uncontrollable external component (the opposing team), it is fundamental for the management to standardize the performance of the team to grant a certain quality of the show offered. To solve all these problems, it is sometimes required a strategical rebranding to standardize some factors, like tangible and intangible, personnel, selected performances and processes, and creating a consistent and distinctive perception of quality in others, like infrastructures in and around the stadium as well as the size of the fan community.

It is clear, indeed, that, just like leisure businesses, clubs are involved in retailing activities (merchandising and tickets) and hospitality business which all require an approach focused on customers' needs.⁷⁰ That is crucial since supporters represent a fundamental part of the brand value. They ensure stability and strength to the club brand, by watching the games, supporting the teams, buying the tickets and the merchandise, which transcend players or performances.

Now it is evident. Soccer societies have been becoming a brand, more precisely a passion brand. The brand synthesizes the history of the club and the experiences of fans into a narrative; this is invoked and monetized by slogans and trademarked logos that differentiate each team. Therefore, it acquires importance the need to introduce the concept of brand equity in the

⁶⁸ Meffert, H. & Bierwirth, A. (2005). Corporate Branding. In H. Meffert, C. Burmann & M. Koers (Eds.), *Markenmanagement* (143-162). Wiesbaden: Gabler.

⁶⁹ Welling, M. (2004). Die (Fußball-)Vereinsmarke. In P. Hammann, L. Schmidt & M. Welling (Eds.), *Ökonomie des* (391-418). Wiesbaden: Gabler.

⁷⁰ Barrie Pierpoint (2000) 'Heads above water': Business strategies for a new football economy, *Soccer & Society*, 1:1, 29-38.

soccer. For this purpose, I want to use the model developed by Gladden & Mine⁷¹ which outlines the 12 antecedents of brand equity under three broad headings:

1. Team-related antecedents include the team's record of success, the head coach and the presence of a star player;
2. Organization-related antecedents comprise the organization's tradition and reputation, league affiliation, product delivery, logo design and home venue;
3. Market-related antecedents comprise the media arrangements, geographic location, competitive forces and team following.

These antecedents all together contribute to impact different variables of the marketplace: national media exposure, merchandise sales, corporate support, game atmosphere, ticket sales and additional revenue streams. The natural consequence is the inception in the fans' minds that the sport product is the expression of the sports consumption experience.⁷²

Apart from the aesthetic pleasure of watching a sporting performance, another variable affecting the will of fans to watch soccer matches is the intensity that comes from identifying with an individual or team as they strive for success.⁷³ This is the key aspect marketers try to leverage to generate financial returns by creating a strong brand around the team or a specific individual.

At the light of these considerations, soccer clubs represent an identity in which fans from all over the world recognize themselves. This evidence is shown by the fact that the relationship between a football club and its fans is becoming more and more akin to the relationship between brands and consumers: fans are becoming more likely to choose glory over geography, success

⁷¹ Gladden, J.M. & Milne, G.R. (1999) Examining the Importance of Brand Equity in Professional Sport, *Sport Marketing Quarterly* 8(1), 21-29.

⁷² Gladden, J.M., Milne, G.R. & Sutton, W.A. (1998) A Conceptual Framework for Assessing Brand Equity in Division I College Athletics, *Journal of Sport Management* 12(1), 1-19.

⁷³ Mason, D. S. (1999) What is the Sports Product and Who Buys it? The Marketing of Professional Sports Leagues, *European Journal of Marketing* 33(3/4), 402-418.

over roots and clubs must be able to take advantage of this opportunity to establish their presence worldwide.

The branding, and consequently the rebranding, strategy touches three different customers' dimensions:

- Sensorial dimension, defined by Bouchet as “the tangible characteristics of sport products and services, those features which can be experienced via all consumers' senses (vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch).⁷⁴”
- Semantic dimension, which refers to the engagement (for example on the social media) the club is able to raise among customers. As stated by Mitch Joel “Spend your time connecting your business to *influence*... not reach⁷⁵.”
- Somatic dimension, referred to, always by Bouchet, as “The somatic dimension refers to the body and corporal practices expressed and manifested through buying and consumption behaviours and rituals. ... [S]ports brands should be considered as transmission mechanisms of values, gestures and rituals.⁷⁶”

The soccer clubs as brands must offer an experience which touch all customers' senses and make them feel proud of being part of that enlarged family.

Football brands are particularly well suited for an economy of attention where branded goods are worth more because of their connection to abstract ideas. Sport can transcend national and linguistic barriers. Unlike movies or sit-coms, football matches need no translation, though, each linguistic region can provide commentators to narrate the action on the field, just in case. These aspects of sport make it desirable to the global flow of media and money that are hallmarks of the twenty-first century. The brand contributes by virtue of the added meaning

⁷⁴ Bodet, G., Bouchet, P., Hillairet, D. (2013) Sport Brands (Routledge Sports Marketing), New York.

⁷⁵ Joel, M. (2013). Ctrl Alt Delete: Reboot Your Business. Reboot Your Life. Your Future Depends on It., Business Plus,

⁷⁶ op. cit.

sports consumers attach to the names and logos of their favorite teams.⁷⁷ In turn, the appeal of the brand names leads many commercial advantages, including more leverage to negotiate better sponsorship deals and higher likelihood of game attendance.

By one side, the complexity of the global soccer environment led to the intensification of sports contents - teams, leagues, federations, events, athletes and celebrity causes – whether delivered online or on-site, uploaded, downloaded, broadcast, narrowcast or podcast, and to an ever-increasing value;⁷⁸ on the other, has required clubs to strengthen their brands and to strive to convey a strong, consistent and appropriate message to consumers.⁷⁹

Brands are not static; they evolve over the time. They are created in the mind of customers. The management must avoid the brand anonymity: if it is facing a situation of declining or negligible brand equity, the solution may coincide with the rebranding.

1.4.1 Rebranding in the sport

In the sport, the rebranding politics refers to change in name, logo, historic slogan or the uniform colors and allow managers to intervene on the perception of the supporters of the club and, especially, of that discipline in general.

In a profit maximizing model of corporate behavior, rebranding occurs for the long-term good of the business, usually reflected in terms of revenue generation. In fact, it is interesting to point out that despite consistent potential gains deriving from rebranding efforts, changes can be costly in terms of direct⁸⁰ and indirect costs (risk of losing accumulated goodwill in the form of name recognition, brand image, and a loyal supporter base that can take years to build)

⁷⁷ Foster, G., Greyser, S.A. & Walsh, B. (2006) *The Business of Sports: Texts and Cases on Strategy and Management* (2nd edn). Victoria: Thomson.

⁷⁸ Glendinning, M. (2007) Content is king, *SportBusiness International*, May. Retrieved 1 February 2008

⁷⁹ Kahle, L. (2007) Trends and perspectives in the international sports industry: The dance between the individual and the group, *American Marketing Association*, 7 October.

⁸⁰ DeFanti, M. P., & Busch, P. S. (2011). Image-related corporate name changes: Their effect upon firms' stock prices. *Journal of Brand Management*, 19(3), 241-253.

with researchers demonstrating that a club's most identified and committed fans are most negatively affected when a team changes its features, especially the name.⁸¹ Therefore, a complete analysis of the rebranding requires the evaluation of the interaction among distinctive features modification, brand equity and switching costs, and the effect of each on attendance and merchandise sales to determine the financial effect of rebranding.

Focusing on the rebranding strategy involving the change in name, benefits are related to the possibility of recovering from a damaged name or unfavorable brand association(s), as well as enhancing operational efficiency and brand equity.⁸² Four criteria for an effective brand name have been proposed, including that the name should be easy to say, should be tangible, should help the club's positioning, and should have a positive connotation.⁸³ In this way, a brand name contributes toward and influences the development of brand associations, memories and consumption patterns which are considered core to sport spectator-based brand equity.⁸⁴

At the same time, the name revolution, if not required to distance the club from any negative associations with the previous one⁸⁵, may be useful to reenergize the interest of the local community in the club.⁸⁶

On the other side, change in logo must be carefully assessed since it concerns many implications. First, sports are an emotional experience for many fans. That joy is often associated with a logo. These associations are often built up starting in childhood. And when that logo is changed, fans feel frustrated and betrayed, because something that brought them

⁸¹ Walsh, M., Winterich, K., & Mittal, V. (2010). Do logo redesigns help or hurt your brand? The role of brand commitment. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 19(2), 76-84.

⁸² Miller, D., & Merrilees, B. (2011). Corporate rebranding. In R. J. Burke, G. Martin, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Corporate reputation: Managing opportunities and threats* (pp. 281-303). Farnham: Gower.

⁸³ Dalakas, V., & Rose, G. (2014). Developing brand identity in sport: Lions, and Tigers, and Bears oh my. In M. P. Pritchard, & J. L. Stinson (Eds.), *Leveraging brands in sport business* (pp. 109-122). New York, NY: Routledge.

⁸⁴ Walsh, P., & Ross, S. D. (2010). Examining brand extensions and their potential to dilute team brand associations. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 19, 196-206.

⁸⁵ Dwyer, B., Le Crom, C. W., Tomasini, N., & Smith, G. A. (2011). The Richmond what? The naming of a Minor League Baseball franchise. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 20, 56-64.

⁸⁶ Ballouli, K., Grady, J., & Stewart, R. (2015). The delicate art of rebranding a minor league baseball franchise: Practices, pitfalls, and payoffs of rebranding the Winston-Salem Warthogs. *Sport Management Review*.

happiness and fond memories is suddenly gone. A new brand needs time to build up an emotional connection to their new look and so, it would be preferable to preserve those elements of the previous logo viewed as very meaningful by the fans, like the ones connected to the history of that club. Second, it is fundamental that the new logo would convey a real meaning. If the rebrand is undertaken solely to make headlines or bring fresh wind to corporate communications, it's not going to be successful. Finally, the new logo having not achieved a cult status yet, it is not significant for supporters and may require time to build up connections with them.

Changes in name and logo affect both attitudes and purchase intentions of high identified fans⁸⁷ but in a different manner. Indeed, if attitudes toward the brand significantly decrease, purchase intentions experience a significant increase. This paradoxical effect seems to be consistent with the "social identity theory", where highly identified fans deal with their cognitive dissonance by purchasing new merchandise to maintain their existing attitudes towards the team regardless of whether the logo changes are large or small. Moreover, significant for team managers is that purchase intentions increase for low-identification/less-committed customers too.

Managers are treating clubs as brands. Since sport performances are uncontrollable, unpredictable and spontaneous⁸⁸, which means it cannot in isolation provide long-term benefits⁸⁹, management takes a long-term approach with a focus on the sport experience and a sustainable relationship with customers to build the brand rather than winning. The rebranding makes the football club a worldwide lifestyle brand that goes beyond the pitch and appeals to football and non-football fans. The societies' essence doesn't consume itself in the show offered

⁸⁷ Ahn, T., Suh, Y. I., Lee, J. K., & Pedersen, P. M. (2013). Sport fans and the team's redesigned logos: An examination of the moderating effect of team identification on attitude and purchase intention of team-logoed merchandise. *Journal of Sport Management*, 27(1), 11-23.

⁸⁸ Gladden, J. M., Milne, G. R. and Sutton, W. A., 1998. A conceptual framework for assessing brand equity in division I college athletics. *Journal of Sport Management* 12 (1), 1-19

⁸⁹ Ross, S. D. (2006). A conceptual framework for understanding spectator-based brand equity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 20(1), 22-38.

to the fans during the 90 mins, but becomes a sense container that weekly, annually reinforces, modifies and perpetuate itself. The football gives experiences to its fans and the success of the rebranding depends on the ability of delivering positive remarkable and memorable experiences which appeal directly to the ‘hearts’ of stakeholders. These experiences build emotional capital reflected in brand value and goodwill, and the opposite is true if they are perceived as negative.⁹⁰ Thus, how a brand acts, reacts or sees future scenarios by being proactive determines the success under the roof of this arena.⁹¹

The rebranding initiative, however, cannot be isolated if the aim is to succeed in the highly competitive and dynamic sports marketplace where athletes, products, and organizations are examined on and off the field on a daily or weekly basis.⁹² From here the need of managing the totality of facets characterizing the brand and its interactions with fans within a symbolic interactionist and qualitative context, representing the concept of hybrid sports branding⁹³, to generate a spillover effect on the audience in terms of higher participation and to exploit the intersection between different narrative constituents meant to charm the audience in a specific culture.⁹⁴

The soccer, with its values, symbols, colors, supporters, myths and heroes, may be compared to a community. It creates an identity, in which fans recognize themselves, that evolves with the passage of the time by continuously establishing and expanding its connections at local and global level: “... *el fútbol es más que un deporte e incluso más que un espectáculo.*

⁹⁰ Cortsen, K. (2010), “Strategizing sports branding at the corporate branding level – how different sports branding platforms capitalize on CSR-based partnerships”, working paper. Aarhus: Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University.

⁹¹ Haudan, J. (2008). *The Art of Engagement: Bridging the gap between people and possibilities*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

⁹² Smith, A.C.T., B.R. Graetz, and H.M. Westerbeek. ‘Brand Personality in a Membership- Based Organisation’. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 11, (2006): 251–66.

⁹³ Cortsen, Kenneth. ‘Annika Sörenstam – A Hybrid Personal Sports Brand’. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal* 3, no. 1 (2013): 37–62

⁹⁴ Martinez, D.P. ‘Soccer in the USA: “Holding out for a Hero”?’ . *Soccer & Society* 9, no. 2 (2008): 231–43.

*Es una expresión concentrada de los dos procesos que configuran nuestro mundo: la globalización y la identidad”.*⁹⁵

Obviously, there are some cases in which the name of the club, being representative of founding values of that team origin city, generate stronger involvement at a local level. That can explain, at least in part, why in some cases gains in new merchandise sales are strongest when the teams develop a new local identity, providing further evidence that “local brands are often more than brands, they are institutions”.⁹⁶

Particularly in the sport, a rebranding strategy that want to be perceived as successful needs to:

- Reach out to the fans who engage with the current brand and find out what they feel are the positives and negatives.
- Come up with a detailed strategy to improve on the current brand while increasing the connection to the community.
- Stick to the plan, even if it means delaying parts of the rebrand, cutting corners will only do damage in the long run.

First of all, it is important to determine the “team salience”⁹⁷, and so, the elements from which derives the existence and the success of the team. Consequently, utmost importance has been given to the identity expressed by the previous brand and in which fans reveal themselves. It is what determines the employees’ retention⁹⁸, is expressed through the logo and the marketing communications⁹⁹, allows for the identification of the team and generates

⁹⁵ Castells, M., 2006, “Fútbol, globalización, identidad”, *La Vanguardia*, 06/05/06.

⁹⁶ Kapferer, J-N. (2005). The post-global brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 12(5), 319-324.

⁹⁷ Keller, K. L. (2001). Building customer-based brand equity: A blueprint for creating strong brands. *Marketing Management*, July/August, 10(2-3), 15-19

⁹⁸ Wheeler, A. R., Richey, R. G., Tokkman, M. & Sablynski, C. J. (2006). Retaining employees for service competency: The role of corporate brand identity. *Journal of Brand Management*, 14(1), 96-113.

⁹⁹ Cornelissen, J. P., Haslam, S. A. & Balmer, J. M. T. (2007), Social identity, organizational identity and corporate identity: Towards an integrated understanding of processes, patterning and products. *British Journal of Management*, 18(1), 1-16.

competitive advantage and a strategic edge¹⁰⁰, and if correctly managed permits to appeal to those fans not involved with the sports. Furthermore, other parameters refers to club's image and meaning, which are driven by team performance and imagery and influence the ways in which fans are associated to the club. Looking at those aspects, in order to assess if they are correctly emphasized by the existing brand, it is fundamental to understand the breadth of the rebranding and the hierarchy of intent that the club wants to communicate.

Benefits connected with the rebranding, and its commercial implications, are several but those don't prevent the danger it would be underappreciated: the first reason is that according to some it destroys the purity of the game; the second is that the reasons behind this strategy are not fully understood or appreciated. The becoming a business of the football is changing the common-sense view of the community by it created: supporters are perceiving a weakening of their sense of moral ownership of the club due to the proliferation of diktats of concern for its competitive resources and financial health.

Furthermore, we have not to forget the huge amount of money invested by societies in this type of strategical actions which, apart from the already cited operations, may, in some cases, involve the construction of a wholly-owned stadium.

Another problem arising in the determination of the rebranding strategy is the one related to "*the inconsistent and intangible nature of the sports product*"¹⁰¹ which makes difficult to exploit its commercial potential, by attracting customers and generating revenues or, even, to deliver the desired image to fans.

However, on this point, the success depends on the ability of the management in connecting tangible and intangible elements which are subject to multiple interactions. Quoting Tuchman:

¹⁰⁰ Balmer, J. M. T. & Gray, E. R. (2000). Corporate identity and corporate communications: Creating a competitive advantage. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 32(7), 256-262

¹⁰¹ Shank, M. (2009). *Sports Marketing: A Strategic Perspective*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

“Traveling to a sporting event makes the intangible tangible. People long for an interactive experience. What can be more exhilarating than inhaling the dust from the streets of Pamplona, Spain, while you frantically run from the bulls? You cannot get any more hands-on than walking the streets of Monaco immediately after the Grand Prix. How about being part of the electric crowd at Kentucky’s Midnight Madness? It is a great way to relive your youthful days and be a part of something so special.”¹⁰²

The sport makes people live emotions and it may be central to their lives but can change during people lifetime¹⁰³. The rebranding strategy has to deliver meaning to acquire and strengthen a prominence position in the fans’ leisure time spending choices, by stimulating meaningful and consistent perceptions in line with values, proficiencies, ideas, personality and actions in which fans identify themselves.¹⁰⁴ In that sense, the role of players is fundamental inasmuch as they experience solid opportunities to capitalize on their talents and sports brands, and hence names, on and off the playing fields.¹⁰⁵

The change is aimed, through a better understanding of the fans feelings or judgments towards the team, to explore whether the team lives in the ‘heart’ or ‘head’ of the fans and to increase the team resonance, and so supporters’ responses and their relationship with the team.

Individual are the center of interest in personal rebranding sports¹⁰⁶ and, for this reason, they are often what makes the difference among sports brands.

Moreover, considering the proximity of meaning and understanding associated to different sport brands, it must be indagated the “experience” concept, and what makes customers willing

¹⁰² Tuchman, Robert. (2009). *100 Sporting Events You Must See Live: an insider’s guide to creating the sports experience of a lifetime*. Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, Inc. 160.

¹⁰³ Reynolds, L. T., & Herman-Kinney, N. J. (eds.) (2003). *Handbook of symbolic interactionism*. Rowman Altamira.
¹⁰⁴Montoya, P. (2002), *The Personal Branding Phenomenon*, Personal Branding Press Publishing & Vaughan Printing, Nashville, TN.

¹⁰⁵Turner, G. (2007), “The economy of celebrity”, in Redmond, S. and Holmes, S. (Eds), *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, Sage Publications Inc, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 193-205.

¹⁰⁶ Carter, D.M. (2010), *Money Games: Profiting From the Convergence of Sports and Entertainment*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

to repeat it, accounting it for a large portion of our decision-making process when consuming or purchasing a brand in the contemporary society.¹⁰⁷

Many failures in the rebranding made clear that another mistake concerns the communication of this change. It's fundamental make the customers aware of the meaning of this new brand strategy rooted in research and strategic thinking, and not to merely give to them a paint job.

Only by understanding where your organization should be heading, understanding your customers and developing a brand identity that speaks to both internal employees and external customers is possible that the creative route chosen turns out to be the right one. That doesn't mean there won't be

some post-launch criticism but they will find more consensus to support the process. People don't like change. Involving fans will make them to feel protagonist and to accept it, as if it was their decision.

The implementation of this strategy requires also the careful assessment and utilization of the mass media that displays the postmodern capitalist nature of the sport.¹⁰⁸ This area is a necessary and inescapable element for enhancing the strength of a sports brand. Indeed, as stated by Andrews "*sport and the sports media, as cultural goods par excellence, are clearly a central element in a larger process (or set of processes) that is reshaping society and culture.*"¹⁰⁹ The greater interest and attention raised by mass media, make them a crucial element to influence society and culture¹¹⁰ and, sometimes, the rebranding is aimed to capitalize

¹⁰⁷ Ingram, H. & Ransley, J. (2004). *Developing Hospitality Properties and Facilities*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

¹⁰⁸ Brick, C., Caudwell, J., Wagg, S. & Wheaton, B. (2009). *Key Concepts in Sports Studies*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

¹⁰⁹ Andrews, D. L. (2004). "Sport in the Late Capitalist Moment". In Slack, T.: *Commercialisation of Sport (Sport in the Global Society)*. New York, NY: Routledge. Pp. 2-29.

¹¹⁰ Slack, T. (2004). *The Commercialisation of Sport*. Oxon: Routledge.

on the potential opportunities arising from new technology platforms and media fragmentation.¹¹¹

1.4.2 Supporters' perceptions

I want to come back to one of the most fundamental aspect characterizing this world: “Soccer clubs engender a loyalty that other brands can only dream of. Once someone has set his heart on a club then (usually) they are committed for life, good times and bad”¹¹².

Consumers' loyalty goes beyond poor performances by ensuring the opportunity of opting for product extensions over the core product.¹¹³ Clearly, performance may represent a strong starting basis for the attraction of fans and it would be essential to understand the factors that can permit and enhance it.

A strong brand allows for an easier fans identification by synthesizing the physical, aesthetic, rational and emotional elements of the team they support. Hence, there is the need to endow the soccer brand of a strong narrative around which connecting the team to the community and the potential supporters. If brand managers are successful, the brand becomes an overarching narrative that invokes the positive aspects of a set of products or services.¹¹⁴ Players and coaches are highly influential in adolescents and adults becoming fans. The only person more influential in a person under the age of 20 becoming a fan, is that person's father. This underlines the importance for brand managers of understanding factors around which implement the rebranding and shape attachments to sports teams amongst their target market.

¹¹¹ Rein, I., Shields, B., & Grossman, A. (2014). *The Sports Strategist: Developing Leaders for a High Performing Industry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹¹² Bailey, P., Football club as brand, themoderngame.co.uk

¹¹³ Gladden, J.M. & Funk, D.C. (2001) Understanding Brand Loyalty in Professional Sport: Examining the Link between Brand Associations and Brand Loyalty, *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship* 3(1), 67.

¹¹⁴ Kolbe, R.H. & James, J.D. (2000) An Identification and Examination of Influences that Shape the Creation of a Professional Team Fan, *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship* 2(1), 23-38.

However, this extraordinary loyalty entails also a great level of exposure. In fact, players and trainers are constantly monitored or “accountable every day to the fans”.¹¹⁵ That implies a strong degree of attention towards the way the club adopts to achieve its dual mission: to promote sporting success on the one hand and to operate as commercial businesses on the other hand. And, usually, there isn’t correspondence between the degree of importance given to the two objectives by clubs and fans. This is because fans’ attachment starts during the youth and the club represents a symbol of belonging (to a group, or feeling happy or comfortable). The nature of this trust lies in the club’s history, team members of today or of the past and even the political message conveyed, because of the sponsor for effect of co-branding strategies. And the supporters, especially the young ones, may suffer the transformation of the football club in an entertainment organization with the highest goal being to make profit or to at least fulfil the ambitions of the shareholders, to become ahead of the game. Fans are the secret of soccer clubs. They share emotional investment in their team’s performance, and an emotional investment in the failure of their competitors: triumph without them wouldn’t be possible, neither as a human experience nor as a commercial venture.¹¹⁶

On the same line, Bill Shankly said “Some people think football is a matter of life and death. I assure you, it's much more serious than that.”

This demonstrates, again, how the loyalty towards the football is different from any other type of entertainment (and not only it) industry. The attachment and the devotion toward a club transcend any success or failure on the pitch. Fans involvement doesn’t stop at the end of the game, they create contents and discussions on social media before, during and after a game. That gives a strong power to managers of the teams to undertake courageous initiatives that in another fields would be totally impracticable.

¹¹⁵ Morrow, S. (2003): *The People’s Game*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

¹¹⁶ Hamil, S. (1999): A Whole New Ball Game? Why Football Needs a Regulator. In: Hamil, S., Michie, J., and C. Oughton (eds): *A Game of Two Halves? The Business of Football*. Edinburgh: Mainstream, 23-39.

At the same time, this aspect may become a double-edged weapon if the management is not able to use it. In fact, as added by Bailey “this (the loyalty) is great for the football club, but what this level of commitment and loyalty creates is a sense of ‘ownership’ of the brand by its fans”. As lifelong supporters, they feel to own a bit of the club and to have the right to express their opinion on those concerns affecting the future of the club. They stay beside the team longer than owners, managers, coaches and players: even if they understand the evolution of the soccer world they look at their support as a faith. No amount of success is worth to them sacrificing what makes their club special.

It’s true that there is more to a brand’s identity than its logo and name, but they are, without any doubts, the most tangible elements, and supporters care about those. Replacing them may negatively impact the trust a customer has in the known brand, disturbing the existing loyalty-relationship.¹¹⁷

At this regard, non-product related attributes such as club logo, history, and tradition are nearly three times more important than success and star players in developing loyal fan behavior.¹¹⁸ In addition, nostalgia and memories of team names and colors have been shown to play an important role in team identification and loyalty.¹¹⁹

Fans’ perceptions or images can influence their behavior towards the club, for instance in the purchase of tickets, so it becomes fundamental to consider the degree of dissociation with the old brand and if, and which, residual meanings or associations should be incorporated in the new one.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Pauwels-Delassus, V., & Descotes, R. M. (2013). Brand name change: Can trust and loyalty be transferred? *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(8), 656-669.

¹¹⁸ Bauer, H. H., Stokburger-Sauer, N., & Exler, S. (2008). Brand image and fan loyalty in professional team sport: A refined model and empirical assessment. *Journal of Sport Management*, 22(2), 205-226.

¹¹⁹ Funk, D. C., & James, J. D. (2006). Consumer loyalty: The meaning of attachment in the development of sport team allegiance. *Journal of Sport Management*, 20, 189-217.

¹²⁰ Ferrand, A. & Pages, M. (1999) Image Management in Sport Organisations: The Creation of Value, *European Journal of Marketing* 33(3/4), 387-401.

1.5 Previous attempts of rebranding: failure or victory?

The incapacity of listening and understanding the audience may lead to the failure. At this regard, several failures have accompanied the attempts of rebranding of some clubs. For instance, supporters of SV Austria Salzburg broke away from the renamed FC Red Bull Salzburg, as sign of protest against the new owners' name, logo and color changes¹²¹. Or even when Assem Allam bought Hull City and tried to change the name in Hull Tigers: the fans protested and the FA (English Football Association) rejected the name change request, twice¹²². Also, the Everton Football Club on May 2013 decided to introduce a new logo described as "more modern, cleaner and dynamic". The reaction by the fans was of hysterical derision and forced the club to instantly reverse its strategy. Even the Arsenal, which was one of the first teams trying to rebrand itself, encountered several criticisms among supporters because they would have been involved more heavily in the redesign of the new logo, that per them lack of enough connection to the club's history. However, despite the criticism, the change was necessary, since the club was struggling to copyright the old crest and suffering the unofficial sale of merchandise, and it still represents the club's official logo. What it is true Another example refers to the Cardiff City. It has known as Bluebirds since 1908 but the new owner Vincent Tan, after having acquired the club decided the kit from blue to red and the badge from a bluebird to a red dragon. The action was moved by the intention of making stronger the existing connection between Cardiff and the Wales. The motivation wasn't enough to win the fans' support and Tan was forced to make a step back.¹²³ There are several of these examples showing how important is creating and developing a mutual trust between club and fans, which pretend to be considered an intrinsic part of the club, and the brand. Hence, the commodification

¹²¹ Bouchet, P., Hillairet, D., & Bodet, G. (2013). *Sport Brands*. New York, NY: Routledge.

¹²² Telegraph.co.uk

¹²³ Walesonline.co.uk

of the football, and the deriving transnational network, hasn't affected the will of the fans of maintaining their belonging and identification sense with their club¹²⁴.

Obviously, there are also situations where the rebranding got customers excited and was a success. For example, Roman Abramovich sought to mark his arrival in 2005 at the helm of the Chelsea Football Club and change tied nicely with the run-up to the club's centenary year. His attempt to restore the rampant lion has originated a refreshed crest which has been happily embraced by the fans. Also, the Burnley decided to swap its traditional coat for a more distinctive club emblem. Despite its character seems to recall the Lego style, plenty seemed to like it. Another example is the one of the Manchester City Football Club. The society had actuated a rebranding strategy which had been enthusiastically accepted by fans despite the evident homogenization with the other owners' branded football projects, NYCFC and Melbourne City. The secret of the success is linked to the strong involvement of customers as well as to the nod to tradition and the introduction of the Lancashire rose, which attests a strong linkage with fans' origin land.

It appears, so, evident that an effective and successful rebranding strategy cannot disregard an active and consistent participation of supporters.

¹²⁴ Peter Kennedy & David Kennedy (2012) Football supporters and the commercialisation of football: comparative responses across Europe, *Soccer & Society*, 13:3, 327-340.

II. INDIVIDUAL-CENTRED CO-CREATION OF VALUE

2.1 The joint-creation of value

The rebranding strategy has highlighted the need for firms, sports and non, to involve consumers in the development of brands that result meaningful and enchanting to them. It would represent a process where the brand is conceived as an “open system”¹²⁵ and firms and consumers act together on its four dimensions: physical (tangible products), textual (brand-related stories), experience and meanings. Then, the success of such an approach depends on the ability to commonly design brands that exactly suit particular functional and symbolic needs while conveying relevant meanings and experiences.

Consumers, indeed, have high expectations and firms must keep a track of these expectations, which are best addressed through a cooperative and collaborative relationship.¹²⁶ In this way, consumers are seen to have realized their potential to utilize consumption to construct, represent and maintain their self-identity,¹²⁷ demonstrate knowledge, distinction, and expertise and form social networks.¹²⁸ At the same time, would also be prevented the risk of the firm’s offer proposition of satisfying just one or some of the complex and multi-dimensional

¹²⁵ Pitt, Leyland F., Richard T. Watson, Pierre Berthon, Donald Wynn, and George Zinkhan (2006), "The Penguin’s Window: Corporate Brands From an Open-Source Perspective," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34 (2), 115-27.

¹²⁶ Sheth, J. N., and Parvatiyar, A. (1995) “Relationship marketing in consumer markets”, *Journal of The Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 255-271.

¹²⁷ Firat, A.F., Dholakia, N., and Venkatesh, A. (1995) ‘Marketing in a Postmodern World’, *European Journal of Marketing* 29 (1): 40-56.

¹²⁸ Holt, D.B. (1995) ‘How Consumers Consume: A Typology of Consumption Practices’, *Journal of Consumer Research* 22 (1): 1-16.

meanings of the value: as interactive relativistic preference experience;¹²⁹ as a symbolic meaning;¹³⁰ as value added concept;¹³¹ or value-in-use.¹³²

Organizations are encouraged to move from marketing to customers toward “marketing with customers, as well as other value-creation partners in its value network”¹³³, where the focus of the proposition of value are services rather than goods and where the co-creational relationship would benefit to all the involved parties.¹³⁴ In this framework, the consumer becomes a co-producer of the core product¹³⁵ and the more central is his involvement in the creation and delivery of the process or service, the higher levels of attachment, engagement and loyalty he develops.¹³⁶

“Becoming a co-creative organization is about changing the very nature of engagement and relationship between the institution of management and its employees, and between them and co-creators of value – customers, stakeholders, partners or other employees.”¹³⁷ In such a context, essential requirement for the achievement of a successful co-creation of value is the possess of organizational capabilities aligning outside-in customer-to-employee experience with inside-out employee-to-customer experience.

¹²⁹ Holbrook, M.B. (2006) ‘Consumption Experience, Customer Value, and Subjective Personal Introspection: An Illustrative Photographic Essay’, *Journal of Business Research* 59 (6): 714 - 25.

¹³⁰ Shankar, A., Elliott, R., and Fitchett, J. (2009) ‘Identity, Consumption and Narratives of Socialization’, *Marketing Theory* 9 (1): 75-94.

¹³¹ Woodruff, R.B., and Flint, D.J. (2006) ‘Marketing’s Service-Dominant Logic and Customer Value’, in R.F. Lusch and S.L. Vargo (eds.) *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate and Direction*, pp. 183 - 95, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

¹³² Vargo, S.L., and Lusch, R.F. (2004) ‘Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing’, *Journal of Marketing* 68 (January): 1 - 17.

¹³³ Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2014). *Service-dominant logic: Premises, perspectives, possibilities*. Cambridge Press University, New York.

¹³⁴ Friedman, M. T., Parent, M. M., & Mason, D. S. (2004). Building a framework for issues management in sport through stakeholder theory. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 4(3), 170–190.

¹³⁵ Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68, 1–17.

¹³⁶ Parker, K., & Stuart, T. (1997). The West Ham Syndrome. *Journal of the Market Research Society*, 39(3), 509–517.

¹³⁷ Venkat Ramaswamy, (2009) "Leading the transformation to co-creation of value", *Strategy & Leadership*, Vol. 37 Issue: 2, pp.32-37.

Driving the transition towards this co-creative organization requires strong leadership and commitment of managers. Thus, they must know and act in line with the strategic intent of the company by understanding the roles of all types of co-creators in the ecosystem, and acting in real time in response to the changing needs and desires of customers and stakeholders, as demanded by changes in the nature of co-created value.

The production and the exchange of value, previously solely dependent on the internal capabilities and expertise of the firm, nowadays requires the active participation of formerly passive consumers¹³⁸. Customer knowledge is one of the most important knowledge bases for an organization¹³⁹ and has driven the contextual move from "What can we do for you?" to "What can you do with us?".¹⁴⁰

Today's firms, hence, have the imperative need of creating as much value as possible by exploiting capabilities of a network of stakeholders. In fact, defining the stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization's purpose",¹⁴¹ it comes out the importance of creating and delivering a collective value through the construction of a network where the company is the central actor around which interests rotate.¹⁴²

The need of such an organizational shift had been already underlined several years ago, when it was pointed out that the source of the economic value hasn't to be found in the development department of corporates, but in the interactions between company and consumers, referred to as value co-creation.¹⁴³ This trend had successively been enhanced by

¹³⁸ Lagace, M. (2004) *Your Customers: Use Them or Lose Them*, Harvard Business School Working Knowledge Series, 19 July. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School.

¹³⁹ Bennett, R. and Gabriel, H.I. (1999), "Organisational factors and knowledge management within large marketing departments: an empirical study", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 212-25.

¹⁴⁰ Wind, Jerry and Arvind Rangaswamy (2000), "Customerization: The Next Revolution in Mass Customization," Marketing Science Institute Working Paper No. 00-108. Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute.

¹⁴¹ Freeman, R. (1984). *Strategic Management: A stakeholder approach*. Pitman: Boston p. 46.

¹⁴² Zagnoli, P., & Radicchi, E. (2010). The football-fan community as a determinant stakeholder in value co-creation. *Sport in Society*, 13(10), 1532–1551.

¹⁴³ Prahalad, C.K. and Ramaswamy, V. (2004a) 'Co-creation Experiences: The Next Practice in Value Creation', *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 18(3): 5–14.

the internet, and its user-generated version, Web 2.0, where the co-creation has become the center of the firm's economic value creation.¹⁴⁴ The explosive growth of the Internet¹⁴⁵ leads to new relationship realities in consumer culture. Consumers have access to information about firms, products, technologies, performances, prices, and other consumers actions and reactions from around the world and can create thematic consumer communities, where sharing ideas and feelings, revolutionizing emerging markets and transforming established ones.¹⁴⁶ Research on virtual brand communities¹⁴⁷ is required to clarify the culture and value co-creative roles played by consumers as stakeholders.¹⁴⁸ In addition, through the internet they can even experiment and develop new customized products.

The source of new competitive advantage and the seeds for a firm's future profitable growth lie in the strategic capital it can build by continuously interacting with its customers through engagement platforms, especially those centered on customer experiences. The considerable interest behind this strategy, lies in the potential of "co-production" and "co-creation", either individually or in community contexts, to enhance innovation and business performance.¹⁴⁹ The company, in fact, can learn directly from the customers' behavior, generate and refine soft insights and, consequently, generate more sticky initiatives. The positive word of mouth from the community can reduce new product-service failure and misalignment with the market and accelerate and enhance market acceptance, by improving the reputational image of the club.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ Ritzer, G. and Jurgenson, N. (2010) 'Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The Nature of Capitalism in the Age of the Digital "Prosumer"', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 10(1): 13–36.

¹⁴⁵ Kozinets, R. V. (2009). *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. London: Sage

¹⁴⁶ Eric W.K. See-To, Kevin K.W. Ho. 2014. Value co-creation and purchase intention in social network sites: The role of electronic Word-of-Mouth and trust – A theoretical analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior* **31**, 182-189.

¹⁴⁷ James H. McAlexander, John W. Schouten, Harold F. Koenig (2002) Building Brand Community. *Journal of Marketing*: January 2002, Vol. 66, No. 1, pp. 38-54.

¹⁴⁸ Schau, H. J., Muniz, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 30–51 (Sep.)

¹⁴⁹ Gibbert, M., Leibold, M. and Probst, G. (2002), "Five styles of customer knowledge management, and how smart companies use them to create value", *European Management Journal*, Vol. 20 No. 5, pp. 459-69.

¹⁵⁰ Venkat Ramaswamy, (2008) "Co-creating value through customers' experiences: the Nike case", *Strategy & Leadership*, Vol. 36 Issue: 5, pp.9-14, doi: 10.1108/10878570810902068

The new approach is based on an individual-centered co-creation of value between consumers and companies, with each person's uniqueness affecting the co-creation experience. Managers must increase the quality of the co-creation experience by innovating the experience network that allow customers to co-construct and personalize their experiences, aiming to the generation of the "experience of one".¹⁵¹

In this way, the firm would be able to charge a premium price to consumers thanks the delivery of a unique value¹⁵², by mean of an offer completely not standardized, and to make the customers perceive such a voluntary, co-productive activity as significantly enjoyable.¹⁵³ This point is particular interesting: the so called 'free labor' of consumers–producers, is simultaneously, voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and, perhaps, exploited by firms.

Firms take advantage of customers' labor on a twofold level,¹⁵⁴ the so-called double exploitation.¹⁵⁵ On one hand, these working consumers¹⁵⁶ are not paid for the know-how, enthusiasm, and social cooperation that they contribute to the designing, developing, and manufacturing processes of goods and services. On the other hand, they pay a price premium for the fruits of their own labor as the use value provided by co-created commodities is likely higher than that which can be accomplished through rationalized systems of standardized production. It seems paradoxical, but the consumer ends up to pay a premium price for a customized good or service to which production it has directly contributed.

¹⁵¹ C.K. Prahalad, Venkat Ramaswamy, (2004) "Co-creating unique value with customers", *Strategy & Leadership*, Vol. 32 Issue: 3, pp.4-9.

¹⁵² Foster, R.J. (2011) 'The Uses of Use Value: Marketing, Value Creation, and the Exigencies of Consumption Work', in D. Zwick and J. Cayla (eds) *Inside Marketing: Practices, Ideologies, Devices*, pp. 42–57. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵³ Terranova, T. (2000) 'Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy', *Social Text* 63 18(2): 33–58.

¹⁵⁴ Humphreys, A. and Grayson, K. (2008) 'The Intersecting Roles of Consumer and Producer: A Critical Perspective on Co-production, Co-creation and Prosumption', *Sociology Compass* 2(3): 963–80.

¹⁵⁵ Zwick, D., Bonsu, S.K., and Darmody, A. (2008) 'Putting Consumers to Work: `Co-Creation` and New Marketing Govern-Mentality', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8 (2): 163 - 96.

¹⁵⁶ Cova, B., and Dalli, D. (2009) 'Working Consumers: The Next Step in Marketing Theory?' *Marketing Theory*, 9 (3): 315-339.

It would be illogical, however, think that such a cooperation would benefit just corporates. Indeed, customers gain experiences of value through their participation and influence in the design process, by being a part of creating the product/service offering, by socially networking and interacting with people who share like-minded passion for the sport, by increasing their motivation, and by reducing their risk of emotional and technical dissatisfaction.

Not to be undervalued it is even the economics component, since the collaborative creation give guarantees about the quality of the product, reducing searching costs, increasing the performance and improving the quality of the price-experience relationship.

The result is a win-win situation¹⁵⁷ where customer is the value-in-use creator, so the party in a business engagement that creates value and the interactions between him and firms allow for a joint-value creation, whereby all participants are liable to gain benefits or value towards achieving their life goals. Therefore, the harmony relationship between companies and consumers or consumer and consumer is possible in value co-creation process when both parties have set their goals above economic value.

Co-creation may take place in the context of customer communities where the nature of the relationship not anymore one-to-one, rather many-to-many.¹⁵⁸ To convincingly justify the use of “community” they should share a culture with norms, values and identity, and mutual interests and objectives, and it is what effectively happens when we refer to sport teams fan clubs. The presence of these virtual customer communities enables organizations to follow innovative development patterns, finalized to the production of new goods and services, where customers play varied roles.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Fitzsimmons, James A. (1985), "Consumer Participation and Productivity in Service Operations," *Interfaces*, 15 (3), 60-67.

¹⁵⁸ Gummesson, E. (2004) 'Service Provision Calls for Partners Instead of Parties in Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing', *Journal of Marketing* 68 (January): 20 - 21.

¹⁵⁹ Pitta, D.A. and Fowler, D. (2005), "Internet community forums: an untapped resource for consumer markets", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 22 No. 5, pp. 265-74.

Under this perspective, corporates should implement “interactions and relationships between the firm and its stakeholders in the process of decision-making and control over firm resources”¹⁶⁰ in a way that align the interests of all the parties involved. This cooperation would benefit clubs not just generating economic value but also in term of reputation and goodwill, enhancing the possibilities of attracting further supporters. Furthermore, with the passage of the time, the co-creation, and the possibility of exploiting the network “to apply resources in new ways to create new value for all stakeholders”,¹⁶¹ leads to the development of new “specialized and applied knowledge and skills, service exchanges, and resource integration”.¹⁶²

The success of the whole process is so affected by interaction patterns, knowledge creation, customer motivation, and integration of the virtual customer community with the new product development team.¹⁶³ Community building is not just about increasing membership, or even about the engagement of members with the community, but focuses on the creation of a level of mutuality in which there is ongoing dialogue between community members and the company. The result of this dialogue generates the expansion of the community, and probably, also the intensification of customers’ engagement with the experiences that community members co-create with the company.¹⁶⁴

Fans acquire a participatory culture by actively creating images, banners and other auxiliary texts that complement and extend the meaning of the company/sport team.¹⁶⁵ That is because members or supporters in the co-consuming group pursues two main goals: individual goals – information, experientialism, social life, self-identity, and collective goals – a sense of

¹⁶⁰ van Ees, H., Gabrielsson, J. and Huse, M. (2009), “Toward a behavioral theory of boards and corporate governance”, *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 307-319.

¹⁶¹ Lee, S.M., Olson, D.L. and Trimi, S. (2012), “Co-innovation: convergenomics, collaboration, and co-creation for organizational values”, *Management Decision*, Vol. 50 No. 5, pp. 817-831.

¹⁶² Lusch, R.F. and Vargo, S.L. (2014), *Service-Dominant Logic*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

¹⁶³ Nambisan, S. (2002), “Designing virtual customer environments for new product development: toward a theory”, *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 392-413.

¹⁶⁴ Kupiec-Teahan, B., Leeming, E., Rowley, J., (2007) "Customer community and cocreation: a case study", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 25 Issue: 2, pp.136-146

¹⁶⁵ Jenkins, H. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

community, group identity, collective resources, brand experience, oppositional brand community, brand legitimacy, and so forth.

Another consideration refers to the psychological importance of the co-creation. Consumers are increasingly attempting to express their personality by means of individual product choice and, so, they are not willing to accept, as passive receptacles, the brand identities projected by marketers; conversely, through the participation in the construction of goods and services, they are active co-producers of brand meanings.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the process itself provides psychic benefits to the customer, whether in the form of enjoyment, accomplishment, self-confidence, or control.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Cova, Bernard (1996), "What Postmodernism Means to Marketing Managers," *European Management Journal*, 14 (5), 494-99.

¹⁶⁷ Lusch, Robert F., Stephen W. Brown, and Gary Brunswick (1992), "A General Framework for Explaining Internal vs. External Exchange," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 20 (2), 119-34.

2.2 Co-productive sports interactions

Sport clubs are commercial organizations, therefore have financial objectives but, given the high number of stakeholders involved, economically and emotionally, they are also indirectly seen as platforms to express involvement in corporate social responsibility and good citizenship.¹⁶⁸ Considering that, it would be of fundamental importance the ability of creating positive synergies between commercial and social purposes,¹⁶⁹ by considering the embracement of the CSR as an opportunity-driven rather than problem-driven concept and taking advantage of possibilities for the co-creation of value between clubs and their stakeholders, and even among these.¹⁷⁰

Thus, the delivered value is created by different parties including also fans, which play an active role. Under this perspective it is fundamental the creation of a network finalized to the stimulation of multiple reciprocally beneficial interactions,¹⁷¹ which are aimed to know the need of supporters and how to best solve them.¹⁷²

Then, the increase in the brand value is dependent on various factors such as the club's performance in the league, individual players' performance outside of the sporting venues, particularly in the media, the coverage of the sport on media, and interest of the public.

However, while the creation of value may be shared, the determination of the value of the outcome

¹⁶⁸ Blumrodt, J., Bryson, D. & Flanagan, J. (2012). European football teams' CSR engagement impacts on customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(7), 482–493.

¹⁶⁹ Breitbarth, T. and Harris, P. (2008), "The role of corporate social responsibility in the football business: towards the development of a conceptual model", *European Sport Management Quarterly*, Vol. 8 No. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Michie, J. and Oughton, C. (2005), "The corporate governance of professional football clubs in England", *Corporate Governance*, Vol. 13 No. 4, pp. 517-531.

¹⁷¹ Chesbrough, H. (2003). The Era of Open Innovation. MIT Sloan Management Review (2011). Top 10 Lessons on the New Business of Innovation; Vol. 44; p. 35 - 41.

¹⁷² von Hippel, E. & Katz, R. (2002). Shifting Innovation to Users via Toolkits. *Management Science* 48 (7), 821–833.

is clearly individual as value is embedded in the customer's individual experience of consumption. The customer's perceptions and evaluations of value (co-)creation determine his or her value outcomes and is phenomenological and experiential, referring to the customer's 'feeling, thinking, wanting, sensing, imagining, and acting'.¹⁷³ The greater is the meaning delivered by clubs during these interactions, and so the outcome value, the higher is the consumers' value perception, the stronger are the behavioral intentions,¹⁷⁴ the satisfaction and the loyalty stimulated in them¹⁷⁵. For this reason, the various interplays improve supporters' benefits, customers' well-being, such that they 'becomes better off in some respect'.¹⁷⁶

In strengthening this relationship sport celebrities are effective resources for clubs who aim to persuade supporters to lower their defense mechanisms.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, marketing campaigns featuring key athletes as icons and protectors of the organization may play a crucial role in stimulating positive responses and the attachment to the club.

Subsequently, clubs need to be able to extend fan's feelings on a team or athlete (i.e. emotional value) in order to influence consumers' attitudes towards the brand (i.e. functional value) and increasing sales (i.e. economic value). Secondly, given the importance of the symbolic dimension, clubs must adapt their actions to fit the characteristics of sport fan communities, ensuring a congruence between the process and the context.¹⁷⁸

The value creation cannot be reduced to the process in which there are distinctive 'value producer' and 'value consumer'. Hence, there is the need for firms to reinforce the relationship

¹⁷³ Gummerus, J. (2013). Value creation processes and value outcomes in marketing theory: Strangers or siblings? *Marketing Theory*, 13(1), 19–46.

¹⁷⁴ Byon, K. K., Zhang, J. J., & Baker, T. A. (2013). Impact of core and peripheral service quality on consumption behavior of professional team sport spectators as mediated by perceived value. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 13, 232–263.

¹⁷⁵ Howat, G., & Assaker, G. (2013). The hierarchical effects of perceived quality on perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty: Empirical results from public, outdoor aquatic centres in Australia. *Sport Management Review*, 16, 268–284.

¹⁷⁶ Grönroos, C., & Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: Making sense of value creation and cocreation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41, 133–150.

¹⁷⁷ Dix, D., Phau, I. & Pougnet, S. (2010). "Bend it like Beckham": the influence of sports celebrities on young adult consumers. *Young Consumers*, 11(1), 36–46.

¹⁷⁸ Abosag, I, Roper, S. & Hind, D. (2012). Examining the relationship between brand emotion and brand extension among supporters of professional football clubs. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(9), 1233–1251.

with their passionate fans – a relationship that is usually considered as a very strong bond – by improving its relational characteristics such as intimacy, trust, and commitment,¹⁷⁹ to give life to a fan-to-club co-creation

Sporting brand managers should focus their efforts on promoting and managing the interactions and relationships amongst members to have a maximization of fan's value, which is the key to boost club income, match attendance, club involvement and loyalty. Furthermore, the relevance of the relationship, and so of the experience delivered, is emphasized by the situation where fans act as brand missionaries who carry brand related messages and ideas to others,¹⁸⁰ by sharing their emotional ownership.

The co-creation of value generated through the interaction between sports organizations and supporters, and so through the integration of resources and application of competencies can be explained thanks to the Service-dominant (S-D) logic.¹⁸¹ Indeed, just like what happens in the service industry, clubs propose value through market offerings, but the value is created only when those offerings are “used” by fans in meaningful ways. And so, the co-creation is subject to the involvement of many actors and their contribution, in a context where the clubs' proposition of value is best described as the configuration of a value network.

First, the crucial requirement of this model is fulfilled since sport teams deliver services, whose quality depends heavily on the behavior of the spectators and athletes. In such ‘service systems’ the actors depend on the resources of others to create value, meaning that fans integrate team performance and teams integrate spectator-induced atmosphere.¹⁸² Therefore, essential

¹⁷⁹ Harris, L. C., & Ogbonna, E. (2008). The dynamics underlying service firm–customer relationships. *Journal of Service Research*, 10, 382–399.

¹⁸⁰ McAlexander, J., Schouten, J., & Koenig, H. (2002). Building Brand Community. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(Jan.), 38-54.

¹⁸¹ Vargo, S. L., Maglio, P. P. & Akaka, M. A. (2008). On value and value co-creation: A service systems and service logic perspective. *European Management Journal*, 26(3), 149–152.

¹⁸² Vargo, S. L., Maglio, P. P., & Akaka, M. A. (2008). On value and value co-creation: A service systems and service logic perspective. *European Management Journal*, 26(3), 145-152.

requirements for the value creation are the integration of resources and the service-for-service exchange.

Second, is evident the important role of the customer in the value creation process: the value arises when the contents offered make customers and stakeholders engage with the team in a way which creates positive buying intentions, inspires positive word-of-mouth or deepens customer loyalty. Therefore, it is crucial the ability of clubs to communicate to sport fans in a way that the passion they feel over sport is transferred to the club brand.

Third, the last aspect of the S-D logic refers to the context of value creation, per which the value is derived and determined in a specific context in which firms make value proposals and customers integrate and apply their own resources. Sport is a specific context as it allows teams to create diverse value proposals. Supporters become engaged with brands promoted by celebrity athletes or top teams because brands provide emotional and/or symbolic value. In addition of exploiting top athletes, clubs can enhance their brand value by promoting initiatives showing their good citizenship. This is the case, for example, when clubs sponsor adolescents' sport activities at the local level. In this way, through sport – whether professional or amateur – customers can feel a part of something good and meaningful.¹⁸³

In the sport context, the value is created by several actors (e.g. fans, individual athletes, sport organizations, sport leagues, media, security services, payment service providers, travel agents, governments etc.) that combine their resources¹⁸⁴ and co-evolve together. It means that the co-creation is not just the result of fans-club interaction; conversely, also relationships among fans may have a co-creative nature. In particular, there are two predominant roles¹⁸⁵ in this co-creation process: provider (who shares, discusses, and educates less experienced members,

¹⁸³ Jalonen, H., A Complexity Approach to Value Co-Creation through Business and Sports Cooperation, Proceedings of the 11th European Conference on Management Leadership and Governance, Military Academy, Lisbon, Portugal 12-13 November 2015, pp. 160-166.

¹⁸⁴ Woratschek, H., Horbel, C. & Popp, B. (2014). The sport value framework – a new fundamental logic for analyses in sport management. *European Quarterly of Sport Management*, 14(1), 6–24.

¹⁸⁵ Pongsakornrungrungsilp, S., & Schroeder, J. Understanding value co-creation in a co-consuming group. Discussion Papers in Management. Paper 09/04. The University of Exeter Business School.

using the community's collective resources – knowledge, information, and experience)¹⁸⁶ and beneficiary (who enjoys experientialism alongside their fellow members in order to satisfy their individual level of consumption and form a strong relationship with other members).

Within this process, important positions are also assumed by creative posters and brand warriors play by sharing resources and other benefits to the community, while strengthening the brand value. Since value can be uniquely perceived by each beneficiary, benefits from this process can be experience of social interaction, aggregated knowledge, or hedonistic emotion depending on the situation, person, issue, or time. It follows these collective resources are utilized to convey strong symbolic meaning to their interactions and to construct strong identity regarding who they are and how they socialize.

Additionally, when an individual is introduced to a group, he generally will not participate in group activities, until he knows that his behavior will be accepted. To participate in community activities, the individual must first feel a connection to or relationship with the other members. This kind of socialization inside a group usually begins by adopting the mannerisms, attitudes, style of dress, speech, and behavior perceived to be characteristic of established members. In such a way fans acquire a sort of “cultural capital”¹⁸⁷ from the tribe: the knowledge of how to consume the sport as a product, and do so in the socially endorsed way. This feeling of membership facilitates a sense of social acceptance and opportunities for the individual to participate in activities which co-create value among members of the sport fan consumption community.¹⁸⁸

At the same time, the creation of such a community and the continuous fan-to-fan interactions – defined as situations in which two or more customers are physically, virtually, or

¹⁸⁶ Avery, J.J. (2007) 'Saving Face by Making Meaning: The Negative Effects of Consumers' Self-Serving Response to Brand Extension', PhD Dissertation. Harvard University.

¹⁸⁷ Richardson, B. (2004), "New consumers and football fandom: the role of social habitus in consumer behaviour", *Irish Journal of Management*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 88-100.

¹⁸⁸ David P. Hedlund (2014) Creating value through membership and participation in sport fan consumption communities, *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 14:1, 50-71,

mentally involved in each other's practices¹⁸⁹ – are one specific form of value co-creation.¹⁹⁰ Interactions with other customers contribute to a customer's value perception by providing “linking value”, that is, value based on peer-to-peer bonds and socially embedded consumption’.¹⁹¹ In addition, research into brand communities provides empirical evidence that customers' interactive practices within consumer collectives create greater value than which is created through interactions with the club or brand.¹⁹²

Interesting it is also to notice how self-perpetuating is the community. For example, heterogeneity within consumer communities can contribute to its continuity when the heterogeneous actors are dependent on each other;¹⁹³ or even activities, performances, and conversations fostered by competition with rivals strengthen the existence of the community by demonstrating authenticity, creativity, and particularly superiority of its members over other groups of supporters.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, fan friendships and fan rivalries intensify the enjoyment of several team sports-related activities and reinforce the desire to be part of the community to express their social identity by showing who they are and who they are no. All these aspects together reduce the possibilities of changing the team supported. Thus, the experience of sport fans is largely shaped by ‘their conversations, social relationships, media use and memories, which exist outside of the live venue in their everyday lives.’¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ Grönroos, C., & Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: Making sense of value creation and cocreation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41, 133–150.

¹⁹⁰ Lemke, F., Clark, M., & Wilson, H. (2011). Customer experience quality: An exploration in business and consumer contexts using repertory grid technique. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39, 846–869.

¹⁹¹ Libai, B., Bolton, R., Bugel, M. S., de Ruyter, K., Götz, O., Risselada, H., & Stephen, A. T. (2010). Customer-to-customer interactions: Broadening the scope of word of mouth research. *Journal of Service Research*, 13, 267–282.

¹⁹² Schau, H. J., Muñiz, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 30–51.

¹⁹³ Thomas, T. C., Price, L. L., & Schau, H. J. (2013). When differences unite: Resource dependence in heterogeneous consumption communities. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(5), 1010–1033.

¹⁹⁴ Kelley, S. W., & Tian, K. (2004). Fanatical consumption: An investigation of the behavior of sports fans through textual data. In L. R. Kahle & C. Riley (Eds.), *Sports marketing and the psychology of marketing communication* (pp. 27–66). Hillsdale, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum.

¹⁹⁵ Crawford, G. (2004). *Consuming sport: Fans, sport and culture*. London: Routledge.

Showed that, it may become profitable to undertake managerial actions aimed to exploit the opportunities provided by the involvement in the co-creation among fans and focused on moving the boundaries of the joint sphere (customer-firm co-production) by creating virtual platforms, that are now solely in the customer sphere,¹⁹⁶ where the contents would be the result of the interactions among the supporters and where the co-creative channel would be managed by establishing governance mechanisms such as controlling the access to the forum, defining behavioral rules for the forum users, and enforcing these rules through forum administrators.¹⁹⁷ Examples of such attempts by manager to control discussion around brands, not aimed to diminish the significance of the creative and emotional nature of the fans' participation, is represented by 'official' Twitter hashtags, but the open nature of the platform means this control is limited.¹⁹⁸ Thus, managers seek to incorporate into the brand the economically desirable aspects of fan participation while working to limit the potential damage to the brand that fans can inflict if they feel disaffected.

Moreover, a strong implication for brand managers is that interactions between consumers in the collective group contributes to the co-creation of the cultural code of the brand through history, tradition, and expectation. This co-creation contributes to a sense of strong identification and the solidarity to the brand value, whereby consumers co-construct the cultural code of the community in order to protect their community from external threats and internal threats (e.g., fake fans, kneejerk fans, glory-hunters, etc.), and to enhance the perceived distinction from other football clubs and communities. Actors of this form of co-creation can appear in the process either as providers by adding new resources, or as beneficiaries by reading and responding to threads. Moving cyclically inside the process, and obviously making

¹⁹⁶ Grönroos, C., & Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: Making sense of value creation and cocreation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41, 133–150.

¹⁹⁷ Uhrich S., (2014) Exploring customer-to-customer value co-creation platforms and practices in team sports, *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 14:1, 25-49,

¹⁹⁸ McCulloch, C., (2013). Of proprietors and poachers: Fandom as negotiated brand ownership. *Journal of Audience & Reception studies*. Volume 10, Issue 1

contributions to the community, these participants acquires roles of bidirectional creators¹⁹⁹ who act as passive and active customers within firm–customer relationships. The more interactions and exchanges of resources and knowledge incur among members the greater value will be produced.²⁰⁰

Interestingly, this co-creation process is a brand hijack,²⁰¹ whereby consumers seize the brand creation role from the company and perpetually enrich the brand value through discussion and arguments. This leads to the co-creation of value in line with the notion of brand culture; that is “a focus on cultural processes that effect contemporary brands, including historical context, ethical concerns, and cultural conventions...” [and] “... refers to the cultural codes of brands – history, images, myths, art, theatre.”²⁰² In the value co-creation process, providers contribute resources with which individuals reproduce the meaning and history of a brand as part of a group or brand community.

Dealing with the generation of value achieved through the common exploitation of resources made available by different parties interacting in each network, I cannot overlook the concept of co-competition among clubs as significant contribution to the value proposition.

Hence, despite it is true that competition is considered by many as the ‘heart and soul of sport management’,²⁰³ the basic requirement for the existence of the sport venue is the participation of at least two teams, which led to approaches more open to include strategic alliances and network and

¹⁹⁹ Blazevic, V., and Lievens, A. (2008) ‘Managing Innovation through Customer Coproduced Knowledge in Electronic Services: An Exploratory Study’, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 36 (1): 138- 51.

²⁰⁰ Nahapiet, J., and Ghoshal, S. (1998) ‘Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage’, *Academy of Management Review* 23 (2): 242 - 66.

²⁰¹ Cova, B., and Pace, S. (2006) ‘Brand Community of Convenience Product: New Forms of Customer Empowerment - the Case "My Nutella the Community"’, *European Journal of Marketing* 40 (9/10): 1087 - 105.

²⁰² Schroeder, J.E. (2009) ‘The Cultural Codes of Branding’, *Marketing Theory* 9 (1): 123 - 26.

²⁰³ Shilbury, D. (2012). Competition: The heart and soul of sport management. *Journal of Sport Management*, 26(1), 1–10.

cluster strategies. From this consideration, has been developed the concept of coopetition that captures the interplay between competition and cooperation, leading to the co-evolution,²⁰⁴ between organizations²⁰⁵ or at the scale of a network.²⁰⁶ It aims to create a value or ‘positive variable-sum’²⁰⁷ by fending off competitors, pooling resources, and/or exchanging ideas, by increasing innovative capabilities²⁰⁸ and performances.²⁰⁹ And just like the co-creation with supporters, it is based on the existence of a strong trusting relationship among the parties.

We have clarified that the rebranding is finalized to offer an improved proposition of value which would result more compelling in appealing new fans and strengthening the bond with the existing ones, and, consequently, be much more profitable under a financial point of view. It is quite evident that, as co-protagonist actors of the show offered, rival teams may contribute in a valuable way to achieve those objectives, through discussions about common issues, expertise sharing, and the attraction of new participants.²¹⁰

Therefore, the rebranding strategy needs to carefully assess the approach to follow with respect to the cooperation. Hence, football clubs benefit financially from negotiating some resources together and may adopt three types of status²¹¹: the efficient which rarely trade players and have a ‘weak use of coopetition strategy, the merchandisers who strongly benefit from merchandizing, and the coopetitors which adopt the so-called cooperative competition (i.e., competition in which cooperation dominates) while registering very good financial profitability and gaining access to top players. It follows, that managers, in implementing the rebranding

²⁰⁴ Lamberg, J.-A., & Laurila, J. (2005). Materializing the societal effect: Organizational forms and changing patterns of dominance in paper industry. *Organization Studies*, 26, 809–830.

²⁰⁵ Bengtsson, M., & Kock, S. (1999). Cooperation and competition in relationships between competitors in business networks. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 14, 178–194.

²⁰⁶ Dagnino, G., & Padula, G. (2002, May). Coopetition strategy: A new kind of inter-firm dynamics for value creation. Paper presented at the EURAM conference, Stockholm, Sweden.

²⁰⁷ Dagnino, G., & Rocco, E. (2009). *Coopetition strategy*. London: Routledge.

²⁰⁸ Quintana-García, C., & Benavides-Velasco, C. A. (2004). Cooperation, competition, and innovative capability: A panel data of European dedicated biotechnology firms. *Technovation*, 24, 927–938.

²⁰⁹ Luo, Y. (2007). A coopetition perspective of global competition. *Journal of World Business*, 42(2), 129–144.

²¹⁰ Stockdale, S., & Williams, S. (2007). Leading a small business? No, it’s a rugby club!. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 39, 339–342.

²¹¹ Robert, F., Marques, P., & Le Roy, F. (2009). Coopetition between SMEs: An empirical study of French professional football. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 8(1), 23–43.

strategy, should establish the strength of the linkage between organizations as being weak, moderate, or strong.²¹²

Obviously, the decision of a mutual cooperation with other clubs must be aimed to solve organizational problems of the league, to find encounter points to gain greater financial revenues related to the exploitation of commercial rights, to ease the access to new markets, to increase the level of the league, and consequently of the exhibition offered, but it cannot acquire prominence on the ‘competitive-dominant’ dimension,²¹³ which is what fosters the fans’ passion.

²¹² MacLean, J., Cousens, L., & Barnes, M. (2011). Look who’s with whom: A case study of one community basketball network. *Journal of Sport Management*, 25, 562–575.

²¹³ Bengtsson, M., & Kock, S. (2000). Coopetition in business networks – To cooperate and compete simultaneously. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 29, 411–426.

2.3 Communities of fans

Football fans are not regular customers.²¹⁴ Their imagination is captured by football brands with some believing nothing else matters. Because of their irrational loyalty,²¹⁵ it is very unusual to see them to switch allegiances.²¹⁶²¹⁷ Indeed, given the “excessive” devotion toward their football club, supporters become members of sacred “imagined communities”.²¹⁸ The discourse shifts slightly in the fifth chapter. The soccer can be viewed as a secular faith, with fans as devoted as an adherent to any spiritual sect. In this world, even the most imperfect individuals are deified if they have the requisite soccer skills.²¹⁹

These “modern tribes”²²⁰ are so important to many fans because allow them to share and get involved in contents of vital importance and to create identification among them.²²¹ Their support and engagement hinge on a “common cause,” a communal, not individual, one.²²² If it is true that the hedonistic winning is the primary aim of the community,²²³ it is the tribal community identity that keeps fans loyal. It is sometimes true that the loyalty to the team is secondary to the one to the community: for some fans, indeed, the competition itself is not at all important.²²⁴ The attachment to a sports brand, provides a sense of unity and belonging

²¹⁴ Horne, J. (2006). *Sport in Consumer Culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

²¹⁵ Hamil, S. (1999). A Whole New Ball Game? Why Football Needs a Regulator. In S. Hamil, J. Michie, & C. Oughton (Eds.), *A Game of Two Halves? The Business of Football* (pp. 23–39). London: Mainstream.

²¹⁶ Richardson, B., & Turley, D. (2007). *It's Far More Important Than That: Football Fandom and Cultural Capital*. European Association for Consumer Research Conference. Milan: Bocconi University.

²¹⁷ Sandvoss, C. (2003). *A Game of Two Halves: Football, Television and Globalization*. London: Routledge.

²¹⁸ Anderson, B. (1983/2006). *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.

²¹⁹ Bar-On, Tamir. *The World Through Soccer: The Cultural Impact of a Global Sport*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

²²⁰ Bridgewater, S., Stray, S. (2002). *Modern Tribes: Brand Values and a Typology of Premiership Football Fans*. Warwick Business School Working Paper.

²²¹ Grant, N., Heere, B., & Dickson, G. (2011). New sport teams and the development of brand community. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 11(1), 35–54.

²²² Pongsakornrunsilp, S., & Schroeder, J. (2011). Understanding value co-creation in a co-consuming brand community. *Mark Theory*, 11(3), 303–324.

²²³ Hirschman, E. C., & Holbrook, M. B. (1982). Hedonic consumption: Emerging concepts, methods, and propositions. *Journal of Marketing*, 46, 92–101 (Summer).

²²⁴ Koenigstorfer, J., Groeppel-Klein, A., & Schmitt, M. (2010). "You'll Never Walk Alone" - How Loyal Are Soccer Fans to Their Clubs When They Are Struggling Against Relegation? *Journal of Sport Management*, 24(6), 649-675.

which boosts the self-esteem of the group members²²⁵ and the extent to which it can be boosted is influenced by the success of the team and other attributes of the brand. Fans co-produce this community identity through the simple act of posting to or reading the forum or singing songs together,²²⁶ and the resulting deep attachment makes fans a “captive market”²²⁷ whose demand is inelastic.

This interactive community, is characterized by a multidirectional set of relations (*polyadic network*), where the multiplicity of stakeholders (*nodes*) interact with each other, such as the team, the fans, the institutions, the media, the owners etc., to contribute to providing the sports service.²²⁸ Overall, the network appears to be relatively “dense”²²⁹ since each stakeholder sets up continuous interactions with all the other members of the community to co-participate at the value creation.

Despite each team being the actor *positioned ab origine at the core of the system*, the relational “centrality”²³⁰ of a stakeholder may be measured in terms of power, management of relations, specific importance within the network.²³¹ Referring to the closeness, and so to the ability of one stakeholder to independently interacting with other, relevant is the position of the fans. In fact, as regard events keeping up their interest such as the dynamics of player transfers, the introduction of new subscription politics, commercialization of new jerseys, introduction of a new logo, etc., supporters play an active role, relating directly to the football club owners and local institutions and expressing their opinion both “officially” (press releases, open letters etc.), and “diffusely” (intervening in the many local sports transmissions, blogs, online articles

²²⁵ Cova, B (1997) “Community and Consumption – Towards a Definition of the ‘Linking Value’ of Product or Services” *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 31, No. 3 / 4, pp 297 - 316

²²⁶ Schau, H. J., & Gilly, M. C. (2003). We are what we post? Self-presentation in personal web space. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25, 123–144 (June).

²²⁷ Conn, D. (1997). *The Football Business: Fair Game in the ‘90s?* London: Mainstream.

²²⁸ Zagnoli, P., & Radicchi, E. (2010). The football-fan community as a determinant stakeholder in value co-creation. *Sport in Society*, 13(10), 1532–1551.

²²⁹ Scott, J., *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook*, Sage, London, 2000.

²³⁰ Rowley, T.J., „Moving beyond Dyadic Ties: A Network Theory of Stakeholder Influences Author(s)”, *The Academy of Management Review*, 22(4), October, 1997.

²³¹ Burt, R.S. *Toward a Structural Theory of Social Action*, Academic Press, New York, 1982.

published on the net, etc.). That is why fan communities is considered particularly “opinionated”, influencing in some cases football clubs’ strategic choices. By the other side, considering the openness to dialogue and to collaborate of fan communities, in order to preserve the strong identification, they have with their own team, owners and managers are forced to adopt strategies in which they involve the fans and negotiate with them, asserting their role as protagonists of the city and therefore of its football.

In addition, this community membership is a major driver of fan consumption regardless of whether other product demands (like club success) are satisfied: through their consumption experiences, they are part of ongoing never-ending processes of emotional creation²³² through “doing” fandom online and offline. These understandable emotions, dominated by rational and irrational instincts, are lived experiences, which occur simultaneously and inseparably with cognition in situated social contexts.²³³ Moreover, the effect of this often intensely emotional experience is a ‘fannish’ relationship with the brand, a strong sense of empowerment and ownership, and the evolution of a community which sees distinctions between marketing content ‘for us’ (i.e. the fans), and marketing for a wider, uninitiated audience. This emotional connection to the brand, defined ‘affective economics’, creates a basis for increased consumer power.²³⁴

Fandom is co-creative; for example, football match atmosphere “quality-makers” are fans.²³⁵ But the heavy emotional bond may lead supporters to desire more control or co-creation that goes beyond the traditional offline realm of fandom, such as on non-match-days, or on the part of fans who cannot attend matches for whatever reason (e.g., finance, geographical

²³² Küpers, W. (2000). Embodied emotional and symbolic “pro-sumption”: Phenomenological perspectives for an interpretative consumer research. In S. C. Beckmann, & R. H. Elliott (Eds.), *Interpretive Consumer Research: Paradigms, Methodologies & Applications* (pp. 293–317). Handelshojskolens Forlag: Copenhagen Business School Press.

²³³ Denzin, N. K. (1984). *On understanding emotions*. San Francisco: Jossey Publishers.

²³⁴ Jenkins, Henry, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York ; London: New York University Press, 2006.

²³⁵ King, A. (2002). *The End of The Terraces: The Transformation of English Football in The 1990s* (Rev. ed.). London: Leicester University Press

location). They perceive the participation to online environment as the mean to enshrine their identity and to augment and increase their cultural production. Fans want to be involved, so as co-productive and non-vicarious²³⁶, in the construction of their social reality, which may concern the display of banners and flags, or the singing of traditional club songs, or even the penning of some new ones.²³⁷

The explanation may be also found in the fact that consumer-supporter see possessions as parts of their identity/selfhood²³⁸, and they act as a relevant component in affecting his emotional well-being: “if they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down”.²³⁹

Fans harbor a desire to build their culture in ways transcending market transactions²⁴⁰: being a supporter is something that you do, not something you can buy.²⁴¹ Fans are devoted to suffering. They dedicate their lives, money, time, energy and heart to the club without expected returns. This ‘sacrifice’ is something made for the sake of it and it cannot be paid back. Such a sacrifice, however, lead to positive value of strong commitment²⁴² and to a desire of an upgrade to the empowerment into the management level. In this way, they nourish and share of emotional ownership of the club.²⁴³

Brand communities, indeed, show signs of sharing, mastery/control, and possessive attachment over the brand.²⁴⁴ For example, it is always more common they express their wish

²³⁶ Kozinets, R. V. (2001). Utopian enterprise: Articulating the meaning of Star Trek's Culture of Consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28, 67–89 (June).

²³⁷ Pongsakornrunsilp, S. (2010) Value co-creation process: Reconciling S-D logic of marketing and consumer culture theory within the co-consuming group. PhD Thesis: University of Exeter Library.

²³⁸ Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15, 139–168.

²³⁹ James, W. (1890). *The Principles of Psychology*: Vol. 1. New York: Henry Holt.

²⁴⁰ Richardson, B., & Turley, D. (2006). Support your local team: Resistance, subculture, and the desire for distinction. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 33, 175–180

²⁴¹ Richardson, B. (2007) Consumption Outside the Market: An Ethnography of Consumer Resistance Amongst Football Fans. PhD Thesis: Dublin City University Library, p. 157.

²⁴² Van Lange, P.A.M., RusBult, C.E., Drigotas, S.M., Arriaga, X.B., and Witcher, B.S. (1997) ‘Willingness to Sacrifice in Close Relationships’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 72 (6): 1373 - 95.

²⁴³ King, A. (2000). Football fandom and post-national identity in the New Europe. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 51(3), 419–442.

²⁴⁴ Belk, R. W. (2010). Sharing. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36(5), 715–734.

to have a say over the manager's team-selections or to control other facets of football management's behavior. That it would be fundamental because a 'properly structured supporter involvement will help to contribute to improved governance' of football clubs.²⁴⁵ Fans have in fact plenty of opinion on all club operations.

Thus, when fans perceive goal incongruence with the club, such as when the club sells a key player (damaging success potential), or raises ticket prices (making it more difficult for community members to attend games), or rarely consults with fans (lack of fan control), they express disagreement and vice versa. And it is mainly in these moments which comes out the soul of the community: if the club is not successful, and if fans believe that they do not have enough control, they believe that at least they are together, as a group.

Fans, therefore, desire more involvement into controlling the brand. Their engagement in this co-shaping of the team culture, particularly through interactions with other fans, may be viewed as an unofficial "democratizing of innovation".²⁴⁶ That would be possible through an adoption of a business model oriented towards a brand community philosophy,²⁴⁷ where managers are perceived as collaborative co-creators and stakeholders are fully involved to facilitate dialogue, understanding of fan goals, and thus pursuit of goal achievement through supplier-consumer collaboration.²⁴⁸

This management's role can be pursued through proactively leveraging the power of VCs to mutually benefit consumers, through greater understanding of consumer experience and how it can be improved.²⁴⁹ Thus, sport organizations can exploit the development of online communities by applying social media strategies to co-produce social capital and social support. For example, social capital, which is the value embedded in developing and maintaining

²⁴⁵ Arnaut, J. (2006), *Independent European Sports Review*, 72–3.

²⁴⁶ Von Hippel, E. (2005). *Democratizing Innovation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

²⁴⁷ Fournier, S., & Lee, L. (2009). Getting brand communities right. *Harvard Business Review*, 105–111 (Apr).

²⁴⁸ Füller, J., Jaweck, G., & Mühlbacher, H. (2007). Innovation creation by online basketball communities. *Journal of Business Research*, 60, 60–71.

²⁴⁹ Chan, K. W., & Li, S. Y. (2010). Understanding consumer-to-consumer interactions in virtual communities: The salience of reciprocity. *Journal of Business Research*, 63, 1033–1040.

personal and social relationships,²⁵⁰ is formed among fans and between the sport organization's personnel and fans at sporting events when they interact, collaborate, and co-create the game experience. On the other hand, instead, members of the same community provide social support and help each other regularly,²⁵¹ enhancing, through these social interactions, their identification and their trust toward the club,²⁵² as well as their brand-related consumption attitudes. Furthermore, supporters' emotional attachment to these virtual community makes them willing to express their opinions making them to feel part of a family.²⁵³ A fan's review of a match, in addition, produces valuable information for the club, for example regarding the performance of the club's players, helping the club with valuable information on how to develop its brand.

Managers should listen the voice²⁵⁴ of the community to understand which are the positively valued goals, and how to reach them, and which are negatively valued goals to be avoided.²⁵⁵ Or, even to understand which are the reasons making the fans loyal, like the shared community identity, aspirations for success, and belief that they have a stake in controlling/co-creating this identity and success with other consumers and with the brand itself, and foster the perception of these values.

²⁵⁰ Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

²⁵¹ Gruzd, A., Wellman, B. and Takhteyev, Y. (2011), "Imagining Twitter as an imagined community", *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 55 No. 10, pp. 1294-1318.

²⁵² Seo, W.J., Green, B.C., Ko, Y.J., Lee, S. and Schenewark, J. (2007), "The effect of web cohesion, web commitment, and attitude toward the website on intentions to use NFL teams' websites", *Sport Management Review*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 231-252.

²⁵³ Mathwick, C., Wiertz, C. and De Ruyter, K. (2008), "Social capital production in a virtual P3 community", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 34 No. 6, pp. 832-849.

²⁵⁴ Rappaport, S. D. (2010). *Cutting edges: Listening-led marketing science, media strategies and organizations*. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 50(3), 305–315.

²⁵⁵ Solomon, M., Bamossy, G., Askegaard, S., & Hogg, M. K. (2006). *Consumer Behaviour: A European Perspective* (3rd ed.). London: Prentice Hall.

Managers could contact “e-fluentials,” influential community members to tap their knowledge as “pools of qualified consumers”²⁵⁶ finding opportunities to collaboratively co-create, with fans, new facets of fan experience that reflect fan preferences, or goals.²⁵⁷

Acting as collaborative co-creators could help the club to achieve greater consumer-supplier goal congruity, greater consumer satisfaction/positive emotion, and minimization of consumers' expectation–experience gap.²⁵⁸

2.3.1 Typologies of fans

To understand the contribute that the community can generate to the club, and so the way it has to be involved in the process of value generation, it is useful to classify fans according to their level of identification with the team, defined as “*the personal commitment and emotional involvement people have with a sports organization*”²⁵⁹, and the participation to the event. In the cases of low identification fans do not feel to be part of the team and follow it just to satisfy a need for entertainment; while, intense level cases refer to those fans whose affiliation to a sport club subtends a common social identity. In turn, fan identification affects their participation to the match, which can be direct or indirect. Real or live spectators are those who directly watch in the match, while indirect spectators enjoy the game through free-view television, digital, satellite and terrestrial television, radio, Internet and mobile phones. In some cases, the choice between direct or mediated participation is correlated to numerous variable

²⁵⁶ Füller, J., Jawecki, G., & Mühlbacher, H. (2007). Innovation creation by online basketball communities. *Journal of Business Research*, 60, 60–71.

²⁵⁷ Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 132–140.

²⁵⁸ Healy, J. C., McDonagh, P. (2013). Consumer roles in brand culture and value co-creation in virtual communities. *Journal of Business Research* 66 (2013) 1536.

²⁵⁹ Sutton, W.A., McDonald, M.A., Milne, G.R., „Creating and fostering fan identification in professional sports“, *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 6(1), 15-22, 1997.

factors that are organizational (change in schedule of games), social (friends and family's influence), economic (increase in average ticket prices), distributive (ever-increasing "virtual" choices for enjoying sports events), technical-sportive (match location, team combination, refereeing), safety and security (episodes of violence occurring inside and outside stadiums) in nature. Such factors influencing fans' choices to attend sports events must be carefully managed by teams to deliver the best possible experience.

In terms of direct participation, live occasional spectators "consume" sport as with any other type of entertainment such as movies, music concerts, etc. and go to the stadium sporadically to capture the "aesthetic" dimension of the event, the atmosphere and the "neat play" on the field.

Live fans, participate to the event motivated by the importance and the "drama" of each match. Given that their participation is not continuous they do not buy a season ticket and rely on the "social" dimension to choose to go to the stadium: it is a moment of aggregation with other people, friends, family, a way of having a good time together. The supporter is not just a spectator, but "participates" with excitement to the event continuously. Despite that it is not an active member of the fan club, even though he/she feels highly motivated and part of the team.

The "twelfth man" lives for the team, not just during the match but every day, and put all his heart in providing essential support to the success of the team as much as the players and coach are. The actions performed by fans during the game (ritual chants, songs, banner waving, etc.) motivate the team and "intimidate" the other side and thus to an extent, fans' emotions, passions and moods can influence the result of the match. The "twelfth man" seems to actively and passionately follow every match, both home and away, in national championships and international tournaments. Fans truly believe they must "participate" in the game to "help the team win". What strengthens and distinguishes the role of the twelfth man compared to that of the supporters is the importance he gives to rituals (which he spends a great deal of his time in) and in planning the celebratory routines, the wording to put on the banners, the songs to be

chanted, and the co-ordination of the fan clubs. During pre-match days, fans meet up to discuss their “scenographic” strategies and keep themselves up-to-date with the line-ups of their own team and the opponents“, as well as downloading online statistics on players“ performance. They do not match with definition of fans as “at low risk position”,²⁶⁰ since when the team does well they do not share success and considers themselves to have played a role in this as well as they do not tend to blame the players, manager or other external agents when the team does not do well. They always put the maximum commitment to live their faith.

Occasional TV spectators are those who watch the most important matches both at national and international level (Champions League finals, European and World football championships, etc.) on television. They are characterized by a strong passion for the sport and a competitive spirit which make them always take sides for one or the other team. In addressing their decision important is the role played by factors such as the popularity of a football player, the fame of a club or the passion for a specific jersey or other tangible aspects such as the country of origin of the teams competing on the pitch, the participation of star players and the refereeing.

Within the random individual and mobile attendance, we have classified sports fans that “sporadically” follow football, mainly but not exclusively through web sites and mobile phones. This category refers to those fans who have a strong interest for the sport but are not emotionally linked to one team, so they use to follow several matches downloading the most thrilling highlights and combining it with “live betting” services, where betting on the event is streamed on web sites or mobile phones.

Constant multimedia fans create virtual communities of people with whom to share their passion for the same team. These fans usually attend matches on pay-tv or through web sites that offer live football services. Through multimedia match attendance, fans are not only able

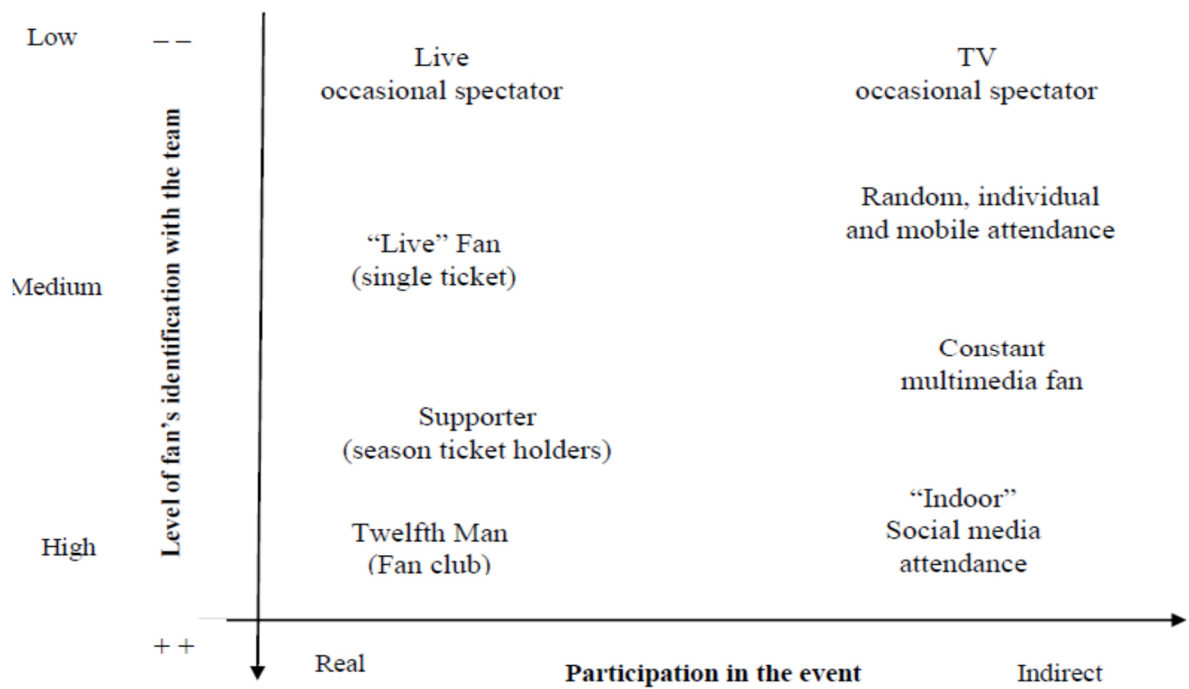
²⁶⁰ Cialdini, RB, Borden, RJ, Thorne, A, Wilker, MR, Freeman, S and Sloan, LR (1076) “Basking in Reflected glory: three (football) studies” *Journal of Personal and Social Psychology*, 34: 366- 75

to follow their own team, but can even have real time exchanges of information with other fans, strengthening their own “ties” with the team. Despite there being no direct participation, the use of new media can increase the fans’ voice and the flow of information and comments, increasing the level of attention paid to the team. By the perspective of the team, the value created on online platforms through interactions among supporters is as important as the one created by those attending the match at the stadium.

The indoor social media attendance segment referring to fans who usually meet up in small groups in public places like cafes, fans’ clubs, etc. or in friends’ and families’ houses for championship and Champions League matches and recreate a sort of “stadium atmosphere”.

The different participation characterizing these fans is closely dependent upon the strategies of the football club both in technical and managerial terms, the role played by the owners, the competitive position of the team, the calendar of events, the media channels on which the sport content is provided (matches, interviews with players and coaches, dedicated channels, etc.), and to social and personal relationships (family, social class, income, etc.). Performance is unarguably one of the variables affecting the participation, but clubs should generate a fans loyalty transcending by this dimension, as the one attached to popularity, history, legend and the international flavor acquired over time.

Moreover, the creation and the improvement of continuous club-supporters’ relationships aimed at preserving a certain level of fan loyalty and avoiding lower levels of identification and participation (generating value for the team) is developed through the ability of each individual football club to undertake new sports-technical challenges and to set up initiatives able to involve the fans. These initiatives might include tangibles such as the modern management of football venues, an exciting team performance, appealing merchandising, the organization of collateral events, the offer of additional services (call center, services online for the fans such as games and chat, info services on mobile phones, etc.) and even the fans’ involvement in strategical revolution affecting the image of the club.



To understand the potential of value creation of these fans, by outlining the different ways in which they can influence the decisions of the management, it is necessary to examine the fans' inclination to cooperate" or, conversely, their "inclination to be a threat" to the football club and for the network as a whole.

Partners have very high cooperative potential, but at the same time may have great control over the football club's decisions and can therefore shape its strategic outcomes. Partner fans can be defined as "rule setters" and may be particularly opinionated and able to voice their concerns towards the football club. Partners are not conceived as individual entities, but rather as a coordinated fan club which interacts with the other stakeholders (football club, media, local government etc.), supports the team and assists the football club in managing ticket sales. In addition, their" strategic behavior is therefore distinguished by a high level of freedom of opinion and action toward the football club, but also by their inclination to be "propositively

open”. Such an attitude, requires the management of the team acts with a spirit of dialogue and negotiation, involving them in its strategic choices.

The group defined collaborator, instead, has a high level of co-operation and a relatively low threat potential. Also, they act as a “collective” dimension and try to establish “friendship and dialogue with the football club, thinking of football merely as an exciting sports event”.²⁶¹ They try to participate in club’s activities and restore the human side to the match–event for example by seeking moments of encounter with the opponents’ supporters through the organization of convivial meetings, twin fan clubs, exchanges of team flags and jerseys, etc. Collaborators, thanks to their friendly attitude, play a fundamental role for the club by granting safety and security to the live venue.

Analyzing the threats, strong danger is posed by contrarians. They have a strongly critical stance towards club’s choices without the minimal intention to collaborate. Management cannot ignore this group of fans since, virally spreading their criticism on blogs, social networks and fans’ web sites, they can affect and harm beliefs and thoughts of other stakeholders, leading in some cases to the deterioration of the social and sports atmosphere.²⁶²

The audience are fans who are characterized by having contextually low cooperation and threat levels. They are apparently passive since they do not express their position through media or fan clubs but they heavily affect club’s revenues²⁶³, for example: not going to the stadium or not purchasing a pay-tv subscription. In this way, they also influence the value of a match’s broadcasting rights thus decreasing this segment of revenues.

Finally, the dysfunctional group appear to have very high threat level and non-existent attitude to collaboration. They are not attracted by the football event, which represent just an occasion to yell out their anger, frustration, and personal dissatisfaction through oral and

²⁶¹ Sancassani, M., *La voce dei tifosi*, Italian Federation of Football Club supporters, June, 2009.

²⁶² Wilson, R., „The six simple principles of viral marketing“, *The web marketing today*, n.70, 2000.

²⁶³ Hunt, K.A., Bristol, T., Bashaw, R.E., „A conceptual approach to classifying sport fans“, *Journal of Services Marketing*, 13(6), 439-452, 1999.

physical abuse of power, destructive fury and violence towards things and people. Violence is mainly the result of the social unease of the individual²⁶⁴ and it is originated by a long process starting in the mind of the individual before the event. The violence of their behavior threat not just the football event and concur to generate negative feedback affecting the entire network of stakeholders (fans, Institutions, media, local citizens, etc.), ruining the reputation of the club.

²⁶⁴ Elias, N., Dunning, E. *Quest for excitement. Sport and leisure in the civilization process*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989.

2.4 Rituals: multiple contributions to the value creation

The pleasure of the supporter experience at the stadium, which is positively affected by perceived crowding,²⁶⁵ impacts the symbolic and the emotional dimension and depends upon the fulfillment of three different dimension: perceived team performance, stadium service quality and spectator induced atmosphere.²⁶⁶

In the sport, the primary service encountered is the live venue but it would be wrong to reduce the consumption experience to a single episode²⁶⁷: for instance, fans debate about the chances of their team before the match and they discuss and dissect the key events of the game,²⁶⁸ grieve for or celebrate their team after the match,²⁶⁹ participate in practicing and performing choreography, marches, and chants both at the stadium and at pre-match gatherings and travel to the away games of their team.

Therefore, many valuable interactions occur beyond the customer's touchpoints with the firm, e.g. in pubs and restaurants,²⁷⁰ in parks,²⁷¹ in fan busses and trains,²⁷² in fan zones,²⁷³ or in online fan forums²⁷⁴ and make sport brands become global, with clubs' supporters around

²⁶⁵ Wakefield, K., & Sloan, H. J. (1995). The effects of team loyalty and selected stadium factors on spectator attendance. *Journal of Sport Management*, 9, 153–172.

²⁶⁶ Woratschek, H. / Horbel, C. & Popp, B. (2010). Extending the Service - Profit Chain: The Role of Identification and Co - Creation. Bayreuth: Wirtschaftswissenschaftliche Diskussionspapiere

²⁶⁷ Flint, D. J. (2006). Innovation, symbolic interaction and customer valuing: Thoughts stemming from a service-dominant logic of marketing. *Marketing Theory*, 6, 349–362.

²⁶⁸ Harris, L. C., & Ogbonna, E. (2008). The dynamics underlying service firm–customer relationships. *Journal of Service Research*, 10, 382–399.

²⁶⁹ Mann, L. (1989). Sports crowds and the collective behavior perspective. In J. H. Goldstein (Ed.), *Sport, games, and play* (pp. 299–332). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

²⁷⁰ Weed, M. (2008). Exploring the sport spectator experience: Virtual football spectatorship in the pub. *Soccer & Society*, 9, 189–197.

²⁷¹ Kytö, M. (2011). We are the rebellious voice of the terraces, we are Çarşı!': Constructing a football supporter group through sound. *Soccer & Society*, 12(1), 77–93.

²⁷² Woratschek, H., Horbel, C., Popp, B., & Roth, S. (2007). A videographic analysis of "weird guys": What do relationships mean to football fans? Business Discussion Paper Series No. 05–07, University of Bayreuth.

²⁷³ Lauss, G., & Szigetvari, A. (2010). Governing by fun: EURO 2008 and the appealing power of fan zones. *Soccer & Society*, 11, 737–747.

²⁷⁴ Healy, J. C., & McDonagh, P. (2013). Consumer roles in brand culture and value co-creation in virtual communities. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(9), 1528–1540.

the world.²⁷⁵ The so-called ‘satellite fans’, despite live far away from their favorite team, and many of them have never visited a game of their own team, generate an important value proposition because they increase the media demand, purchase merchandising, and develop consumption capital in distant markets. This shows how the value is co-created by fans through the satisfaction of social motives, without the need of attending directly the game.²⁷⁶

These interactions with other customers on various platforms during the live venue and even beyond the game day²⁷⁷, which include several groups of other spectators (e.g. family members, opposing fans, own fans, VIPs) and a large number of specific activities of these others (e.g. supporting the team, provoking, performance of choreography),²⁷⁸ contribute to increase a focal customer’s value perception and should therefore not be conceptualized as a ‘less authentic’ or ‘passive’ form of fandom that is only used by ‘flaneurs’.²⁷⁹

Therefore, all these multiple interactions with fans-consumers, especially those going beyond the consumption moment represent different components of the co-creation process. Among these, fundamental importance is acquired by ritual behaviors connected to sport events and teams and (a) how widespread they are; (b) how they form and why; and (c) the relationship between engagement in rituals and other desirable attitudes and behaviors. Indeed, a positive relationship was found to exist between ritual behavior and outcomes such as satisfaction, team identification, merchandise expenditure and game attendance, resulting in a strengthening of the connection between team and fans.

²⁷⁵ Kerr, A. K., & Emery, P. R. (2011). Foreign fandom and the Liverpool FC: A cyber-mediated romance. *Soccer & Society*, 12, 880–896.

²⁷⁶ Kelley, S. W., & Tian, K. (2004). Fanatical consumption: An investigation of the behavior of sports fans through textual data. In L. R. Kahle & C. Riley (Eds.), *Sports marketing and the psychology of marketing communication* (pp. 27–66). Hillsdale, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum.

²⁷⁷ Kerr, A. K., & Emery, P. R. (2011). Foreign fandom and the Liverpool FC: A cyber-mediated romance. *Soccer & Society*, 12, 880–896.

²⁷⁸ Woratschek, H., & Durchholz, C. (2012b). Co-creation of value by other customers – Evidence in sports. Business Discussion Paper Series No. 04–12, University of Bayreuth.

²⁷⁹ Gibbons, T., & Dixon, K. (2010). ‘Surf’s up!’: A call to take English soccer fan interactions on the Internet more seriously. *Soccer & Society*, 11, 599–613, p. 604.

Ritualized ways in which fans consume sport products represent a form of co-creation where they act together with the organizations to create value.²⁸⁰ The creation of, and the participation in, rituals is the way through which sports fans operate as an active participant in the creation and standardization of their individual sports experience. Hence, the customer becomes integrant part of the creative process providing inputs and increasing the ability of the team to customize offerings to supporters needs.²⁸¹ Furthermore, it is showed that participants in these rituals, not only enhance their own experience and create value, but in undertaking rituals were seen to add value for other non-participating spectators, by increasing motivation to attend games.

The rituals involving spectators in sporting events involve “meaningful artefacts”²⁸² expressive of the identification and affiliation process and may be performed individually or as part of a collective group. For example, seeing other fans wearing and using team merchandise likely motivates fans and members to purchase more team merchandise in the future, so that they can be seen and feel like a true member of the sport fan consumption community. Others rituals include tailgating, organizing activities before or after a game, wearing team colors, decorating bodies, using instruments, creating signs and banners, eating particular foods planning cheering activities, singing team songs or chants and actively participating in creating contents on internet and socials.²⁸³ Even praying or using lucky charms for the team success are considered ritual activities.²⁸⁴ Rituals characterizing brand community behavior tend to be

²⁸⁰ A positive relationship was found to exist between ritual behavior and outcomes such as satisfaction, team identification, merchandize expenditure and game attendance.

²⁸¹ Auh, S., Bell, S., McLeod, C., & Shih, C. (2007). Co-production and customer loyalty in financial services. *Journal of Retailing*, 83(3), 359–370.

²⁸² Percy, M. and Taylor, R. (1991), “Something for the weekend, sir? Leisure ecstasy and identity in football and contemporary religion”, *Leisure Studies*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 37-49.

²⁸³ Chun, S., Gentry, J. W., & McGinnis, L. P. (2005). Ritual aspects of sports consumption: How do sports fans become ritualised? *Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research*, 6, 331–336.

²⁸⁴ Neale, L., Mizerski, R., & Lee, A. (2008). Measuring consumer rituals: A marketing application. In Proceedings Winter American Marketing Association Educators Conference: Marketing the organisation and its products and services.

performed at particular times with regular patterns of behavior, before, during and after the game, with team schedules and aspects of the stadium providing such circumstances.²⁸⁵

In addition to escapism, social interaction, identity, involvement and enhancement of the game experience, engaging in such ritual behaviors act as a tension releaser.²⁸⁶

Rituals are highly dependent on symbols, like colors, mascots and stadium, as drivers of meaning and to be effective, a ritual must repeat its basic messages over time, to assist participants and observers with the same level of cognitive functioning regarding the experience.²⁸⁷ Having said that, it follows that even if rituals may evolve over time, they are largely resistant to change except for those situations where changes are imposed by external forces (such as policy amendments, tragic events associated with performing rituals, imitation of others or circumstantial changes). Therefore, they are learnt and communicated from family, friends or community members, or through experiences, observation and imitation of other fans as well as media and supporter groups identified as ‘ritual specialists’ or points of socially recognized authority, to lead and communicate the performance of rituals.²⁸⁸

The aim of the club is to spread and to preserve over the time those elements which customers want to make resistant to the change: the more fans are resistant to switching, the more loyal to the club they will be, regardless for the team performances. Being engaged in rituals fans interact among them and increase opportunities to exchange knowledge,²⁸⁹ by adding value to the experience of attending games, and therefore those more engaged in sports communities would be expected to have higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty to teams. Fans,

²⁸⁵ Rappaport, R. A. (1996). The obvious aspects of ritual. In R. L. Grimes (Ed.), *Readings in ritual studies*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

²⁸⁶ Chun, S., Gentry, J. W., & McGinnis, L. P. (2005). Ritual aspects of sports consumption: How do sports fans become ritualised? *Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research*, 6, 331–336.

²⁸⁷ Davis-Floyd, R. E. (1996). Ritual in the hospital: Giving birth the American way. In R. L. Grimes (Ed.), *Readings in ritual studies*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

²⁸⁸ Bell, C. (1992). Constructing ritual. In R. L. Grimes (Ed.), *Readings in ritual studies*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

²⁸⁹ Goethals, G. T. (1996). Ritual: Ceremony and super Sunday. In R. L. Grimes (Ed.), *Readings in ritual studies*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

in fact, use rituals to belong to a group²⁹⁰ and to identify themselves with other fans as much as with the team. Rituals recalling club history and tradition, driving emotions and showing “the right way to do things”²⁹¹ contribute to enhance the enjoyment of the game, leading to fan complete satisfaction.

In addition, when a fan knows behaviors which exemplify the rituals and traditions associated with the team and thus has the opportunity to act and feel like a true member of the consumption community, he/she participates in the rituals, traditions, and other related team-based activities. Moreover, continued participation in rituals, traditions, and other related team-based activities reinforces feelings of fans’ membership in the consumption community and increases collaboration and integration in the community.²⁹²

In turn, the positive experience lived and the perception of being part of something increase the individual’s preferences for club’s goods and generate a repetition of the purchase and a positive word-of-mouth.²⁹³ Such a positive word-of-mouth behavior includes sharing information about goods or services,²⁹⁴ giving recommendations regarding product choices²⁹⁵ and, most fundamental aspect in the value creation, promoting the team to others.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁰ Marshall, D. A. (2002). Behavior, belonging and belief: A theory of ritual practice. *Sociological Theory*, 20(3), 360–380.

²⁹¹ Houston, H. R. (1999). Through pain and perseverance: Liminality, ritual consumption, and the social construction of gender in contemporary Japan. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 26(1), 542–548.

²⁹² Dionisio, P., Leal, C., & Moutinho, L. (2008). Fandom affiliation and tribal behavior: A sports marketing application. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 11, 17–39.

²⁹³ McDonald, H. (2010). The factors influencing churn rates among season ticket holders: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Sport Management*, 24(6), 676–701.

²⁹⁴ Thompson, S. A., & Sinha, R. K. (2008). Brand communities and new product adoption – The influence and limits of oppositional loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, 72, 65–80.

²⁹⁵ Arora, H. (2009). A conceptual study of brand communities. *The Icfai University Journal of Brand Management*, 6, 7–21.

²⁹⁶ Ahonen, T. T., & Moore, A. (2005). *Communities dominate brands: Business and marketing challenges for the 21st century*. London: futuretext.

2.5 Co-destruction of value

As stated above, traditional concepts of value creation in sport contexts, where the value, as a service, is exclusively created by the firm and delivered to the customer in exchange for goods or money,²⁹⁷ has been revolutionized by several evidences.

Hence, fans are an integral part of the entire surrounding characterizing live sport events at the stadia. Through their behaviors, actions (e.g. singing, waving flags and performing choreographies) and affective reactions to stimuli spectators jointly shape the stadium atmosphere²⁹⁸ by creating value for them as well as for others.²⁹⁹ Affecting the central value dimension of the live venue, fans lose their passive role to become co-creator of value. On the other side, sport managers aim to exploit this form of co-creation to have a good stadium atmosphere at their venues, as it impacts the possibilities of improving all the involved actors' well-being.³⁰⁰

Value, though, cannot be assessed on a global level, but it is individually evaluated and determined by each concerned actor: although value is co-created in a collective process, it is strongly linked to personal experiences.³⁰¹ It means that value is strictly linked to the adaptability of the beneficiary.

Another concern refers to the fact that, despite providing a good basic condition for the creation of value, through the provision of catering, seating, security personnel and so forth, service providers cannot provide value independently, but just to make a value proposition that

²⁹⁷ Parks, J. B., Quarterman, J., & Thibault, L. (2011). Managing sport in the 21st century. In P. M. Pedersen, J. B. Parks, J. Quarterman, & L. Thibault (Eds.), *Contemporary sport management* (4th ed., pp. 4–27). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

²⁹⁸ Chen, C.-Y., Lin, Y.-H., & Chiu, H.-T. (2013). Development and psychometric evaluation of sport stadium atmosphere scale in spectator sport events. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 13 (2), 200–215.

²⁹⁹ Woratschek, H., & Durchholz, C. (2012). Co-creation of value by other customers. Universität Bayreuth, Bayreuth.

³⁰⁰ Maglio, P. P., & Spohrer, J. (2008). Fundamentals of service science. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 18–20.

³⁰¹ Helkkula, A., Kelleher, C., & Pihlstrom, M. (2012). Characterizing value as an experience: Implications for service researchers and managers. *Journal of Service Research*, 15(1), 59–75.

customers may accept.³⁰² So, being involved other actors in the value creation process, the stadium operator cannot fully control what happens inside the stadium and, therefore, ward off the possibility that spectators can use value propositions as they see fit to maximize their own well-being.

However, it is not obvious that the contributions of supporters would lead to the enhancement of the above-mentioned well-being. Indeed, value co-destruction is also a possible outcome of collaboration between the different actors involved in the service process.³⁰³ This circumstance defined also “devaluing”,³⁰⁴ is ‘...an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the systems’ wellbeing...’.³⁰⁵ That happens when there is an incongruence of procedures, engagement and understandings among supporters and clubs, and impacts five interaction value practices (informing, greeting, delivering, charging and helping); or, even if only the potential enhancement of well-being has not been met.³⁰⁶

Here, it emerges that co-destruction may be the result of the inability of meeting up the fans’ expectations about the achievement of a certain future state³⁰⁷ and, in turn, can easily cause another value dimension (e.g. physical skills and aesthetics of the game) to gain or lose importance for the individual, leading to the depression of the entire perception of the brand value. The outcome of the

³⁰² Vargo, S. L., Lusch, R. F., Akaka, M. A., & He, Y. (2010). Service-dominant logic: A review and assessment. In N. K. Malhotra (Ed.), *Review of marketing research* (pp. 125–167). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

³⁰³ Echeverri, P., & Skalen, P. (2011). Co-creation and co-destruction: A practice-theory based study of interactive value formation. *Marketing Theory*, 11, 351–373.

³⁰⁴ Woodruff, R. B., & Flint, D. J. (2006). Marketing’s service-dominant logic and customer value. In R. F. Lusch & S. L. Vargo (Eds.), *The service-dominant logic of marketing. Dialog, debate, and directions* (pp. 183–195). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

³⁰⁵ Plé, L., & Cáceres, R. C. (2010). Not always co-creation: Introducing interactional co-destruction of value in service-dominant logic. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 24, 430–437, p.431.

³⁰⁶ Smith, A. (2013). The value co-destruction process: A customer resource perspective. *European Journal of Marketing*, 47(11/12), 1889–1909.

³⁰⁷ Robinson, L. (2012). Managing customer expectations of sport organizations. In L. Robinson, P. Chelladurai, G. Bodet, & P. Downward (Eds.), *Routledge international handbooks. Routledge handbook of sport management* (pp. 57–68). London, New York, NY: Routledge.

interactional process, so the level of satisfaction achieved, is thus predetermined by actors' expectations of different practices.

Furthermore, sport fans are a group of actors that cannot be viewed as a homogenous group of spectators that has only one way of using its operand resources, and has only one perception of created or destroyed value: "There is no 'average fan' in a stadium who experiences an 'average value outcome'".³⁰⁸ For instance, home and away fans strongly differ in what use of operand resources they would regard as value creating (the chants that create value for home fans may have a value destroying effect on away fans) and the club, as a service provider, can do little to manage this process. So, the same actions creating value for one actor may destroy value for another, and this merely depends on consumers' expectations and their perception of the situation.

One emblematic example to emphasize the role of supporters in the value co-creation and, consequently, their potential of co-destruction is given by what happens in two German Bundesliga football games during the 2012/2013 season. In fact, fans of football clubs in Germany's top two divisions had planned a silent protest (in German: 'Stimmungsboykott') against an initiative called 'Safe Stadium Experience', to establish tighter security guidelines. For this reason, most fans throughout Germany collaboratively expressed their annoyance by remaining silent for the first 12 minutes and 12 seconds on three match days. With this action, they aimed to demonstrate how the football experience would change without fan support, since they demonstrate to remove the atmosphere from the stadiums'.³⁰⁹ This protest shows how it is impossible to create a positive stadium atmosphere without the collaboration of the fans and renouncing to this contribution can thus be considered co-destructive. Furthermore, with the

³⁰⁸ Chandler, J. D., & Vargo, S. L. (2011). Contextualization and value-in-context: How context frames exchange. *Marketing Theory*, 11(1), 35–49.

³⁰⁹ Ruf, C. (2012, November 27). Zwölf Minuten Schweigen in den Kurven. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* [Twelve minutes of silence in the stands].

stadium being a platform for value creation, it emerges that the effects of value co-destruction goes beyond the levels of the fans as actors.

Creating the stadium atmosphere enhances the fans' self-esteem and provides them with a sense of power, or helps improve their own status in the fan scene, by, contextually, improving their attachment to the club's brand and the event's proposition of value for external actors, like those assisting the match online or in TV.

Obviously, management also faces some challenges related to the rituals. Indeed, apart from the partial relinquishment of control by the organization, due to the strategical involvement of customers, there are some consumer behaviors which may threaten the brand and the organization's viability. One of these is certainly the Hooliganism, defined as "a specific form of competitive violence organized by fan groups"³¹⁰. Such an aggressive fan behavior, including vandalism, intimidation and violence among supporters, if not adequately controlled by the management, may lead to problems like sanctions and ban from competitions.

Another evident limit is given by the attempt of managers of corporatizing ritual behavior for commercial and financial purposes. The creation of manufactured rituals generates strong supporters' resistance and runs counter the co-creation concept. Management, instead, should try to cooperate with influential individuals of the community to positively stimulate rituals behavior, but should leave supporter groups to enforce their own norms.

At this purpose, an opportunity to increase the enhancement of ritualistic behavior before and after games, and the enlargement of the community, may coincide with the establishment of a home-base exclusively for fans.³¹¹

Moreover, also to the strong proliferation of sports and the progress of technologies create some problems to the relationship with supporters. Indeed, traditional supporters find difficult

³¹⁰ Spaaij, R. (2007). Football hooliganism as a transnational phenomenon: Past and present analysis: A critique—More specificity and less generality. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24(4), 411–431.

³¹¹ Karg, A. J., H. McDonald, H. (2014). Managing co-creation in professional sports: The antecedents and consequences of ritualized spectator behavior. *Sport Management Review* 17 (2014) 292–309

to adapt themselves to the new, online environment as well as to the increase of the ticket prices, which has made unaffordable to them to live the stadium experience. They perceive this change as an attempt to deny to the whole community “to grow up in the match going culture”³¹². That is why, trying to resist to the market, and not to the community, they attach their tribe identity to history, culture and values of the club whilst being a completely un-connected not-for-profit business.

Furthermore, the progress allows fans a constant, real-time access and, as a consequence, they have always higher concerns and expectations for the sport show offered, and so the way they are spending money to live sport attractions, which force managers to the difficult challenge of retaining elusive fans.³¹³

To do so, one of the secrets involves heightening their attractions to the properties by emphasizing rivalries, which means giving fans a team to cheer for and a team to cheer against.³¹⁴ Sport fans, indeed, hold an inherent desire for a competitive sport contest, and the association with rivalries can enhance the sport experience and increase attendance, viewership and overall consumption. Rivalries create the foundation for story lines that ingratiate the sport fan and consumer to one team or athlete over another. Focusing on this dimension, managers needs to frame promotional campaigns, use them to heighten fan interest, and thus better connect with fans in a crowded marketplace. No one athlete or team can win forever, but the drama attached to the competitive aspect can sustain and perpetuate fan interest and participation.

³¹²BBC (March 18). Reds fans form 'affordable' club. BBC News. WWW document. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/football/teams/l/liverpool/7303144.stm>

³¹³ Rein, I., Kotler, P., & Shields, B. (2006). The elusive fan: Reinventing sports in a crowded marketplace. *Future Research Quarterly, Winter*, 66-76.

³¹⁴ Trail, G., Robinson, M., Dick, R., & Gillentine, A. (2003). Motives and points of attachment: Fans versus spectators in intercollegiate athletics. *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 12* (4), 217-227.

2.6 Relevant fan's engagement

Each team has the mission of maximizing its value, but just few have understood that the most valuable asset to which leverage on it's becoming the fans. The secret of the success is now to excel during each stage of the customer lifecycle: in acquiring new fans, in growing their lifetime value, and in converting them into advocates.

The value creation is just the result of meaningful interaction with fans wherever they are - whether that means engaging on social media, presenting a unified experience across devices, or personalizing content and communications. Successful sports marketers are doing this by implementing an engagement marketing strategy - and what they do, continuously over time.

It appears evident the need for clubs to adopt the rebranding to address strategies to enhance and exploit in a profitable way fans' contributions. Put the fans at the center of the creative process gives the possibility to make quicker steps, shortening the time between idea and outcome, so that you can create more—and better targeted—programs. Then, the maximization of the value created through the supporters' engagement depends on the genuineness and the sincerity of the relationship and on ability in exploiting the following five factors.

First, the link with the fans gives the possibility to offer hyper relevant communications that speak to them as individuals allowing for a direct, tailored marketing. Second, in targeting customers it is relevant their behavior and what they are actually interested in, not the demographic and what they might be interested in. Third, supporters' engagement must be perceived a natural continuation of a conversation: The more time that you devote to that conversation, the more you know about your customers, and its evolution over the time, the higher chances you have to drive purchase decisions and the greater value you can create. Fourth, the relationship with fans doesn't have to lose the focus over its unique goal: ensuring that you get the most value out of your fans, and they get the most value out of your offerings. Finally, the offered experience must be consistent and delivered across every single platform

of contact. Meeting your fan where there are, in real time maintains the momentum of your brand and makes your marketing more timely, relevant and effective.

Focusing on fans means try to maximize the potential lifetime value they can deliver to the organization, thanks to the threefold investment that fans make when they become members - investing time, money and emotion.

Involving the fans in decision-making has a rich history.

Mark Cuban, when first took ownership of the Dallas Mavericks, provided his email and told fans he wanted to hear from them, and then he responded to each one. Or Bill Veeck's Grandstand Managers Day in 1951 allowed 100 St. Louis Browns fans to make out the lineup and make decisions during the game by holding up placards with "yes" or "no" in response to questions such as "Should we change pitchers?" A modern-day example is the Seattle Sounders Democracy in Action program, whereby the general manager is employed at the will of the membership.

Interesting it was even the Golden State Warriors initiative aimed to let fans develop ideas to demonstrate their creativity. They organized an Adobe Creative T-shirt Design Contest for their Fan Appreciation Night. The contest offered fans who submitted designs a creative and fun experience, and presented a unique T-shirt for fans who received the giveaway.

Also, there are several cases in which the involvement of fans has been far more crucial since it influenced the decision-making process at some strategical level:

- Choosing/determining a logo: Tennessee Titans, Baltimore Ravens, New York City FC;
- Choosing a name for the franchise: Kansas City Royals, New York Mets, Atlanta's new MLS team, Miami Dolphins;
- Stadium location: Barcelona FC;
- Uniform: Cleveland Browns, Kent State;

- Hat/Cap: St. Louis Cardinals fans decide on road cap;
- Rule: Harlem Globetrotters ask fans to propose a rule to change the game/outcome;
- Opponent: Floyd Mayweather asking fans to vote to determine his next opponent;
- Play: Portland State University football. Fans submit plays and are compensated \$10 for every yard gained if their play is selected;
- Pairings: Hyundai Tournament of Champions. Fans could vote on one of three choices as to who would be paired with Dustin Johnson;
- Food: Milwaukee Brewers let fans submit recipes and vote on concession items.

Fans' involvement may lead to fan development and ultimately result in fan engagement: they are no longer passive spectators. They're active, vocal, creative and expressive – sharing content, protesting and having a greater influence on sporting outcomes. And the rise of social media means they're becoming far more integrated in the action. “The future will be about making sports fans part of the show, in the venue and at home. Even if a fan is sitting on the sofa, they still want to feel they can have an impact, to become part of the process. we need to learn from the success of the reality talent shows and make fans the protagonists”.³¹⁵

And as fans become more empowered, they will demand greater control. The sheer number of fans content is driving social media channels to explore ways to filter and surface powerful fan content and make it part of the narrative. Fans don't just want to see their selfies on the big screen or hashtags on a ticker, they want to be part of the action. designed to intimidate visiting teams with an 'intense' spectator experience, amplifying crowd noise in a way that improves the team's performance.

³¹⁵ Colajanni, L., media delegate for Formula E.

Moreover, the proliferation of technologies and the internet helps the co-creation of value beyond the game day.³¹⁶ Online interactions allow for an extension beyond the virtual world and thus become a precursor of face-to-face encounters, for instance if fans arrange car sharing via team-related social media platforms to travel to games together³¹⁷. Or, mobile devices allow customers to be in touch with others almost anywhere at any time.³¹⁸ Accordingly, it appears clear that interactions among team sports customers in online environments extend the match day long into the Week.³¹⁹

Furthermore, real-time, in-play action has revolutionized betting. As these simulations become more sophisticated, they may become a platform to train and recruit future managers.

Life as a fan used to mean limited opportunities to dig into your passion – a few magazines and the occasional broadcast. But the rapid rise of smartphones means that being a fan is now a 24/7 behavior. At the same time, live sports have become almost ‘unmissable’. Live action is central to the fan experience – but it is limited. The 24/7 fan is looking for ways to get their fix during down-time and to follow sports throughout the year, even off-season. Now that social media has established itself in the arsenal of athletes and teams, there is a new need to fill – meaningful content out of season.

The pre- and post-game coverage at sports events will become an increasingly important part of the offering, increasing the ‘eustress’ and ‘entertainment’ elements. In other words, they do not substitute one medium for another, instead adding it together to meet an ‘urgent need to stay connected with sports all day’. Fans know that if they go online when a game is taking place, they will find people to interact with. They know that if they post content in the right

³¹⁶ Brown, A. (2008). Our club, our rules: Fan communities at FC United of Manchester. *Soccer & Society*, 9, 346–358.

³¹⁷ Dixon, K. (2011). A ‘third way’ for football fandom research: Anthony Giddens and structuration theory. *Soccer & Society*, 12, 279–298.

³¹⁸ Hennig-Thurau, T., Malthouse, E. C., Friege, C., Gensler, S., Lobschat, L., Rangaswamy, A., & Skiera, B. (2010). The impact of new media on customer relationships. *Journal of Service Research*, 13, 311–330.

³¹⁹ Healy, J. C., & McDonagh, P. (2013). Consumer roles in brand culture and value co-creation in virtual communities. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(9), 1528–1540.

time and place, it will form part of the sport's digital story. This brings fans ever closer to their sport, and the development of technology will only enhance this experience in years to come. Fans will be consuming sports everywhere – on their commute, at work, even on the toilet – and out-of-home media will provide content like live scores, news and replays. However, with new innovations in media and technology – from bigger screens to virtual reality – fans are finding new opportunities to personalize the experience and reach deeper immersion. To win the fan passion “You need to be a lot more entertaining to get the impact.”³²⁰

Focus will shift to contextually aware apps with special features for attending fans. In-stadium e-commerce will heighten the experience. Stadia will be part of a wider package that fuses sport with entertainment, retail, food service, leisure and tourism. Stadia will focus on awe-inspiring experiences. Venues will focus on amplifying mass social experiences. Atmosphere and energy become crucial parts of the live experience. The live experience is about memory-making. Fans take more photos when they're in the stadium than at home because 'being there' has social currency – especially when history is being written. “There are only so many people you can fit in a stadium, so you want to give those fans on the other side of the world a similar experience and make it as rich and compelling as possible outside of the typical TV screen. That's where virtual reality could become important – to be able to feel part of that experience wherever you are”.³²¹

Another consideration to be done about the fans' attachment to professional sports is linked to the evidence that they are becoming more expensive and elitist. Thus, everyday fans will have to spend more money just to stay connected. However, the reality is that “People are finding ways to adjust their budgets so that they can go. If the fan base is highly identified, they'll keep paying whatever it takes.”³²²

³²⁰ De Vries, R., global head of marketing and brand strategy at Nissan

³²¹ Barker, P., head of commercial acquisition for the FA.

³²² Wann, D., sports fan psychologist.

Finally, it also emerges the social potential of the sports show. With such huge reach, sports provide some of the most powerful platforms to inspire positive change in the world. Research shows that fans not only see athletes as role models in sport, but in life generally, and they consider personality to be more important than skill. Venues and stadia become more focused on sustainability. Sport will take leadership on discrimination, as it provides some of the most important platforms for tackling racism, ageism or sexism.

2.6.1 Practical impact of the co-creative rebranding

What it all comes down to is that the world of professional sports is a business and like so many other choices an organization makes, rebranding is a business decision and should be treated as such. But in this case, fans lead the change.

The implementation of the rebranding has to take into account that is dealing with something ‘sacred’ and managing a piece of community property, not a business asset: it is a repository of people’s emotional associations. Clubs need to promise an experience which is in line with what believed and appreciated about the brand by effectively involving customers and making them act as a “touchstone” in guiding what the brand does.

The need for the rebranding is also confirmed by a legendary former Manchester United’s player, Paddy Crerand.³²³ He explained how the ‘ethos’ of Manchester United to entertain was vital to the club and where it ultimately derived its appeal as a brand. From George Best, to Cantona, Beckham, Giggs and today Rooney and Ronaldo, the club has sought out the most exciting players and associated itself with a special, swaggering glamour. Sir Hector Laing, once Group Chief Executive of Britain’s United Biscuits, memorably said: ‘Buildings become dilapidated. Machines wear out. People die. But what live on are the brands’. This is why brands

³²³ Smith, S. and Milligan, A. (2002) ‘Uncommon practice — People who deliver a great brand experience’, FT Prentice Hall, NJ, USA.

should be constantly reviewed, so that they live on profitably and for the benefit of the ‘community’ they serve long after the brand owner has gone.

As I have already underlined, the experience begins long before the match starts and continues long after. It follows that the meaning delivered by sport brands, and so the enjoyment of the customer journey, have always less to do with what happens on the pitch and more to do with everything else surrounding it. During it, the brand needs to effectively reflect its values and promises and understand the aspects that make customers incline to pay more to get what they want.

Furthermore, there is another crucial assumption to keep in mind: as stated by the Procter and Gamble’s speaker ‘We don’t own our brands, our consumers do’. Consumers own the brand experience and give the permission to play in their lives. They have no contractual responsibility to the brand but they feel an enormous sense of ownership and expect the brand to have an obligation to them. They want to know everything about the brand and with mobile technology and the internet, they can do it anytime, anywhere, anyhow. The brand has to continuously stimulate and stoke this desire of information of supporters: silence is not an option because it would lead to miss the opportunity to build a rewarding relationship with one’s audience; or, at worst it can actively disengage them. This system would also act as a defensive mechanism in the case of negative publicity affecting the brand: genuine goodwill brand has developed during its existence, would activate fans in telling what they know to be true about it, not just to people close to them, but even on internet and mass media.

In such a framework, it appears clear that the rebranding strategies involves a carefully assessment about the choice of commercial partners since they have to ‘fit’ with their brands and culture. Nowadays, the dictate is to look for shared cultures, shared brand values and shared aims which forgo a potentially lucrative option in the short term for the benefits of a better and more sustained long-term option, enhancing the development of ‘soft’ measures such as

awareness, preference, acceptability instead that ‘hard’ measures such as profitability and sales forecasts.

The co-creation driving the rebranding requires five brand values³²⁴ which have to be exploited in order to deliver the wanted image and to gather positive reactions among supporters. The first one refers to the team performances. It relates to fans emotions and actions if the brand is successful. If the brand performs well (on-the-pitch), then fans are more likely to show a positive response and engage in increased support and activities, such as to talk about the team, attend matches, take others to matches, wear a replica shirt, buy club merchandise, visit official club and fanzine web sites, subscribe to a club magazine and become more interested in football as a whole. Second important factor is the organization ability of the club. Fans show strong concerns about their club has financial stability, funds to buy new players and a plan for future growth (a strong youth academy, a top manager and coaches and a go-ahead board of directors). Fans also want their club to act according to value of honesty and integrity and it matters to them that the club has a good relationship with the community. Another aspect which matters to fans is the respect of the “nostalgia dimension”: history, tradition and perceived knowledge. In fact, they want the respect of team logo, motto, sponsors, the mascot, and the team’s nickname because representative of the team existence. They also have knowledge of classic victories, goal scorers and opponents in cup runs and other past successes. Then it is fundamental to fans the organization of initiatives and activities related to the brand which are not strictly related to the match but can improve its attendance. Examples may be official transport to matches, participation to events organized by the club and, also, making informal swaps of seats. Finally, the last aspect refers to the capacity of the brand of enhancing the self-esteem of supporters. Indeed, they experience a personal emotional response to how

³²⁴ Bridgewater, S., Stray, S. (2002). Modern Tribes: Brand Values and a Typology of Premiership Football Fans. Warwick Business School Working Paper.

the brand performs. It follows that fans feel better about themselves and consider that they gain respect from friends and colleagues if the team they support is successful.

Such a framework suggests one fundamental thing to keep in mind: Every part of a rebrand comes down to the fans. It can happen that the club becomes so isolated from its target fan base that the connection is nearly non-existent, prompting ownership to look for a way to revitalize the brand. These changes, if handled well, will help the organization to feel more in-touch with the times and can strike a deeper chord with not only sales but the community as well.

To put in a nutshell, the sporting event and its co-creation of value can be seen as a mutually network process of all actors contributing to the “output”, where the value produced by the supporters could be of prominent importance due to social relationships, rituals of fan groups and the phenomenon of distancing from occasional spectators.³²⁵ Fans are not spectators: they don’t want just to see a well-played game regardless of which team won or loss, but they are motivated to attend a game to cheer on their favorite teams and players.

Indeed, nowadays the satisfaction of the customers’ needs is becoming ancillary to the establishment, development, and maintenance of successful relationships between consumers and the sport organization that can be accomplished through organizing, using, and supporting sport fan consumption communities.

Some sport organizations and their personnel proved had been successful in the attempt to bridge the gap by promoting more understanding while also bonding with and improving their relationships with fans and their communities

For instance, Columbus Crew SC certainly understood the benefit of doing a rebrand correctly. The club is the MLS franchise based out of Columbus, Ohio. For the first 19 years of the franchise’s existence they were known as The Columbus Crew, and were a founding member of Major League Soccer back in 1996. While re-branding in 2015 they chose to make

³²⁵ Bühler, A., Chadwick, S. & Nufer, G. (2009). Relationship Marketing in Sports. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

the change to Columbus Crew SC (Soccer Club). They also decided that along with the new name should come a new logo. While re-designing the logo Columbus Crew SC organization focused on the history of the team as well as the culture of the supporters' groups of Crew SC.

Owner Anthony Precourt said in a club statement "Our new badge and word-mark truly reflect who we are as a club, from our origins and historical accomplishments to our connection with Columbus and our unique fan culture". The new logo and rebrand have been received incredibly well by fans thus far, and helped Columbus Crew SC celebrate a great year as the not only made it to the MLS Cup Final, but ended up hosting the event as well.



Another example of fan centrality in a marketing strategy comes from the tennis. The All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) appointed data-driven sports marketing agency Two Circles, to help it better understand and communicate with its audiences across all brand touchpoints. The particular focus of the partnership was to create a data management foundation aimed to catch greater insight into Wimbledon audiences to increase engagement across all digital platforms, through more tailored communications. The will was obviously to exploit the gathered data to enhance guest experiences at every brand touchpoint.

Alexandra Willis, head of communications, content and digital at the All England Lawn Tennis Club, said: "Wimbledon engages with audiences worldwide and we want everyone to experience the best of The Championships, whether they're sitting in Centre Court or are hundreds of miles away in their own living room. With people wanting to get closer to the action, it is more important than ever to understand our guests' requirements, what content they want and how they want to consume it".

Another attempt to shed the corporate image strengthening the prominent role played by fans is the English Premier League rebranding. Indeed, the club wants to acquire a more human image, becoming fan friendly. The reason of the move is well explained by Rupert Pratt, managing partner at sports agency Generate Sponsorship: “the commercial equity as a rights holder is your fans, so the more the brand means to fans, the more appealing it is for partners. It’s a sensible move.”

The need to make the EPL’s brand to appeal to more fans is finally explained by Jez Hayter, creative director at sports agency Creative Midfield: “We have seen a trend in sporting brands becoming more open, where the brand has to talk to the community that supports the sport itself. In essence, it’s about supporting the supporters. The new identity means the brand doesn’t feel like it’s a big corporation that pumps a lot of money into the sport – it feels like it’s owned by the community, supporters and the people who play.”

A further example hails out from the soccer. Indeed, just few time after the successful rebranding, Manchester City FC placed its fans front and center of its newly re-launched website, designed from the bottom up on the principle of co-creation. Mancity.com dovetailed with the release of a new club badge and had been created in partnership with supporters through several phases of focus groups, surveys, prototype designs, and user testing.

Adopting a mobile-first strategy the portal allows to interact by swiping, tapping or clicking and boasts several features such as City Now which offers a real-time feed of club news. Furthermore, the site features more video footage through CityTV where members can create their own customized playlists.

Diego Gigliani, senior vice-president of media and innovation for City Football Marketing, commented: “The main benefits of the new mancity.com can be described simply: more of the content you’ll love with a better overall experience. The site is mobile-first, video-rich, and features a range of content from across the club, our teams and players, our fan base and the

wider football community. It adapts to the match cycles, makes it easier to discover trending or related content, and contains a fresh and modern design.”

Contents are presented within a redesigned navigation system with an adaptive homepage which responds to match day’s and other key events. Just last week the club was also the first football team to launch a Facebook Messenger bot. Other recent digital innovations for City include the first ever Premier League game broadcast live in virtual reality, the launch of an official Manchester City Giphy page and the installation of a 360-degree camera in the players’ tunnel.

The website unveiled represents the result of “months of research, planning and development” which they say, “proactively engaged the club’s fan base throughout the process” and it’s designed “with mobile use at its heart”.

The restyling reflects both the new expectations of our digital fans and our vision of where media consumption is heading. He added: “The new site is the latest example of our sustained commitment to innovating across the club, all directed at better connecting with our fans in both Manchester and around the world and ultimately strengthening our sense of community.”

Even the Aston Villa, in the attempt of being successful, has created and managed focus group with some core supporters to let them express their criticisms and perplexities about the hold style of the “villains”, that many considered not appropriated for a global appeal. The fans’ concerns were more orientated towards the lion’s effigy and on the colors, despite that on the text. And respecting fans thoughts, club decided to insert claws to the lion’s paw, symbol of strength, valour and bravery, and enlarged the logo. Furthermore, to appeal supporters, which were obviously emotionally attached to the previous logo, and to maintain coherence to what done until that moment the badge hadn’t been dramatically revolutionized. That was confirmed by Holt, cofounder of Someone, the agency that in charge of rebranding the logo: “the change lead to a significant improvement not to distort the identity created in many years of life. This work has to be undertaken with sensitivity.”

Another proof of the importance of knowing who is your target and how to best involve them in your strategy, is given by the Atlanta Hawks, a team of the NBA.

The problem was that the many NBA fans living in Atlanta loved rival teams instead of their Hawks. Furthermore, this led to another paradox that many clubs around the world have: The Hawks won't attract top talent until the building is full of Hawks fans... but the building won't be full of Hawks fans until the Hawks have top talent. They needed to convert these people into Hawks fans, and it had to be done by going after younger generations and embracing the diversity of the Atlanta city.

The attention was so focused on a diverse group of his millennial, fans and non-fans, to which, thanks to focus group, were asked their impressions about various marketing proposals likely to help the club in the future. "I wanted to get confirmation because I wasn't the target," said the marketing executive. Getting people back to the seats required more than just a paint job and new logo. They needed to invent a totally new concept inside the Philips Arena, they needed to create an exciting experience for their fans. It required approaching the game as a form of entertainment.

So, Koonin tried to make the Hawks games an unforgettable experience from the time you enter to the time you leave, and this is something that young people love. Each game now starts with a 3D court projection, cheerleading, games for fans, dancers, acrobatics by high-flying basketball dunkers, and, of course, the actual game. "We're not going to build it the traditional way by taking out a ton of ads and blasting our message on radio like we're selling a product, because we're not." Koonin said for ESPN. They are selling an emotion. It's a sentiment, you must make an authentic, emotional connection with fans. Game is now fun, and affordable for Hawks target group.

Digital has changed the way we experience sports. And the Hawks understood the importance of talking with the targeted people, with their own language, by letting them express what they want.

If sport fans feel more like a member and participate in more activities with other members, then the sport organization can reap the benefits through increased attendance at future games, increased purchase of team merchandise in the future, and increased word-of-mouth referrals to others about the benefits of attending the team's games. Therefore, sport organization personnel and marketers should allocate more resources to developing sport fan consumption communities to utilize and leverage the community for the benefit of the organization, its team, and the members of the community.

Fans want to know a player and team inside out so that when they're down the pub after work, they can back up their opinion. Gone are the days you could just have a conversation about a player. Now, you need to back it up with facts and data. And with social media, if a player makes a mistake, it comes alive and becomes the most talked-about issue. Every fan now has this ability to become a content developer – that's something brands are starting to tune into.

III. JUVENTUS' REBRANDING: ATTEMPT TO GO BEYOND FOOTBALL

3.1 The origin

Juventus F.C. has been created from the passion, the passion for the football. Indeed, some young guys, moved by the love for that game coming from the England, established the Juventus on the 1 November 1897. The choice of the name, which in Latin means “youth”, had been driven by the age of those guys, where the older of them was 17 years old. On that day was born a legend.

The first President was Enrico Canfari, the first pitch was in Piazza d'Armi and the color of the first jersey was the pink. Three years later, they shifted to the black and white, which since that day has been becoming the color of the Juventus' skin.

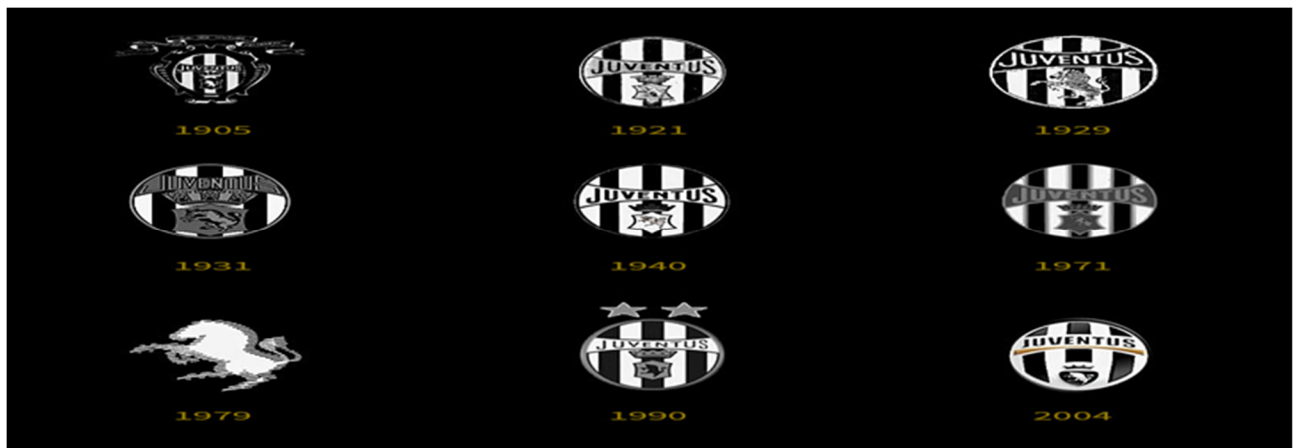
Several years of successes requires not just the ability to adapt yourself to the changes in the competitive environment where you operate but, especially, the capacity to foresee them and to anticipate your competitors.

In such a strategical behavior, the Juventus, with its actual President Andrea Agnelli, and his collaborators, is a leader and with the rebranding just actuated is revolutionizing the world of the soccer. The “Old Lady” of the soccer has just put another piece to its plan of going beyond the football begun many some years ago, which includes ambitious management of sponsorships, broadcast rights, merchandising and even a wholly-owned stadium.

3.2 Understanding the new image

The club launched a new identity during the inaugural “Black and White and More” event on January 16, 2017 with the presentation of a new logo, that is being officially adopted and commercialized starting from the 1st July.

Juventus’s previous club badge (not a ‘logo’, please note) employed the mixture of iconography and graphic devices familiar in the football and sporting world. Its home city of Turin was symbolized by a bull set against a black and white striped background referencing the club’s famous shirts. All this was housed within an oval ‘Old French’ shield which supposedly recalled Italian ecclesiastical symbolism. In 1958 a single yellow star was added to mark the club’s 10th league title, though that was subsequently abandoned and then again reintroduced. Here the transformation of the Juventus’ logo during the history:



European football, indeed, is dominated by shields, crests, ovals, and other devices. There is obviously nothing wrong with these; many come with a glorious story. On the other hand, there is no reason why a football logotype should continue to conform to this tradition.

It is undeniable, the history of a club plays a vital part in the sense of identity and belonging that is such a big part of being a football fan. The stories associated with the devices featured on a club badge are an explicit, powerful link to that history.

Juventus, however, cannot be a city team of Torino, it must become a worldwide brand and not a worldwide football brand, but a worldwide lifestyle brand which opens up non-traditional revenue sources. The problem is connected to the risk of underappreciate this rational for two reasons: the first is because some think it destroys the purity of the game; the second is because the reasons behind it are not fully understood or appreciated.

Businesses are continuously dominated by changes and to survive, thrive and grow change is necessary. In this case, changing concerns what your brand means, what it is and what it encompasses.

The new Juventus logo is no longer about the football team, it's about the brand. An expansion beyond the pitch that must encompass everything it does and that it intends to do. Therefore, it aims not only to appeal to the core football fan, but also to non-football fans. It wants to reach new people and new markets. Crests are very traditional, very football, but if you want to expand your brand beyond that, it needs a wider appeal. The traditional bull is gone but this is a necessary change to go beyond your limits. It's about the future, it's about new markets, Juventus is not a Torino brand, it's a global brand.

While Juventus holds its legions of fans as its driving force, growth for the club will also come from other audiences – entertainment enthusiasts who might not be necessarily as interested in football as a sport. Some of the world's most valuable brands are relevant to people who aren't necessarily lovers or users of their products, but share fundamental values with the brands themselves. Values embedded in the Juventus DNA and showed by the 'until the end' battle cry like perseverance, ambition, excellence. A growth strategy based on enabling people to live the Juventus experience, not merely the Juventus football experience, because Juventus is big in football, but bigger than football.

Furthermore, another relevant rationale behind Juventus strategy is the will to be an identity: most football club brands, in fact, represent their being a team, football, a city or a landmark. Juventus, instead, has chosen to represent itself and rather than referring to an icon, Juventus has turned itself into an icon, as the world's greatest brands do.

The new design brings new codes to football, granting authority, confidence and elegance away from pitches and stadiums. Juventus is trying to build a brand starting from the consideration that football will always be the origin, but never the boundary.

As said by the President Andrea Agnelli, Juventus “spent a year trying to find out what the new markets want, but also to show a sense of belonging and looking to the future. This new logo is a symbol of the Juventus way of living.”

“Built upon heritage-founded principles of confidence, determination, and uncompromising conviction, Juventus has crafted a revolutionary growth plan. Juventus aims to distil its essence into far-reaching experiences which can appeal to the football fan while being highly relevant to entertainment enthusiasts who are further away from football as a sport. The new logo is iconic and universal. It's bold enough to make a statement, but flexible enough to appear alongside a wide range of new experiences—in the stadium and beyond. Juventus's move is unprecedented—to become recognized for more than their performance on the field, but as a universal symbol for perseverance, ambition, and premium Italian style. By leaving the team's defining black-and-white stripes untouched, Juventus is bringing the illustrious legacy and spirit of one of Italy's preeminent teams to new audiences and die-hard fans alike.”³²⁶

It is a logo that with courage goes over the conformism about football crests and is expression of the sum of different elements characterizing the Juventus. The outline of an Italian scudetto, the black and white stripes which are the skin of the Old Lady and the letter “J” that from now on will mean Juventus to everyone.

³²⁶ www.interbrand.com Interbrand project page.



This action has revolutionized the way of doing visual communication in the football. This idea subverts and expands the visual marketing in the soccer since we are not just talking of a new logo, but of the substitution of the logo to a crest. Juventus F.C. is the first to abandon the crest, which represents the symbol of the football, in exchange of a logo that will enhance its awareness beyond the pitch, as a universal symbol for perseverance, ambition, and premium Italian style.³²⁷ The first step for appealing at global level requires a modern logo: Juventus wants to grow, while winning, communicating and evolving the brand. And the society is trying to do it through a logo which suits perfectly for this era: it is essential, minimal, squared, ready to be adopted on football jerseys, but also on social channels and in each other product of the club. This new imagine will shape the Juventus on each different material, from the digital to the paper, on t-shirts, jerseys, jewelry, notebooks commercial products, at the Stadium, on the socials, everywhere.

Hence, after the J-Stadium, the J-TV, the J-Village, J-Medical and, definitely, the J-World, the Juventus has completed its jump in the future with the logo “J”, which includes its spirit, its style, its soul, its colors (often a limit for the merchandising of other famous colored brands) and its being Italian in a design that recall the scudetto and contemporarily opens new, neat roads and with open horizons.

³²⁷ www.juventus.com

The message communicated by Juventus is unique and extremely clear: we are the club has won more championships. We are the championship. We are the “Old Lady”, the story of the football. And now, with this ultracontemporary logo, we are also the future. “If there is one club capable of taking that step, it’s Juventus – the brand is synonymous with ambition and excellence and these are principles that can inspire truly unique experiences. The new visual identity has been designed to boldly take the club’s spirit into new, unexpected realms.” “No club in Europe has so far been able to transcend sport and convey the philosophy behind that.” “It is an iconic, simple design centered around sharp lines and will surely steal the spotlight no matter where it is used.”³²⁸ And Juventus was the unique that could do it in this way. Logo (from logo) means letter. It is the only club identifiable through just one letter, the “J”.

This unconventional strategy to rebrand is aimed to distil Juventus’ essence into far-reaching experiences which can appeal to the football fan while being highly relevant to entertainment enthusiasts who are further away from football as a sport. That would have been possible just with a real marketing masterpiece. In its simplicity, the new logo configures itself as a global premium brand and it is synonymous of:

- Identity: it perfectly reflects the style of the club, and its supporters, constantly based on the research of elegance and style.
- Essentiality: the graphic style of the new logo represents a step forward, where the simplicity and the minimality of the design makes the brand easily identifiable and recognizable;
- Break with the tradition: the Juventus has been able in detaching its logo from a merely soccer perspective, signing the definitive transition of the sport to a business that is trying to conquer new markets.

³²⁸ Ricca, M., Chief Strategy Officer EMEA & LatAm di Interbrand,

- New commercial outlooks: the new logo recalls the Asiatic market, enhancing the chances of a growth in that market.
- Resonance on the social: the launch of the new logo has allowed the Juventus to attract users and stimulate their engagement on its own web site and on the Social Channel, thanks to the live of the event on Facebook and the tweet of the society with the Hashtag **#2beJuventus**, soon become viral and one of the most twitted on Twitter, and also the great traffic generated on Instagram.

Furthermore, evaluating the accuracy of this rebranding strategy we have to inspect the different fans' dimensions affected by the rebranding and how the Juventus touched it. The sensorial dimension is without any doubt the most delicate dimension in this case since it is not that easy to convince supporters critical of the change about the importance of this revolution. This requires time and it will be fully achieved not just by showing the positive consequences resulting by the change but, also, showing the intention to maintain, even in the future, the prominence of mythical elements of the club over the commercial goals. In addition, the stadium offers a variety of services such as a) the Juventus Premium Club, a corporate hospitality project that offers 3,600 premium seats and 64 sky boxes, b) a 70-minute guided stadium tour, c) Area 12, a shopping center adjacent to the stadium, d) J-Museum (the Juventus Museum), and e) different business, cultural and social events. Thanks to the rebranding, and new partnerships, the society will be able to improve the physical surroundings to shape appropriate feelings and reactions among fans and employees. In addition to apparel and the stadium, Juventus also has their own song, football schools and other products and services that can be shared with like-minded and foster a great brand experience.

Considering, instead, the semantic dimension the Juventus fan base is larger than any other Italian football club and is one of the largest worldwide, so the Juventus brand has already reached the myth stage. This means that Juventus has reached universal and global status and that consumers have the impression the brand has always been around and been part of their

life. And with this rebranding the Juventus is just trying to capitalize on its status and its awareness. Referring to the ability of creating connection with its fans, Juventus is on the right track. Its social media channels try to engage their supporters with content that raises emotions. The brand does that with a variety of different media: 1-minute pre-match videos on YouTube, 15-seconds line-up announcement videos on Instagram, a picture of a player that implies winning the match on Facebook, or simply with a tweet or status update that asks for motivational support of their fans, or with contest promoting the active participation of fans.

Finally, touching the somatic dimension, in preparation of a Juventus match, Twitter is filled with selfies of fans wearing their black-and-white jersey with pride and emotions and sharing that with the worldwide web, and Juventus' online managers embrace that phenomenon by retweeting selfies, comments, etc. to incorporate their fans into the brand. An activity supporters most definitely appreciate and makes them feel part of the brand. That leads, consciously or unconsciously, to an appropriation and incorporation of the Juventus brand. The ritual of wearing the club's jersey during a match at home, in the pub or in the stadium makes supporters feel integrated in the brand and possibly own a part of it. Already the action of going to a shop offline or online and spend good money on branded apparel or game tickets strengthen the brand-consumer bond and, therefore again, a fan's mental association with the club. Juventus gives now its supporters worldwide greater opportunities for appropriation and incorporation of the brand by offering easy access to buy official branded apparel and social communication channels for engagement. They think to know *exactly* what the club needs to be more successful and have the feeling that they are entitled to make decisions for the club. That is the case because they unconsciously feel to *own* a piece of it, or at least are part of it... which from a branding point of view is a good thing. "I wear Juventus; therefore, I am Juventus."

3.2.1 Rebranding is part of a bigger plan

The President of the Juventus begun its speech by quoting Jack Welch, ex CEO of the General Electric, “Change before you have to”. Thus, since the beginning he clarifies the sense and the need of such a strategical operation. That is confirmed also by Ricca: “The brand is what links supporters and soccer enthusiastic allowing them the recognition of common identities and values. Manage the brand means to protect the 120 years of tradition, at the same time being able to look at the future: many teams live in the past forgetting to be even business projected in the future.” “That is not a rebranding. The change of the logo is like a change of a dress: you do it because you need to adapt yourself to a new reality, to communicate a new message. A message that is not about changing but understanding of the surrounding environment, to which follow the necessity of evolving, of spreading the brand in new markets and new Countries.”

It is not a case that the Juventus press repeatedly emphasized the words “black and white” and “more”. The “more” here refers to the space that is now open to a global brand like Juventus, whose visual message is no longer confined to football alone. “It was not enough a little adjustment, it was necessary to arrive to the fans’ hearth, narrating through the brand the growth to which the club is projected. Always maintaining the balance between respect for the fans and the vision the society has for the future.”³²⁹ He also talked about the importance of the aesthetic aspect for the success of the strategy:” the new logo is perfectly in line with the stylistic choices made by the greatest international colossus: essentiality and minimalism, simple lines to deliver a complex and meaningful message.”

Vigato explained instead the choice of Milan for the presentation of the new logo: “It is due to many reasons. First of all logistic, since it is much closer to certain events and personalities. Moreover, the Museum of the Science and Technology, a building restored with old styles,

³²⁹ Ricca, M., Chief Strategy Officer EMEA & LatAm di Interbrand.

which represents the perfect bond of tradition and innovation. The right point of encounter between the universes of Fashion, Art and Music in which we usually enter. We would communicate that we e a culture too, for a target as wide as possible”.³³⁰

The clear explanation of the meaning of the rebranding follows: "The keystone of this brand is to make sure that Juventus is always going to be anchored to football, but that it is also going to be beyond football," Ricca tells *MirrorSport*. "The idea is to widen the audience and make sure the brand is loved not just by football fans. It's about a growth plan and making sure they manage to get a better commercial performance, a better influence in a sector that is changing rapidly. Juventus wants to drive the change, rather than stay behind. It's expressing a philosophy of Juventus in a way that appeals beyond the borders of football." "The logo is not the reason, the logo is the expression of a wider plan," says Ricca. "Football clubs will need to amplify their meaning beyond football itself. What we've done with Juventus is create a very versatile identity, which works in today's world." "Media touch points have changed; the expectations of fans have changed. There is an opportunity for clubs who want to drive this change to adopt an expression which enables them to thrive across completely new channels."

Under this perspective, we should also consider the participation of the club to the Milano Design Week, "FuoriSalone 2017", with the exposition to the Wallpaper* magazine's Holy Handmade. The initiative represents a new step toward the brand evolution to become a style icon, in a global identity.

In this occasion, Juventus has developed the theme of the Wallpaper* magazine's Holy Handmade, "reimagining ritual, reworking worship and reconsider the communal", offering an innovative interpretation of the football: two marble football balls, precious artisanal artifacts, two colors, Black and White, obviously, and the logo, with the entirely golden J nestled at the center of the two objects.

³³⁰ Vigato, S., Head of Brand, Licensing and Retail e Co-Chief Revenue Officer di Juventus.

A perfect synthesis of the inspiration from where takes origin the new Juventus' identity: In each project, in each experience, the football will always be the origin, never the limit.

Another important consideration to be made is that the Juventus' brand had already a strong brand awareness, which corroborate the fundamentality of the rebranding strategy in an attempt of increasing financial revenues. Hence, the Brand Finance Football 50 report, which compares the most important world's football club has classified the Juventus as the unique Italian team with the maximum rating, AAA. This standing gives the rating to the different brands based on their value and the way they are managed, considering the investments made to influence directly or indirectly the brand's strength, the returns in terms of image and sports performances, and finally the revenues. In particular, we can sum up all the different financial and marketing parameters considered in just three points:

1. index of brand's strength: how much the brand is appealing and able to make new and old fans loyal;
2. Property rights: how expensive is to use and exploit the brand;
3. Revenues linked to the brand: stadium, commercial and TV rights.

The main secret of this success is due to the marketing orientation and so, the ability to exploit commercial activities and to unbind the brand's reputation from only sport performances.³³¹

Looking more in detail to the Financial performance, after all, appears always clearer that the rebranding represents another necessary step to accomplish this strategy of growth, which has started with the appointment of Andrea Agnelli as the president of the club. Since that moment, indeed, the Juventus is experiencing an unprecedented scale-up which has increased its revenue of almost four times: if in the season 2010-11 it was equal to €154 million (especially due to the non-participation to the European competitions), in the last season it accounted for €562.7

³³¹ The annual report on the world's most valuable football brand. Brand Finance Football.

million³³². That represents a growth of 5% in overall revenue with respect to the previous year, mainly thanks to a near €30m increase in commercial income 104.8 million from players registration rights and, obviously, the streams generated by the great performances in the Champions League and in the Italian Championship (where the Juventus won the sixth consecutive title) and by the wholly-owned stadium.

At this regard, Luca Petroni, Partner Deloitte e Sector Leader THS, said: “the results obtained by the Juventus show how strategic is investing in a wholly-owned stadium and its image and the recent rebranding testifies the will to keep on this pattern”. Not Surprisingly, the financial statement approved by the Board of Directors for the year ended 30 June 2017, has reported a profit of 42,6 million of Euro. This is the third consecutive year the business closed with a profit, and may push the Board to propose the dividends’ distribution on the profit realized: this would be the first time after the season 2001-2002, where the net profit was 6,1 million and the dividends were 0,012 Euro per share. In such a framework, the introduction of the new logo may represent a relevant variable to enhance the value of the business by stimulating:

- The growth in sales of jerseys of the just-ended season, since it’s the last with the oval crest, and at the same time greater sales relative to the uniform of the season 2017/18 because of the advent of the new logo, the first of the genre after the rebranding;
- Forecastable increase of sales of daily clothes and gadgets, thanks to a minimal badge easily replicable and not cumbersome as the old one.

Another important point that must be included in this strategy refers to the management of the retail activities. In fact, for 12 years the Juventus has granted licensing and retail activities rights relative to its brand to one technical partner. But the last year, the club decided to take

³³² Draft financial statement approved by the Board of Directors for the year ended 30 June 2017. Available at: <http://www.juventus.com/en/club/investor-relations/documents/price-sensitive-press-releases/2017-18.php>

back ownership over the exploitation of its brand on products and distribution. This meant looking at the future and shows that the rebranding is just a piece of a much bigger plan of growth. The management of the retail represents the way to make tangible the values and the history the club represents to the fans' eyes.

And referring in particular to the physical stores, the club tries to exploit the atmosphere created in such "talking spaces",³³³ where it is possible to perceive the culture and the identity of the brand not just through the offered products, but also thanks to sensorial and perceptive elements, like sounds, smells, and materials utilized. Hence, here prevails the aesthetic aspect and the experience communicated to the fans.

This was completely a new game for the club which took a year to set up a wholly new retail business unit. The retail unit now counts more than 30 people working in the office, plus hundreds of staff members working in the stores. Two are the secret of the success of this business strategy retail oriented: first designing a product catalogue that offers quality and variety, where fans are treated as customers and segmented by age, gender, tastes, spending power, and so on. Second, ensuring the max of the efficiency along its distributive channel: the B2B channel, used to sell to partners and distributors; the Online commerce, allows orders to come in at any time and to be shipped to different corners of the world; Traditional retail is also a new playing field for the team. Aside from traditional brick-and-mortar locations, Juventus also runs pop-up stores of branded merchandise which open up outside of stadiums when the team is playing.

In order to succeed in the new game, the club knew that they needed to invest in the right technological tools. Juventus selected as new System the LS Nav & Ls Omni, since they are perfect system to perform online retail activities and to gather info to customize products to meet fans demand. As stated by Mauro Zanetti, PMO Manager at Juventus, "*LS Nav meets our*

³³³ Musso, P., "I nuovi territori della marca", 2005.

needs both in the short and the long term, as regards both retail and financial management.”

“The new system has all necessary features to meet and exceed the requirements of users.”

The system also offers a wide range of features which can be used in many ways. For example, Juventus uses standard LS Nav functionalities like cross-selling, recipes and item modifier, in an inventive way to customize the jerseys with fan names and selected patches.

Looking more in detail to the financial result connected with the direct management of the merchandising and licensing, in the short period the increase in revenue had not been as relevant as expected but, despite the increase in costs, the operative margins resulted higher than in the case of outsourcing those activities. Indeed, the revenues coming from this area had been equal to 9,2 mln in the first semester and are expected to be approximately worth 18 mln at the end of the year, against the 13 of the previous year.

Apart from this, the strategic choice has a great marketing potential if correctly exploited. At this purpose fundamental are, in addition to the increase of sponsorships contracts, the improvement of the quality of the team that will lead to a stable exposure to national and international fans by improving the image of the club and, consequently, the customers' base for merchandising/licensing partnerships; and the brand extension, which the Juventus is implementing with diversification of its revenues with respect to the core business with activities like the *J Medical* (medical center owned by the club), the *J Museum* (where is exposed all the history of the club through the won trophies), the J-Tv, J-Cafè, the J-Store, J-Sound, the *Juventus training center* and also the *J college* (a school created specifically for the young talents of the club). In a unique word this is, the J-Village.

During this summer, indeed, Juventus opened a new, impressive multi-functional facility, the J-Village. The center includes training areas for the team, a hotel with conference facilities and restaurants, an international school, a center for sports medicine and rehabilitation and a concept store. The club also plans to increase its investment in retail channels and is confident

that LS Nav will help them provide their customers and fans with the best customer experience possible.

Thus, part of the rebranding strategy is even the “opening of a new megastore in the center of Turin which has the double of the meters of the previous one to contain more products: just like the stadium is made of supporters, the merchandising too needs to adapt itself to the exigencies of everyone, varying from the scarf, to the hat to the carbon ski. In addition, the megastore, linked to the museum, includes a bookcase, where it is possible to get closer to the soccer history from a wider angle.”³³⁴

In this framework, I want to consider rebranding even the purchase of a top player. It may seem strange but, if we pay attention, we can notice that just like a marketing initiative, signing a great player helps to improve the technical quality of the team, to enhance the brand awareness and to increase the opportunity of sponsorship, also with personal partner of the player. Moreover, the player will emotion the supporters on the field and will be engaged in commercial and communicative initiatives to spread the brand’s notoriety.

Even the process leading to the signing of the player strongly involves supporters: the transfer market gets the fans excited, and consequently they will be emotionally caught by the new player and their loyalty toward the club grows. This process represents an asset itself to attract interest and consensus of supporters, by making them dream to see their favorite player bought by their heart club. Here we can insert the signing of a player like Gonzalo Higuaín, that in addition to strongly raising the potential of the team, represents a relevant marketing weapon given the mediatic resonance, at national and international level, of his transfer. In this case, the clamor had been amplified by the reaction of the supporters of Napoli, his previous team, which protesting against his decision to pass to a historical rival, had indirectly contributed to raise the interest of the media around the player and, consequently, the Juventus. We can easily

³³⁴ Ricca, M., Chief Strategy Officer EMEA & LatAm di Interbrand.

conclude that the monster amount of money (94 mln €) paid by the Juventus to acquire the player has been already recovered, in form of Jerseys, with his name, sold, economic rewards for the national and European goals achieved, and through the brand's awareness raised.

Furthermore, the last consideration is about one possible meaning of the "J" and the will of the Juventus of becoming a global brand: the logo chosen resembles a Japanese ideogram, and given that the project has been realized by Interbrand, one of the most important agencies in the world, it's easy to think that this wink to the Asian market, the most profitable, wouldn't just be a coincidence.



The Asiatic market, since few years, are dramatically expanding and this accentuated recall to the Japanese Kanji (RI), indicating value and strength, may give to the Juventus a competitive image advantage needed to enter in Orient.

Also in this case the rebranding is just the prosecution of something already begun. Indeed, the Juventus has taken its first steps into the increasingly lucrative Chinese market by launching the club's J Academy in Shanghai. China, together with the Usa, has been identified by Juventus as a key growth markets in which to expand its programme of training schools and camps. The aim is to develop the Juventus brand amongst young people and families in a country set to see considerable investment in football in the coming years.³³⁵ The reason is quite obvious: the fans become loyal to their team and rarely change it. As a consequence, become essential to create

³³⁵ Adornato, L., Brand Development Manager of Juventus

a relationship with fans (and their family) since they are young, by making them to live an unforgettable experience.

Further incentive is represented by the plan of the China to become a “world football superpower by 2050”. The government has outlined a strategy which aims to get 50 million people playing football by 2020 and deliver a World Cup victory within 15 years. This is obviously very ambitious but not impossible due to the will of investing demonstrated by local teams, as demonstrated by the considerable transfer fees paid this season.

Although these ambitions may take time to come to fruition, the world’s major football brands like Juventus have already identified a burgeoning Chinese football market that represents huge opportunities for brand development.

Juventus’s J Academy initiative launched in Shanghai in February and is the first location in China for its youth academy training schools.

The program has seen considerable success in brand development and awareness globally since its inception and currently features 20 academies in 17 countries with plans to increase to 30 academies in 25 countries in the next three years. Whilst football training academies are not a new concept for clubs looking to increase global awareness, Juventus is taking a different approach to many others with J Academy. In particular, what differentiates Juventus is the involvement in the development in this Academy. Indeed, if other clubs use to license their brand, the Juventus is a partner physically present (at least 30 days per year) in the host country.

The J Academy represents a huge opportunity through which to develop awareness of the Juve brand, to build an emotional connection with new young fans and critically also with local families, communities and businesses. The brand development manager has clarified the approach used: “We establish at least a three-year contract with the local partner, we give them the training tools they need and the commercial tools too”. Whilst local partners are responsible for delivery of the brand they are supported in every way possible, “the partners are given the guidance and tools they need to deliver the brand locally with a localized website which they

manage themselves. This has the distinctive Juventus look and feel and is still a real Juventus product”.

After the rebranding, the name has been shortened from “Juventus Academy” and new designs were created to connect with the essence of the brand. “J Academy aims to ‘grow up people before players’, believing that children should be focusing on enjoying themselves rather than being under pressure to perform”, said Luca.

Luca explains that the new J Academy in Shanghai has been strategically located close to the Shanghai Disney Resort which is currently under construction to the east of the city and is expected to be a major destination in the future. “We’re hearing that families in China are increasingly looking for experiences that they can share together”, Luca explains. For this reason, J Academies will be located close to exciting destinations with plans in the future to set up J Academies within theme parks and even on cruise ships. “The J Academy is part of our strategy to develop Juventus from a football club to a global brand”. “The plan for Juventus and J Academy is to grow quickly and have 1200 kids playing at the Shanghai academy within three years. The programme will be rolled out in more Chinese cities with Taizhou, Zhuhai and Xiangtan all close to an agreement and plans for Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Guangdong too”. Care is being taken however to choose the right local partners. According to Luca, “These are exclusive arrangements which are arranged with the partners for certain cities. We are focused on finding the right partner that can be a representative for the Juventus brand in that territory. Rather than simply license the brand, Juventus with J Academy have identified the value of partnership in developing long term brand awareness and strong connections with communities and businesses, which may well set them apart from other football clubs looking to seize these same opportunities. If China can achieve its lofty ambitions, then brands like Juventus will be well established when these dreams become a reality.”

Asia is developing and Juventus have already noticed the growing interest in their brand in countries such as China and Japan, while they are the most popular Italian club in Indonesia.

The club with these initiatives strengthen its image while also achieving social objectives linked to the fighting of the racism.



The rebranding acquires much more sense if we think at its financial potential. For instance, it has a strong impact on the partnership, which, as demonstrated by many European top clubs, is one of the secrets for achieving a high financial stability. In fact, the impact of the sponsorships on revenues of the Juventus is growing: thanks to the recent agreement with a regional Indonesian partner “Super Soccer Tv”, the 41 commercial partners of the team represent the 18% (70 mln €) of the total revenues of the club (387 mln €), as confirmed by the last audited balance sheet (2015/16), while in the previous year they accounted for the 15 %. However, that is not enough because the other top European clubs have an impact of sponsorships on their revenues equal approximately to the 30 % of the total.

In particular, to enhance the importance of the rebranding, we need to focus on the regional partners which are the result of commercial agreements aimed to develop the club’s image in determined geographic markets, to which the club is increasingly interested. Specifically, the Juventus has chosen

- **International Bank of Azerbaijan;**

- **Luvfans.com**, a chinese social network of fans;
- **star-nigeria.com**, a nigerian beer which is affiliated also to other top clubs like Real Madrid, Arsenal, City e PSG;
- **Tecate**, a Mexican beer;
- **Vwin.com**, a betting on-line society which operates in China, Macao, Taiwan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malesia, Filippine, Singapore and Thailandia;
- **Supersoccer.tv**, a digital soccer platform very followed in Indonesia.
- **Fantasy Sport Game Ballr**, a platform enabling participants to communicate and play live during football matches. The involvement is maximum: every 5 minutes you can choose a different player which make you to accumulate points based upon its live performance. The number of points cumulated make users eligible for some awards, including tickets for a match to the Juventus Stadium.

It is clear the intent of the society: developing the revenues by increasing the penetration of the brand in the world, by entering in new markets which grant possibilities of reaching a huge number of supporters and customers, by stressing in particular the experiential assets which are particular attractive for the Asiatic market. And this gives sense to the rebranding, by making a radical change in the communication strategy. A new brand that appears more desirable to customers from all over the world.

Juventus is growing in popularity and value and cannot exclude the need of exploiting it through a brand that would appeal to everyone. Indeed, its value, according to the estimation made by KPMG, based on broadcast rights, profitability, popularity, sports potential and the property of the stadium, accounts now for 1,21 bln. The rebranding will enable the expansion in new businesses and markets leading to a continuous growth of the club's value. The evidence says that Juventus' brand value has increased by 4% since revealing their new logo.

3.2.2 Growing with the fans

The millennials are at the center of the change. With this jump in the future the Juventus is shifting in an ultra-fashion, desirable and cosmopolite planet. Milligan said: "New generations of younger fans are marketing literate and have grown up in a world where advertising and brand identity is just part of their culture."

In order to promote the brand, the club has understood the importance of engaging with fans abroad, utilizing social media tools to the best of their abilities. Indeed, it has proven the last summer that they can be market leaders for building fan engagement on social media. With 1.3 million followers on Twitter Juventus lead the way in Serie A for fan followings, currently dwarfing rivals such as Inter Milan (644k) and Roma (490k) on the platform. Juventus have been at the forefront of fan engagement, even displaying tweets from around the world inside the stadium (see photo below) and coming up with original digital strategies.

Brainstorming to come up with ideas to connect with the fans, initiatives such as the idea of having the fans submit their design for a visual display in the ground's Tribuna Est. called the "#LoveJu initiative" have proved successful. They did this by inviting supporters to design their own choreography and to upload it via Facebook. The club offered the winner a chance to see their design become a reality ahead of a huge game between Juve and Inter, a rivalry so intense their games are dubbed 'The Derby d'Italia'. Juventus.com explained it was "the world's first choreography conceived and voted for entirely via the medium of a social network". 3,122 creations were submitted while 18,118 votes were cast and the winner was a 16-year old fan named Steven Ken. Such a choreography was then made real by 25,000 Juventus fans at the stadium and witnessed by both the players on the pitch and the club's global fan base watching broadcasts of the game.

Furthermore, are few years that Juventus is trying to communicate its pattern of commercial and sport growth by adopting an original way, clear in every part of the world and capable to

reach all the supporters. A way to do this is creating competitions and hashtags based entirely around players. Choosing perhaps their most globally appreciated star Andrea Pirlo, the club posted a video in a Britain's Got Talent style challenging supporters to send in their own attempts to impress the midfield maestro with the hashtag #Pirloisnotimpressed, thereby engaging with the club online. To date after only 5 days this hashtag has had a reach of 2.5 million and been delivered into 7.3 million timelines (via Hashtracking.com). In terms of exposure it is another major success for the Old Lady which has raised the bar for fan engagement.

Apart from many initiatives involving different players, of significant importance has been also the launch, in correspondence with the introduction of the new logo, of the hashtag "2beJUVENTUS". The aim is expressed quite clearly also by the name: to define what is Juventus, what characterize the identity of the Juventus together, with the supporters.

There is a correlation between society and fans that is becoming always stronger. For instance, at the day of their birthday, kids are invited to the stadium and they are let to experience a unique and unforgettable experience.

Furthermore, a strong importance is given to the mascotte, which represents a fundamental instrument and driver of marketing communications. During the days preceding the Champions League Final, a Juventus' mascotte was present in Cardiff to amuse fans, especially child, and to promote the Juventus' image.

In addition, in global marketing communications the club, taking into account the presence of a global fanbase, and so the cultural differences across different nations, is trying to diversify them in order to be well conceived by the customers of each country.

Moreover, it is important a greater involvement to the fans: it daily publish on its website, and its app, photos of their fans involved in activity related to the team. This gives an enormous contribution in increasing the fans involvement on the social channel of the team. Important it

is also the creation of apps or games for the child where they have the possibilities of managing the mascotte in many activities which aren't related to the soccer.

All these initiatives, helps to reach a greater participation of the fans, an increasing of the brand awareness and an acquisition of completely new supporters.

3.3 Fans' criticisms

The new brand unleashed opposing supporters' reactions, which are perfectly summarized by Lavery. "I love the crest personally." "The brand update is aesthetically pleasing, it harks on memories of a golden era of Italian football and in particular Italia 90, and yet highlights a bold new future for the club. It genuinely feels like a club treading new ground, premium ground."³³⁶

However, there are some risks he points out: "Unfortunately, this looks like a club accelerating into the future, and not particularly intent on taking its existing fanbase with them. "If we have learnt anything over the years about football crest updates and changes, it's that taking fans on the journey with you is vital."

Hence, the main risk of this strategical action refers to the dissatisfaction of the traditional fans. Indeed, from socials and in-depth interviews I realized, the prevailing sentiment towards this rebranding was of perplexity as it takes away the popular appeal of the soccer and seems to break any type of connections with the city of Turin. Some questions come to the mind: And the tradition? The history? The belonging to the city of Turin? Many supporters confided their first reaction was a refusal of this revolution.

The thought of many fans, just after the presentation of the new logo, was that the Juventus had changed an iconic logo without consulting them and asking for their opinion, and more important, forgetting its origins. The old crest was synonym of belonging to a community, a symbol impressed in the heart of the fans. It was totally appreciated and full of meaning from an aesthetic and historic point of view. That is why some of the most emotionally attached fans, the "twelfth men", who have travelled extensively to watch the team play, consider the change as an abolishment of its history for an abysmal logo. They criticize that the history of a team is

³³⁶ Lavery, O., head of insight at marketing agency Ear to the Ground.

made not just of future but also of past and symbols which make it a family. The Juventus represent Turin and the Taurus, symbol of the city, had to be part of the new logo.

“Just awful. Nothing to carry the heritage. I get that its forward thinking and targeting foreign markets, but completely forgets where they came from the in first place. The original, true Juventus crest (the oval shape with the bull and crown) represents the timeless and everlasting continuity that connects all the glorious Juventus squads of the past and present. This continuity speaks directly to the rich and storied history of the club, and the unswerving loyalty of its generations-spanning fanbase. The beauty of the original crest lies in how it connects, bonds, and unites players and fans from all eras in the club's 122-year history. That is why it is absolutely crucial to preserve the truly historic crest of Juventus. I do question whether the fans will accept the new one though.”

Furthermore, they stress a point. This has been presented as a “logo”, which may suit for commercial products, not as a crest/badge football clubs typically have. This new badge is a good representation of corporate greed seeping into football. It ignores virtually all Juve's history in favor of looking trendy and modern. But Juventus is not a business and not a brand. Because Juventus is all about tradition, winning and grit. The black and white is already simple. The crest is a tradition to be respected. That is why fans put it in their heart. Having a “clothing logo on our jersey is a farce.” Others underlined that none of the other football teams had attempted to change the crest which is identity, history. This because traditions are important and there is the need to adopt good sense to conjugate them with the future.

The disappointment led even to an extreme action of some supporters: a petition to have back the old logo. They may represent the “partners” since they try, through this action, to express their disappointment for the strategy adopted by the society. In particular, they act with a high level of freedom of opinion, with the hope of having a dialogue with the club, to induce it to reverse its decision. The following is the text:

BRING BACK OUR BADGE (PETITION)

“Dear President Agnelli,

The new Juventus "logo" has a very simplistic design and reflects "The Juventus way of living" according to you.

But nothing about Juventus is simple. Juventus is complicated. In a good way. It is rich. It is historic (yet modern). It is complex. It embodies happiness but also tragedies. It is a struggle. It is resistance. It is glory.

That is all represented in the black and white stripes. The little crown. The charging bull. The yellow halo. The shining stars.

We do not want our Juventus to be just like any company, brand or franchise with a "logo".

Juventus is a football club. It's a family, a culture and a tradition of its own. Juventus deserves an appropriate badge, a crest, an emblem.

It's good that our club is always forward-looking and constantly striving for innovation. While doing that, we'd like to carry something from the past with us to the future. Plus, somethings should be left alone.

Fino Alla Fine.

A Juventus fan.”

However, it didn't have so much success since just 171 supporters signed it. Here have been two kinds of responses from fans, media professionals and neutral commentators; sheer disbelief and disgust, and on the flipside, adulation and praise for making a brave and bold step forward. And that debate is mostly just centred on the new minimalist design.

Along with the disapprovals showed so far, it's interesting what comes out from the analysis of Twitter that, being more dynamic than Facebook, facilitates interactions, and the sharing of

ideas, among users. Obviously, also there, we can perceive the disappointment of many fans but, in different cases, it is due to concern of losing all the connections with their beloved club: *"I will love you forever **Juventus**, but I don't feel the same about our new **logo**";* however, this doesn't undermine the trust in the club and its strategical choices *"History will reveal not only how successful this risky endeavour was but just how far behind other competing clubs were"*.

At this regard, there is something the vast majority of the people is losing the sight of: *"New logo **juventus** ... future... or comeback/inspiration to the past?"*. The more careful and passionate, indeed, will have noticed *"**juventusfc** already tried to minimise its Logo on the away shirt during the 40'"*. In many ways, the club crest plays the part of a tribal totem, one which is to be protected, and the values, which are the accompanying mottos, aspired to. While this design may look ultra-modern and far-removed from the identity of Juventus, fans would be interested to know that back in 1940, the team wore a kit bearing only the letter "J" in place of its crest. So, historically, it is not as irreverent as it is being made out to be, but more a case of needs must. That means Juventus is creating a button-up collar that will make a return to that jersey for the first time, with the club saying, of course, that it "stands for the past, present and future". A wider black panel stripe down the back and a stand-up collar ensure a classical and elegant look for the Bianconeri as they chase a seventh straight Scudetto title. That can be considered a 'Black and White and More' that now reflects every aspect of the club as it enters an exciting new era.

Moreover, it seems that supporters, despite the obvious initial recoil, are trying to understand and sustain this revolution, also because of their faith: one says, *"**Juventus's** new **logo** is so ugly, but I'm a loyal fan and shall remain supporting them"* or another, *"It's just a **logo**. It does not change a single experience I have had supporting **Juventus** for the last decades"*.

But even more interesting it is the fact that fans are catching the sense of such a huge event to introduce the new image to the world. *"Whether you fancy the new **JuventusLogo** or not, it's generating quite the stir. In other words, it's doing its job"*, *"The more I look at the new*

logo of Juventus, the more I like it. Focusing on the future. Always"; "I don't expect everyone to love the new **Juventus logo**, but I think it has the power to be among the most unique and identifiable in football"; "The new **logo**? The thing that's worked; a lot of attention with people and media not usually reporting Serie A are talking about #Juventus"; making 3 out of 4 people of the world talking of you for a "J" becoming more popular... Well done!". That is the point. Whatever you think about the emblem, and it has divided opinion on social media, this serves as yet another example of why Juventus remain ahead of the competition not only on the pitch in Italy, but off it too. Complacency is not a word in the Juventus vocabulary. And quoting Oscar Wilde, "There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about"³³⁷".

What Juventus and its supporters have in common is for sure the attitude to strive to win. And leading the way means victory: "Championships may be won or not... but as a fan, I know that the club I support it is light years ahead of many". Agnelli, in occasion of the presentation of the new logo, confessed "In football, there is a gradual polarisation underway on the old continent. We are in no-man's land. Half in the last carriage of first class. Half in the first carriage of second class. The risk is to stay trapped in the middle." This re-branding was a conscious effort to upgrade Juventus back to business class. And, as a supporter said, "while Agnelli indicates the way, the rivals look at the finger" leaving to the Juventus the possibility of conquering a virgin market.

Juventus have cemented its place ahead of the pack when most of its competitors don't even realize they're in a race. By condensing the Juventus brand into an essential single logomark, Juventus are future-proofing against signifier overload: "Simply amazing! We are just ahead.. in everything! We definitely get the control of the 'J'. The Italian alphabet has no J, and the new shield appears telling us: La Juve is "J of Italy"". By recording its history into a primary

³³⁷ Wilde, O., & Elfenbein, A. (2007). *Oscar Wilde's The picture of Dorian Gray*. New York: Pearson Longman.

signifier it has carved out a space for itself in the marketing world where “black and white stripes” and the letter “J” are specific to the Juventus brand. Juventus have firmly planted a flag on yet-to-be colonized terrain. They have transformed the 10th letter of the alphabet into a visual icon that they will hope to associate with their brand.



The word cloud created is the result of the trending words adopted by the **supporters** while expressing their **opinion** about the rebranding. It appears that the most important aspect to them is the **history**: the one the **club** must respect, granting a certain **continuity** with the **past**, and maintain and the one it is **changing** with such a strategic action.

People may like it or not, but it was one necessary step that the Juventus had to undertake to stay **ahead among** the other clubs.

It is commonly known. When you deal with changes of elements highly iconic and full of meaning, representative of a common identity, it is impossible to make everyone happy. But the Juventus has always been loved by everyone: it emerges so, the importance of getting the rid of the barriers of a logo excessively linked to one **city**, one **place**, **Turin**, and trying to go **away** becoming global. And the history makes clear that the Juventus' imperative is to be the first, also in taking the **risk** for a so profound **change**. The Juventus decided to build a completely new identity by breaking with the past. Agnelli made it clear: "Destroying schemes and traditions of the soccer sector".

The risk is to destroy the emotional bonds created by supporters with a highly identifiable element like the logo. Changing it may mean deleting an identity for many fans. Moreover, many fans claim that these traditional details made them curious when they were child and persuade them to support the Juventus instead that another club.

Furthermore, we need to inspect the style adopted to design this new logo. It may seem too stylized, cold and aseptic. It has lost its cozy character. Many supporters, surfing on the Juventus website "don't feel at home anymore." The blowback from the sudden dramatic change is largely negative based on the social media reactions from Juventus supporters, and avid football fans. They consider it as "one of the worst club badges in the football world." Perhaps that's the most important thing to take away from all this. A new crest reflecting a new club culture – or even a company culture – is all well and good, but it should never be introduced without full consultation with the supporters, or the employees.

Supporters feel to be betrayed. For example, they pointed out "The new logo tells us this is the Juventus brand and we are customers, not fans." Their identity has been substituted by something free of emotive meaning. But they still support the club, because their love will never change.

3.4 Don't judge the rebranding by its cover

The initial reactions make the rebranding to appear as a poor attempt to enlarge the horizons of actions of the club, while forgetting to give the right importance to what is crucial for its existence: the fans. However, the reality is totally different. The in-depth interviews conducted have been crucial to help my analysis to go beyond interviewees' initial and superficial thoughts, maybe tainted by comments and opinions of others, and to reflect and better understand the real importance given in the rebranding to the supporters.

First, the common thought of the interviewed fans was that the fundamental elements of the logo must have been included are the black & white, which represent the colors of the Bianconeri's skin, the shield and the stars. And they are there. One told me: "My first reaction was like the ones of many fans. "Man, where's the shield? What have they done?". Then I stopped a moment and realized that the Juventus heritage isn't the shield. It's the stripes. They nailed it. Well, the shield is still in there. Through means of "gestalt" the shield is created by the negative space between the lines." Moreover, the stars are the symbol of the championships won by the club (one star for ten national trophies won). The stars represent the winning soul of the Juventus and they couldn't have been missing in the new logo. Furthermore, many of them, even if partially disappointed for the loss of a piece of history, understanding and supporting the Juventus explanations, believe that it has been fair to remove the Taurus from the logo. That is because its presence would have made the Juventus the symbol of a city, and not of the world as it aims to become, with the risk of not appealing to potential customers/fans. And the Juventus cannot allow any restraint to exist. In addition, its absence grants even a further separation from the other club of the city, the "Turin", and we know how the rivalry, especially in the football, is fundamental to nurture the membership and the passion for a club. An interviewee said: "by now, Football societies are businesses and as such they have to act. To be like the top clubs you need to "brand" your logo and the one undertaken by the Juventus,

it is the right way. The past is glorious but you cannot live of nostalgia. The old logo was a greater expression of belonging but, with all the needed respect for the city of Turin, the Juventus is of everyone and I, not being of Turin, don't feel to be less "bianconero" than a Turinese."

So, three elements: the white and black, the J and the shield. The perfect number which represents the perfect synthesis to reflect the value and the history of the club and to synthesize with simplicity an approach, an attitude, a team, a way of living. The first letter of a name – the initial - holds enough signifying power that it becomes something along the lines of a symbolic signifier for the thing the name represents. A single symbol can signify many different things at the same time. By singling out the letter "J", Juventus created a floating signifier that acts as a container for the club's history and all the visual motifs that come to mind when we are prompted to think about Juventus.

However, it would be wrong to reduce the considerations about this new brand just at the elements constituting it. As it emerged, the crucial concern refers to the value that the logo represents. And with the rebranding the Juventus has more than satisfied the expectation of its fans. In fact, they look at the Juventus as the expression of something that makes you to feel realized, but with a continuous will to improve yourself and to achieve always more. Juventus is ambition, is respect of rules and emotions, like the ones of its fans, is ability in planning the future, is sacrifice, is a model of referment, is something worth to be lived. And all these values shared by its fans, its players, its managers, its employees are, nowadays, communicated to the world thanks to the logo. The Juventus, as shown after the relegation in 2006, is synonym of keeping hanging on: by anticipating the rivals, he succeeds in going beyond critical situations and be stronger than before, and than the others.

Furthermore, it is a society self-confident which risks to undertake never explored strategies, to reach the success. And this is not egocentrism, but just the result of the awareness about the ability and competencies of the people working for it. Only in this way it is possible to become

one of the world- leading clubs, as it is. Fans are sure that this revolutionary idea will drive the Juventus to the success, as the building of the Stadium what at its time.

Talking, instead, of the style adopted for the realization of the new logo it appears clear to everyone that the essentiality of its design is required by commercial exigencies, the need to immediately come to the mind of everyone, also those not attracted by the football.

The contemporary media landscape is inundated with marketing rhetoric and images that simply overload the senses. And the Juventus' logo recalls just the informatization of this era, while maintaining the elegance that really sets the club apart. It is just blowing the conventions off to sell its product, by trying to retain a supporter who is not just the one that goes to the stadium or that lives in the same city as the club. It has decided to leverage a logo representative of the club, and not the city, to communicate with people that, by means of changed perceptions and habits, have a different way to live the essence of the club. This badge and this new identity have a universal language that will strike the new generations through its simplicity, just as the Nike logo did to us when we were child. Strong logos do not get old by time. They do not age and have high endurance. It means that if you create a unique logo with futuristic attributes it will stand strong during the time.

Interesting it is also another point underlined by the interviewees. This new brand, as we know, is being adopted for different products, not just sports one. That implies a greater possibility to express their identity and their belonging to the Juventus' family. Indeed, if so far, they had been forced to wear Juventus' products in limited occasions, henceforth they might do that every time, by taking the "Old Lady's" values in each context, without appearing inappropriate.

Last point, that may appear surprising, refers to the aptness to directly involve supporters in the rebranding. Interviewed fans believe that has been right not to involve them because the love which makes them loyal to club, since they were child, would have made impossible for them to act rationally to eliminate those elements resulting redundant. The emotions would have

prevailed. Obviously, they would have preferred the situation where the society, after having prepared a prospectus with different alternative of logo, would have let them to vote their favorite one. But this will not stop them to buy products with that stylized “J” because nothing can stop the love for their team.

And the rebranding has that clear: the soccer is the only category where the loyalty is never questioned, whatever the performances. Moreover, the club sustain that the values constituting the brand will never change and that the true supporters will appreciate the introduction of a new logo because they know that the spirit of the Juventus is founded on the courage of being the first to break the conventions, to aim to the excellence and where winning is the unique possible alternative. “Juventus is football but not just football, so I believe Juventus shouldn’t be supported but lived”³³⁸.

The magnitude of this rebranding effort has the potential of propelling Juventus into an even greater power in the football community. This new image will create a modern identity for the club that will reflect the club’s history, values, as well as their cultural development towards the future. The club is attempting to expand their fan base by promoting the “Juventus way” of living. They do not want to limit their market to zealous supporters of the club but instead establish their identity as a lifestyle brand.

Furthermore, the logo exemplifies Juventus’s philosophy to always strive for excellence. The style and presentation of the logo adapts to the modern market by adopting a simpler, sleeker design developed to appeal strongly to future football fans. In addition, Juventus hopes the new logo will reach out and grab new consumers who may not be football fans but appreciate the style, fashion, and entertainment value represented by the club.

This new path is not without its own dangers, though. Like pushing the boundaries of supporters' wallets through increasing ticket costs, changing the identity of a club risks

³³⁸ Manfredi R, Chief Strategy Officer EMEA & LatAm di Interbrand, interviewed by Wired

alienating the core fan base. The changes are always perceived with hostility, but with the time, if they turn out to be successful, criticism will let the place to approvals. And when there is a solid plan behind your strategy and if there is an immense love by your fans, as in the case of the Juventus, there is no space for failures.

"Of course, it will take time [for fans to adjust]," says Ricca. "I think it's a step into the future but I do completely understand it's going to be destabilising for some of the fans but I think that always happens with change. They can experience the brands through places, through products. The point is, can we make Juventus stand not just for the team, but for a brand people want to be part of. This is not about diversifying or diluting what the club stands for. Juventus has always been and will always be about football, but you can experience football in many different ways and there are ways to appeal to people who don't normally go to the stadium and people who don't always watch football — they might be entertainment enthusiasts."

We have also to take into account that the society has committed the rebranding to an external agency: that is because it would have found the same difficulties of the fans in getting the rid of some elements constituting the history of the club. They would have broken the refreshment due to obvious affective reasons. But the success of the decision is already evident: let's ask to a pedestrian to draw, by using the memory, the old and the new brand. Just few days after, the new brand is probably already more deeply-rooted. And as we know, the memorability is a fundamental indicator of the efficacy of a logo.

As said, the supporters are driven by sentimentalism and this cannot be a winning strategy for a decision affecting the potential to survive in the long period in a given business. In such a situation, there is the need to let the professionals to act and to decide on the basis of their competencies, where the supporters' opinion is taken into account but cannot be determinant for the choice itself. Also, since does marketing mean to anticipate consumers' needs, you cannot ask them something they don't know.

I am quite sure the rebranding will be a success. Thanks to the interviews it appears quite clear that, even if not directly, and contrarily to what the majority of the people believes, the fans' opinion has been painstakingly assessed and utilized in developing the new logo. Juventus knows that they are the driving factor of its success and has been careful in reflecting in the new brand those elements in which supporters reveal themselves, granting a continuity of its image: the same values characterizing the Juventus, and its fans, in the 1897 are the same representing it now and will be the same in the future. The difference is that now have been removed limits to the spreading of its distinctive features. So forth, everyone, in each part of the world and in every context, can be Juventus.

The 1st July the new logo came to life. It is officially started the era of the new visual identity of the “Vecchia Signora” that will drive the financial performances of the club, always less related to those on the pitch. The new logo is reflected in everything related to #Juventus: The Stadium (denominated AllianzStadium because of the entitlement, 9 years ago until the 2023, of its naming rights to SportFive in exchange of 75 million which made a deal with Allianz), JStore, JMuseum, JMedical, Vinovo and the HeadQuarters.

The more, of the “black and white and more”, refers to the absence of boundaries that involves everything regarding the Juventus. But the most important may be exactly the fans. With their continuous support, with their feelings, with their interactions will contribute, unwittingly, to carve the essence of the Juventus. Each fan gives a different meaning to its passion for the club and each of those will be a plus to shape the Juventus image. The emotions the club is able to communicate are worth to be lived by as many people as possible.

And, as marvelously stated by Gianni Agnelli:

“Even when I read a newspaper and my eye falls involuntarily on the letter “J” of Juventus, my heart leaps, getting a thrill.”

And Juventus wants this to be the thought of every person in each part of the world. “J” must mean Juventus.

Conclusion

In my study, I started with the analysis of the rebranding, with a greater focus to the sport environment, in order to extrapolate implications of fundamental relevance for a club aiming to undertake such a strategy in a football context. As it was quite predictable, the rebranding, having as object a substantial and identifiable change, always encounters a certain degree of resistance among supporters. That is particularly true when such a change involves an element full of meaning and highly representative of the team history and tradition, like the logo. Indeed, being on the front line, it is the first point of contact with fans and the most immediate way to communicate with them. Furthermore, particular attention is needed by the involvement of different cultures, which requires the new logo would appeal each of them while conveying the desired meaning.

However, even taking care of all these aspects won't avoid criticisms. So that, the secret of the success of the chosen creative route coincides with the significant involvement of fans, making them to feel protagonist of the strategies of the club. Obviously, their contribution depends on their attachment and identification to the club and to their participation to its activities.

Thus, I also provided the evidence that it is possible to co-create value within the context of a win-win situation, whereby all parties gain benefits or value³³⁹. It emerges, so, that fans represent a valuable asset to which leverage to maximize the value offered: the source of new competitive advantage and the seeds for a club's future profitable growth lie in the strategic capital it can build by continuously interacting with its supporters through engagement platforms. The considerable interest behind this strategy, lies in the potential of "co-production"

³³⁹ Cova, B., and Dalli, D. (2009) 'Working Consumers: The Next Step in Marketing Theory? ', *Marketing Theory*, 9 (3): 315-339.

and “co-creation”, either individually or in community contexts, to enhance innovation and business performance.³⁴⁰

This is the result of an open system³⁴¹ where the value proposition is determined by the interaction among different stakeholders. It implies that the collaboration between firm and fans is not the unique form of co-creation of value. Indeed, also the self-perpetuating relationship among fans have a co-creative nature. The combination of resources in such a fans-to-fans interaction, where there is who acts as beneficiary and who as provider, contribute to a customer’s value perception by providing ““linking value”, that is, value based on peer-to-peer bonds and socially embedded consumption’.³⁴²

Another interesting evidence is that despite the competition is considered by many as the ‘heart and soul of sport management’,³⁴³ the collaboration among clubs may be finalized to develop strategic alliances, network and cluster, driving the development of what we refer to as co-competition, that captures the interplay between competition and cooperation, leading to the co-evolution³⁴⁴. In this way, it would be developed a mutually beneficial system of co-production of value among clubs, while still granting prominence on the ‘competitive-dominant’ dimension,³⁴⁵ which is what fosters the fans’ passion.

Every part of a rebrand comes down to fans and involving them as content developer would enhance its effectiveness, while also bonding and improving the relationships with communities.

³⁴⁰ Gibbert, M., Leibold, M. and Probst, G. (2002), “Five styles of customer knowledge management, and how smart companies use them to create value”, *European Management Journal*, Vol. 20 No. 5, pp. 459-69.

³⁴¹ Pitt, Leyland F., Richard T. Watson, Pierre Berthon, Donald Wynn, and George Zinkhan (2006), "The Penguin’s Window: Corporate Brands From an Open-Source Perspective," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34 (2), 115-27.

³⁴² Libai, B., Bolton, R., Bugel, M. S., de Ruyter, K., Götz, O., Risselada, H., & Stephen, A. T. (2010). Customer-to-customer interactions: Broadening the scope of word of mouth research. *Journal of Service Research*, 13, 267–282.

³⁴³ Shilbury, D. (2012). Competition: The heart and soul of sport management. *Journal of Sport Management*, 26(1), 1–10.

³⁴⁴ Lamberg, J.-A., & Laurila, J. (2005). Materializing the societal effect: Organizational forms and changing patterns of dominance in paper industry. *Organization Studies*, 26, 809–830.

³⁴⁵ Bengtsson, M., & Kock, S. (2000). Co-competition in business networks – To cooperate and compete simultaneously. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 29, 411–426.

Finally, I focused my work on the rebranding actuated by the Juventus F.C. that with its strategy is revolutionizing the world of the soccer. The club, indeed, introduced a new logo that determines an epochal change since it breaks away from the traditional crest to carry in a real commercial brand.

Whatever you think about the emblem, and it is dividing opinion on social media, this serves as yet another example of why Juventus remain ahead of the competition not only on the pitch in Italy, but off it too. Complacency is not a word in the Juventus vocabulary. And quoting Oscar Wilde, *“There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about”*.

The new design includes the outline of an Italian scudetto, the black and white stripes which are the skin of the Old Lady and the letter “J” that from now on will mean Juventus to everyone while granting authority, confidence and elegance away from pitches and stadiums.

While this design may look ultra-modern and far-removed from the identity of Juventus, fans would be interested to know that back in 1940, the team wore a kit bearing only the letter “J” in place of its crest. So, historically, it is not as irreverent as it is being made out to be, but more a case of needs must. That means Juventus is creating a button-up collar that will make a return to that jersey for the first time, with the club saying, of course, that it "stands for the past, present and future".

The first letter of a name – the initial - holds enough signifying power that it becomes something along the lines of a symbolic signifier for the thing the name represents. By singling out the letter “J”, Juventus created a floating signifier that acts as a container for the club’s history and all the visual motifs that come to mind when we are prompted to think about Juventus.

Juventus is trying to build a brand starting from the consideration that football will always be the origin, but never the boundary. What it emerges is that the rebranding is just a part of a wider plan. Juventus has turned itself into an icon aiming to appeal globally not just to football

fans and to get a better commercial performance in a rapidly changing environment by reflecting the Juventus's philosophy to always strive for excellence.

This new image will create a modern identity for the club that will reflect the club's history, values, as well as their cultural development towards the future. The club is attempting to expand their fan base by promoting the "Juventus way" of living.

However, the success of such a strategy depends upon the approval of the supporters and, according to the first reactions, they weren't happy with this change. Many criticisms appear on socials due to the abandon of the original crest, highly representative and meaningful, to introduce a logo that appears too commercial for a soccer club. Though, the evidence provided by my work goes in another direction: the in-depth interviews conducted highlighted that the initial disappointment was mainly due to the unconventionality of the strategy adopted but, at the same time, supporters recognize that this is representative of the spirit of the Juventus, founded on the courage of being the first to break the conventions, to aim to the excellence and where winning is the unique possible alternative. More important, they recognize that fundamental elements of the logo have been included: the black & white, which represent the colors of the Bianconeri's skin, the shield and the stars, symbol of the winning soul of the club. In addition, they look at the essentiality and minimality adopted to make the new logo, which confer it a great elegance, as a chance to express their identity and their belonging to the Juventus' family, even in context different from the sport one. Finally, fans believe that has been right not to involve them because the love which makes them loyal to the club would have made the emotional component prevail over the rational one, complicating the elimination of those elements resulting redundant.

So, contrarily to what the majority of the people believes, the Juventus has been careful in reflecting in the new brand those elements in which supporters reveal themselves, granting a continuity of its image: the same values and identity characterizing the Juventus, and its fans, in the 1897 are the same representing it now and will be the same in the future. And there is a

“more”: the essence of the club, expressed by an iconic letter (the “J”), can be now perceived and nourished without boundaries, because the emotions it delivers are worth to be lived by everyone.

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ABSTRACT

The rebranding is a revolutionary strategy that communicates the will to develop a differentiated position in the mind of stakeholders and a distinctive identity from competitors. The “corporate rebranding refers to the disjunction or change between an initially formulated corporate brand and a new formulation” finalized to improve operational efficiency and enhance brand equity.

What in particular my work wants to stress is that the growth of the business of sports has driven the rise in popularity and significance of sports branding, which requires clubs to operate like businesses and, consequentially, to persecute commercial goals. Therefore, just like any other leisure venue, sports need to exploit the role of the marketing as a mean to remain competitive in a fiercely contested leisure industry.

Managers are treating clubs as brands. Since sport performances are uncontrollable, unpredictable and spontaneous, which means it cannot in isolation provide long-term benefits, management takes a long-term approach with a focus on the sport experience and a sustainable relationship with customers to build the brand rather than winning. The soccer clubs as brands must offer an experience which touch all customers’ senses and make them feel proud of being part of that enlarged family.

It follows that the implementation of a revolutionary strategy like the rebranding, which in the sport, and in the football, refers to change in name, logo, historic slogan or the uniform colors, allows managers to intervene on the perception of the supporters towards the club. The football gives experiences to its fans and the success of the rebranding depends on the ability of delivering positive remarkable and memorable experiences which appeal directly to the ‘hearts’ of stakeholders.

So, it is important to take into account that the rebranding is dealing with something ‘sacred’ and managing a piece of community property, not a business asset: it is a repository of people’s

emotional associations. Furthermore, the attachment and the devotion toward a club transcend any success or failure on the pitch: the devotion of fans towards football club engenders a level of loyalty far greater than in any other industry.

The sport makes people live emotions and it may be central to their lives but can change during people lifetime. The rebranding strategy must deliver meaning to acquire and strengthen a prominence position in the fans' leisure time spending choices, by stimulating meaningful and consistent perceptions in line with values, proficiencies, ideas, personality and actions in which fans identify themselves.

Clubs need to promise an experience which is in line with what believed and appreciated about the brand by effectively involving fans and making them act as a "touchstone" in guiding what the brand does, respecting the consideration that clubs don't own their brands, consumers do. Indeed, as shown by previous attempt of rebranding, the incapacity of listening and understanding the audience may lead to the failure.

Nowadays, teams, to be successful, need to generate as much value as possible by creating and delivering a collective value through the construction of a network where the team is the central actor around which interests rotate. The production and the exchange of value, previously solely dependent on the internal capabilities and expertise of the firm, now requires the active participation of formerly passive consumers, who become co-producers of the core product.

In such an orientation, where the strategies adopted by the teams are fans-orientated, the success depends on the ability to commonly design brands that exactly suit particular functional and symbolic needs while conveying relevant meanings and experiences.

Thus, I also provided the evidence that it is possible to co-create value within the context of a win-win situation, whereby all parties gain benefits or value. It emerges, so, that fans represent a valuable asset to which leverage to maximize the value offered: the source of new competitive advantage and the seeds for a club's future profitable growth lie in the strategic capital it can

build by continuously interacting with its supporters through engagement platforms. The considerable interest behind this strategy, lies in the potential of “co-production” and “co-creation”, either individually or in community contexts, to enhance innovation and business performance.

The existence of this open system determined by the interaction among different stakeholders implies that the collaboration between firm and fans is not the unique form of co-creation of value. Indeed, also the self-perpetuating relationship among fans have a co-creative nature.

The combination of resources in such a fans-to-fans interaction, where there is who acts as beneficiary and who as provider, contribute to a customer’s value perception by providing “linking value”, that is, value based on peer-to-peer bonds and socially embedded consumption’.

Another interesting evidence is that despite the competition is considered by many as the ‘heart and soul of sport management’, the collaboration among clubs may be finalized to develop strategic alliances, network and cluster, driving the development of what we refer to as co-competition, that captures the interplay between competition and cooperation, leading to the co-evolution. In this way, it would be developed a mutually beneficial system of co-production of value among clubs, while still granting prominence on the ‘competitive-dominant’ dimension, which is what fosters the fans’ passion.

Every part of a rebrand comes down to fans and involving them as content developer would enhance its effectiveness, while also bonding and improving the relationships with communities.

Finally, in the last part of my work, I focused on the rebranding actuated by the Juventus F.C. that with its strategy is revolutionizing the world of the soccer. The club, indeed, introduced a new logo that determines an epochal change since it breaks away from the traditional crest to carry in a real commercial brand.

The new design includes the outline of an Italian scudetto, the black and white stripes which are the skin of the Old Lady and the letter “J” that from now on will mean Juventus to everyone while granting authority, confidence and elegance away from pitches and stadiums. Juventus is trying to build a brand starting from the consideration that football will always be the origin, but never the boundary. What it emerges is that the rebranding is just a part of a wider plan.

The first letter of a name – the initial - holds enough signifying power that it becomes something along the lines of a symbolic signifier for the thing the name represents. By singling out the letter “J”, Juventus created a floating signifier that acts as a container for the club’s history and all the visual motifs that come to mind when we are prompted to think about Juventus. Juventus has turned itself into an icon aiming to appeal globally not just to football fans and to get a better commercial performance in a rapidly changing environment by reflecting the Juventus’s philosophy to always strive for excellence. This new image will create a modern identity for the club that will reflect the club’s history, values, as well as their cultural development towards the future. The club is attempting to expand their fan base by promoting the “Juventus way” of living.

However, the success of such a strategy depends upon the approval of the supporters and, according to the first reactions, they weren’t happy with this change. Many criticisms appear on socials due to the abandon of the original crest, highly representative and meaningful, to introduce a logo that appears too commercial for a soccer club.

Though, the evidence provided by my work goes in another direction: the in-depth interviews conducted highlighted that the initial disappointment was mainly due to the unconventionality of the strategy adopted but, at the same time, supporters recognize that this is representative of the spirit of the Juventus, founded on the courage of being the first to break the conventions, to aim to the excellence and where winning is the unique possible alternative.

More important, they recognize that fundamental elements of the logo have been included: the black & white, which represent the colors of the Bianconeri's skin, the shield and the stars, symbol of the winning soul of the club.

In addition, they look at the essentiality and minimality adopted to make the new logo, which confer it a great elegance, as a chance to express their identity and their belonging to the Juventus' family, even in context different from the sports one.

Finally, fans believe that has been right not to involve them because the love which makes loyal to the club would have made the emotional component prevail over the rational one, complicating the elimination of those elements resulting redundant.

Whatever you think about the emblem, and it is dividing opinion on social media, this serves as yet another example of why Juventus remain ahead of the competition not only on the pitch in Italy, but off it too. Complacency is not a word in the Juventus vocabulary. And quoting Oscar Wilde, "*There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about*".

So, contrarily to what most of the people believes, the Juventus has been careful in reflecting in the new brand those elements in which supporters reveal themselves, granting a continuity of its image: the same values and identity characterizing the Juventus, and its fans, in the 1897 are the same representing it now and will be the same in the future. And there is a "more": the essence of the club, expressed by an iconic letter (the "J"), can be now perceived and nourished without boundaries, because the emotions it delivers are worth to be lived by everyone.