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**"Between Profit and Passion: How Football Tourism Revolutionised
Ticketing, Stadium Accessibility, and Fan Experience"**

FINAL MASTER PROJECT

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Abstract

This study examines the growing tension between local fan accessibility and commercial football tourism in European club football. As elite clubs become global tourist attractions, concerns have emerged regarding how an increase in international fans affect traditional supporter experiences, ticket pricing, and stadium atmosphere. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates qualitative insights from three live match observations—Liverpool vs. Sparta Prague, FC Barcelona vs. Girona, and Andorra FC vs. Nàstic Tarragona—with quantitative data from 64 survey respondents. The findings reveal stark contrasts between top-tier and lower-league clubs in managing tourism, with smaller clubs like Andorra FC maintaining accessibility and community focus, while major clubs increasingly adopt revenue-driven ticketing models that often marginalise local fans.

Thematic analysis highlights a perceived erosion of authenticity and a growing disconnect among long-time supporters, driven by dynamic pricing, ticket reselling, and the rise of a more passive, tourist-oriented spectator culture. However, the study also finds that, when managed responsibly, football tourism can enhance cultural exchange and matchday diversity. It concludes by recommending more inclusive governance frameworks—such as those seen at FC Bayern Munich—that can sustain financial success without sacrificing fan engagement. This research contributes to debates on sustainable tourism and football governance by illustrating how local identity and global reach can coexist when clubs prioritise the supporter experience.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context & Background

Football is not only the most popular sport in Europe—it has also become an increasingly important element in shaping urban identities and attracting tourism. Football tourism, the practice of people travelling specifically to watch live games or visit stadiums and museums, has expanded dramatically in the last several decades. Football tourism is expected to contribute significantly to the expansion of the global sports tourism sector, which is projected to reach \$671.2 billion by 2027 (Football and Tourism Report, 2023).

European clubs have emerged as key players in this trend, especially those of international acclaim. Millions of football fans visit cities like Barcelona, Munich, Madrid, and Liverpool every year. FC Barcelona's Camp Nou was named one of Catalonia's most popular tourist destinations, demonstrating the club's significance in both sports and the larger travel and tourism sector (Football and Tourism Report, 2023).

In addition to converting stadiums into international tourist destinations, the influx of foreign supporters has changed club tactics regarding branding, tickets, and infrastructure. Clubs are increasingly using price strategies that cater to higher-paying tourists, frequently at the expense of local fans. According to a comparative study on ticket pricing in European football, English Premier League (EPL) clubs use demand-based and tiered pricing structures that can dramatically increase prices for matches with high demand. These strategies are often supported by the willingness of the travel market to pay (Ticket Pricing in European Football, 2013).

This commercial evolution has raised concerns over the marginalisation of local fans. Local fans frequently find themselves priced out or given less priority when it comes to ticket allocations as demand for match tickets rises. With FC Bayern Munich specifically highlighting affordability as a component of its identity and long-term fan engagement plan, the German Bundesliga, on the other hand, has maintained comparatively low ticket costs (Ticket Pricing in European Football, 2013).

The nature of the in-stadium experience has also been impacted by the conflict between local fan access and tourism-driven commercial expansion. Local fan engagement has a significant impact on the

authenticity of the matchday environment, according to Cordina et al. (2018). According to the study, local supporters' presence and conduct are highly valued by football tourists, who see it as essential to their own enjoyment and cultural absorption. Ironically, clubs run the risk of compromising the very experience that travellers are looking for when they serve a larger number of foreign guests.

These days, football teams are situated at the nexus of cultural identity, urban tourism, and international entertainment. This thesis seeks to investigate the complex dynamic created by their dual roles as a communal institution and a tourist attraction. This study will investigate the effects of football tourism on ticket prices, stadium accessibility, and the changing fan experience in a European setting, with a focus on various clubs around major European cities.

1.2 Problem Statement

A complex network of conflicts between community integrity and economic prosperity has been brought about by the growth of football tourism in Europe. Through stadium tours, matchday packages, and merchandise sales, football teams have effectively used tourism as a source of income. However, this change has also raised concerns regarding local supporters being excluded from their sporting institutions. Global branding and tourism-driven commodification are increasingly defining characteristics of what was formerly a locally rooted, community-focused cultural activity.

The sharp rise in ticket costs at many exclusive clubs is one of the most obvious effects of this shift. Long-time local fans frequently find themselves priced out of regular attendance as clubs adopt tiered pricing structures and matchday packages designed for visitors (Ticket Pricing in European Football, 2013). This is especially noticeable in competitions like the English Premier League, where teams like Liverpool FC have come under fire for their tickets' rising costs despite public efforts to keep them accessible for local supporters (Jason, 2024).

A comparative, fact-based examination of how tourism alters not just pricing strategies but also the accessibility and culture of football as a lived experience is lacking in the current conversation. Clubs' reactions vary greatly; some, like Bayern Munich, maintain inclusive ideals and reasonable prices, while others have embraced more commercialised methods that may alienate devoted local supporters.

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate how stadium accessibility, ticket costs, and fan culture are affected by football tourism for several European football teams. It focuses in particular on how local fan accessibility, ticket prices, and the whole matchday experience are impacted by the growing influence of international visitors. From commercially orientated clubs like FC Barcelona and Liverpool FC to community-oriented organisations like FC Bayern Munich, the analysis goes further into understanding how clubs with various governance models strike a balance between local fan inclusion and tourism revenue. The study also looks into whether quantifiable changes in pricing methods, fan demographics, and ticket distribution practices have resulted from an increase in demand for foreign tourists.

The study additionally examines how local and international fans view stadium experiences differently, emphasising authenticity and atmosphere. This work seeks to show how club-specific activities, such as fan clubs, financial help programs, and cultural events, may decrease or increase the difficulties presented by football tourism. Finally, by providing useful information for legislators, football executives, and destination managers, this study adds to the bigger picture of sustainable tourism and destination management in professional football.

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, collecting data through an online survey designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative insights. To obtain a wide range of perspectives on football tourism, the poll was given to a sample of football enthusiasts, including both domestic supporters and foreign visitors. Quantitative questions concentrated on demographic data, attendance patterns, and opinions regarding stadium accessibility and ticket prices. On the other hand, qualitative questions allowed participants the opportunity to share in-depth thoughts and experiences, which led to an improved understanding of how local fan culture and matchday atmosphere are impacted by football tourism. By combining statistical insights with in-depth, narrative comments, this dual approach guaranteed a balanced analysis.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The five chapters that make up this thesis provide a thorough overview of how football tourism is influencing access and experience at particular European clubs. Whether the reader is an academic, a professional in the field, or someone just curious about the evolving connection between football and tourism, the framework is made to lead them through the study in an understandable, rational, and approachable manner.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Presents the study's history, research topic, goals, questions, and general relevance to lay the groundwork for the investigation.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Investigates current scholarly and commercial studies on football tourism, stadium accessibility, ticket costs, and the larger cultural and economic aspects of contemporary football. It offers the conceptual foundation for the case study analysis and points out theoretical deficiencies.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Explains the research strategy, including the choice of case study, the techniques used to acquire data (such as document analysis, interviews, and surveys), and the general analysis methodology. It also describes limitations and ethical issues.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Outlines the primary conclusions drawn from the case studies and survey data, then critically compares various club tactics and draws attention to significant trends, inconsistencies, and ramifications.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Summarizes the main insights, reflects on their significance for clubs, fans, and tourism managers, and offers practical recommendations for balancing tourism growth with inclusive fan engagement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Football Tourism as an Economic Driver

In Europe, football tourism has become a major source of income for clubs and cities. Every year, millions of football-loving tourists go to see major teams like FC Barcelona, Liverpool FC, and Manchester United, bringing in large sums of money from match day attendance as well as stadium tours, souvenirs, and local hospitality sectors (World Football Summit, 2023). For instance, according to Sharma

and Rudkin (2020), football tourism boosts the UK economy by almost £600 million a year, and there is a favourable correlation between match attendance and higher local expenditure.

Even though these studies show impressive economic outcomes, they sometimes don't take into consideration how the money is allocated or whether it truly helps the club's core communities. The question as to whether the money made by foreign fans is used to enhance accessibility, affordability, or community involvement has not received much critical attention. Given that many clubs simultaneously lower local ticket availability or raise prices, this exclusion is notable and raises the possibility that people who are most invested in the club's identity may not directly benefit from financial advantages.

Furthermore, the majority of economic impact assessments focus on total income rather than the effects of commercial policies on various supporter groups. The literature on distributional equity, a key idea in conversations about inclusive and sustainable tourism, is severely lacking (Ardeleanu, 2020). It's unclear if local supporters benefit from teams' worldwide brand expansion or if they instead have to deal with the unforeseen consequences of crowding, exclusion, or an altered match day culture.

Even within club structures, stark contrasts emerge. Bayern Munich, for instance, retains some of the lowest average ticket prices among elite European teams and actively resists the full commercialisation of matchday income through its fan ownership model (Bühler & Nufer, 2013). In contrast, clubs like Liverpool and FC Barcelona operate under corporate or member-owned models that increasingly mirror global entertainment businesses. This distinction in governance leads to fundamental differences in how clubs define value—either through short-term revenue optimisation or long-term community inclusion.

Therefore, even while the research has provided ample evidence of the economic potential of football tourism, little attention has been given to how these benefits are shared, what is lost along the process, and how governance models influence these results. As clubs broaden their global presence, these gaps demand more investigation and thoughtful consideration.

2.2 Stadiums as Tourist Attractions

Modern football stadiums have transcended their traditional purpose as sporting grounds and are now important hubs in urban tourism networks. With guided tours, museums, and branded retail experiences, clubs like Manchester United and Real Madrid CF increasingly promote their stadiums as year-round destinations that appeal to both football fans and non-football tourists (Football and Tourism Report,

2023). These services help the club establish itself as a commercial and cultural hub and bring in steady revenue on days when games are not being played.

Since Ramshaw and Gammon (2010) recognised stadium tourism as a new area of destination management, there has been scholarly interest in stadiums as tourist destinations. They highlighted that stadiums were being converted into cultural sites, demonstrating a planned reaction to the needs of contemporary travellers. This transformation is vividly illustrated by Manchester City's Etihad Campus which has come to represent urban renewal and is a striking example of this change. Edensor and Millington (2010) described how the club transformed an abandoned industrial area into a bustling, mixed-use neighbourhood with retail, dining options, cultural events, and sporting facilities in collaboration with local authorities. In addition to boosting club brands, these initiatives give host communities long-term social and economic advantages.

The Liverpool's Anfield Stadium case highlights stadium tourism's worldwide influence. According to Evans and Norcliffe (2016) and Taylor & Francis (2020), "The Anfield Experience" turned the stadium into a year-round tourism attraction that provided access to the museum, stadium tours, and opportunities to meet past players. Anfield has grown to be a vital part of Liverpool's cultural tourism, with more than 140,000 visitors annually on days other than match days.

Interestingly, even though there is an increasing amount of research on stadium tourism, the majority of these studies concentrate on elite teams and overlook the regular experiences of local fans in these altered venues. Qualitative research on the effects of stadium commercialisation on grassroots fan culture, spatial patterns, and emotional bonds is still lacking. It's not always evident how clubs' modernisation of their facilities to attract foreign tourists fits in with regional interests or historical continuity.

Stadiums are now important resources in the football tourist industry; yet, the shift towards tourism-oriented redevelopment on tourism creates complex difficulties between heritage, accessibility, and business needs. This calls for a more well-rounded approach to infrastructure planning that takes into consideration the experiences of individuals for whom the stadium is a weekly ritual rather than a tourist destination, in addition to visitor metrics.

2.3 Ticket Pricing Models & Tourism-driven Accessibility Shifts

In recent years, European football ticketing systems have changed significantly, shifting from community-based and loyalty-based models to ones that are more dynamic and profit-oriented. In the past, teams distributed tickets through local memberships and season passes, strengthening ties within the community and guaranteeing regular access for local supporters. However the widespread implementation of membership-tiered systems, resale platforms, and dynamic pricing has upended conventional access and brought in fresh business demands.

Bühler and Nufer (2013) lead the first debates on this subject by analysing the emergence of dynamic pricing in European football, specifically among English Premier League and La Liga clubs. For instance, Real Madrid and FC Barcelona employ dynamic ticket pricing, whereby costs vary based on opponent, seat location, and demand levels. This allows teams to profit as much as possible from popular games, but it also results in outrageous expenses that many local fans cannot afford (Bühler & Nufer, 2013). Their analysis also demonstrates how FC Bayern Munich has taken an entirely different approach. Bayern continuously maintains some of the lowest ticket costs among the best European teams, while being one of the most prosperous and sought-after clubs in the continent. This is mostly because of its unique fan-ownership structure, which permits policy choices that put community access ahead of immediate financial rewards. The club offers standing section tickets for as little as €15 and only makes slight price changes, even for premium matches (Bühler & Nufer, 2013). Season ticket holders can receive discounts of up to 53% from Bayern, demonstrating their dedication to inclusion over profit maximisation.

Further complicating accessibility is the growing dominance of secondary ticketing platforms such as StubHub and Viagogo, which have become embedded in club ticketing ecosystems. According to a recent report by the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC, 2023), these platforms often inflate prices through service fees and speculative listing, with little oversight or transparency. This disproportionately impacts fans who are not part of official club memberships, particularly international visitors or those attending irregularly.

Bühler and Nufer also critically examined the idea of dynamic pricing, which was first widely used in industries like entertainment and aviation (2013). They said that many Bundesliga clubs, like FC Bayern Munich, have opposed demand-based pricing schemes because of ethical concerns and possible reaction from their core fan base, while Premier League clubs are leading the way in this regard. Their analysis indicates that these pricing tactics are cultural choices that have a direct impact on club identity and community ties in addition to being purely economic ones. In a more recent study, Jason (2024) looked at

Liverpool FC and found that matchday demand has increased due to the team's growing international recognition, especially for high-stakes games. He contends that the increase in tourists has drastically changed ticket availability and prices, frequently at the expense of local fans. Long-time local supporters feel excluded and priced out as foreign spectators take up a larger portion of the stadium, weakening the local atmosphere that used to define Anfield.

The dynamics of clubs like Nàstic de Tarragona, which are much lower on the football pyramid than the aforementioned elite clubs are different. These lower-tier Spanish clubs usually continue to have reasonably priced ticketing because they don't have a big global name or steady attendance. Retaining community support and filling seats remain their top priorities. However, as Catalonia's tourism operations expand, there are concerns that even smaller clubs may feel forced to exploit the short-term demand from tourists, perhaps putting pricing methods out of line with local economic realities.

In conclusion, the literature shows an increasing conflict between cultural inclusivity and economic optimisation, even though price innovations have modernised ticket sales and raised revenues. Future studies ought to investigate how supporters adjust to these systems as well as how ticket regulations might be created to strike a balance between sustainability and equity, particularly as football teams grow in popularity around the world.

2.4 Local Fans and the Authentic Paradox

The trade-off between local authenticity and global appeal is one of the most commonly addressed issues in academic literature as football tourism continues to grow. International fans are drawn to the lively matchday ambience that local fans produce, but ironically, their growing numbers are making these same experiences less enjoyable.

As Kim and Jamal (2007) first examined the idea of existential authenticity in tourism, they defined it as an emotionally charged and absorbing experience that makes tourists feel more like insiders than outside observers. The authentic, unplanned encounters between local supporters and tourists—moments that travellers frequently recall most clearly—bring this concept to life in the context of football. Local fans are essential to the perceived authenticity of the football experience, claim Cordina et al. (2018). According to their research at Celtic FC, spontaneous, genuine encounters with local supporters—whether by learning club chants, exchanging historical stories, or taking in the unique ambience of supporter

pubs—often led to the most memorable experiences for visitors. This type of group interaction provides a strong emotional bond with the sport, which is a major draw for many visitors.

This need for authenticity often clashes with the commercial realities of contemporary sport. Local supporters increasingly find themselves geographically and culturally alienated as teams, particularly those in the Premier League and La Liga, pursue revenue maximisation (Cordina et al., 2018). Wealthy tourists and business travellers increasingly occupy stadium areas that were before dominated by passionate local fans. This change weakens the atmosphere on matchdays and may even lead to overt conflict between local and foreign fans. It's interesting to note that when local supporters are outnumbered, even tourists might express discontent. When accompanied by other tourists instead of locals, a Malaysian visitor to Celtic FC expressed dissatisfaction, saying that "local fans do not do this—they create an atmosphere" (Cordina et al., 2018, p. 17). This exemplifies a rising contradiction of authenticity: visitors seek the genuine passion of local fans while unintentionally contributing to their marginalisation.

At teams like FC Barcelona and Liverpool, this tension is especially noticeable. Jason (2024) investigates how Liverpool FC's increased demand from overseas has resulted in what he terms the "Instagramification" of matchdays. Here, visitors are more interested in taking pictures and films than offering verbal support, which further alienates local supporters who feel alienated. The same dynamics may be observed at FC Barcelona, where the increase in foreign visitors has changed the demographics of matchgoers, making normal league games at the Spotify Camp Nou more subdued.

Ultimately, the relationship between domestic fans and international spectators is complicated. The cultural integrity of matchdays necessitates aggressive measures to ensure local involvement, even while foreign fans provide teams with significant revenue and worldwide visibility (Kim and Jamal, 2007; Cordina et al., 2018; Jason, 2024). Clubs run the danger of offending their core communities and undermining the very experience that visitors are paying to have if they don't take these steps.

2.5 Club Responses and Governance Models

To handle the conflict between local fan inclusion and profitability, European football clubs have implemented notably varied governance structures in response to growing worldwide attention and matchday tourism. These models differ in terms of ownership structure, political setting, and cultural ideology in addition to commercial ambition.

One notable example is FC Bayern Munich, which often attracts notice for its fan-oriented administration system. Since Bayern is partly owned by its supporters, it is immune to many of the commercial pressures that other top teams face. To maintain its electrifying home environment, the club has kept ticket prices low, invested in fan facilities, and kept the standing terraces intact (Bühler and Nufer, 2013). The Premier League and La Liga clubs, on the other hand, frequently use dynamic pricing methods that disproportionately favour corporate and overseas viewers.

According to the Football and Tourism Report (2023), Bayern's strategy shows how accessibility results can be directly influenced by governance. According to Bayern's policy structure, supporters are acknowledged as co-owners and cultural stakeholders rather than as consumers. This methodology makes sure that decisions about stadium access, tickets, and merchandising are subjected to a greater degree of ethical scrutiny; this approach not only preserves local access but also maintains the authenticity that tourists want."

In contrast, FC Barcelona provides a hybrid model. Although it is theoretically member-owned (by its *social* structure), its growing globalisation and dependence on foreign travel have caused it to change its priorities. The objective of the club's Espai Barça renovation is to transform the stadium into a multipurpose facility intended for visitors and event-based activities. Critics have questioned whether this plan weakens the club's socio-political status in Catalonia, which has long been regarded as a stronghold of regional identity, even though the initiative contains commitments to local economic growth (World Football Summit, 2023).

Another illustrative case in this topic is Liverpool FC. It has a worldwide ownership structure (Fenway Sports Group) and actively pursues international marketing, although being firmly rooted in local culture and tradition. Jason (2024) observes that ticket distribution increasingly reflects visitor demand, even despite the club's community participation efforts. Critics contend that initiatives like stadium expansion and local discount programs are reactive rather than preventative, providing little comfort to devoted supporters who are left out by market-driven access mechanisms.

Nàstic de Tarragona operates in a very distinct environment at the lower levels. Clubs like Nàstic can remain affordable due to necessity rather than design, as they lack the financial cushion that comes with international fame. However, even smaller teams now have to deal with the pressure to commercialise as Tarragona's tourism industry increases. Regional development plans in Catalonia suggest possible future

collaborations between local football organisations and tourism boards, a tendency already seen in other smaller Spanish clubs like RC Deportivo and Córdoba CF, even though Nàstic has not yet implemented aggressive tourism initiatives (World Football Summit 2023).

Governance frameworks influence how tourism is incorporated into sport in addition to club-level activities. According to the Football and Tourism Report (2023), clubs, local governments, and national federations must all actively participate in sustainable football tourism. Clubs such as Forest Green Rovers and Real Betis have taken on this challenge by incorporating social and environmental goals into their business operations. These strategies reflect a new kind of governance for football tourism that aims for long-term ecological, social, and cultural resilience in addition to revenue.

2.6 Gaps in the Literature

Gammon and Fear (2013) examined the idea of hybrid fan identities, although the majority of the research on football tourism first concentrated on the cultural and social aspects of sports tourism. They maintained that there is a continuum of football fandom, from traditional local supporters to distant followers who interact online or in person on occasion. This viewpoint questions the oversimplified division of football supporters into "locals" and "tourists," acknowledging that modern supporters frequently combine aspects of both.

Soon after, Bühler and Nufer (2013) looked at FC Bayern Munich's distinctive governance model, emphasising how the team's majority fan ownership structure enables it to keep ticket costs low even though it is a top European team. Their research showed that the financially motivated strategies of many Premier League clubs, who use dynamic pricing structures to maximise revenue from foreign tourists, stand in stark contrast to Bayern's community-focused model. This disparity calls into question whether inclusive governance and the expansion of commercial tourism can coexist.

The idea of stadiums as "living museums" first surfaced with Ramshaw (2019), who explained how football stadiums have changed from being athletic arenas to holding cultural and emotional value. The traditional matchday experience may be diminished if clubs progressively repurpose their stadiums to accommodate tourists rather than continuing to fulfil their historical function as hubs for community gatherings, according to Ramshaw.

The experiences of lower-tier clubs, which are frequently disregarded in football tourism studies that are dominated by elite teams, have recently come to attention. This discrepancy was brought to light by

Ardeleanu (2020), who pointed out that minor teams like Nàstic de Tarragona and Andorra FC are important to regional tourism initiatives even though they might not have the same level of worldwide recognition as FC Barcelona or Manchester United. Although these clubs are still very much a part of their communities, they are also coming under increasing scrutiny to change to revenue models that are driven by tourism.

A methodological innovation in this field was brought about by Steadman et al. (2020), who promoted the incorporation of fan-generated content and digital ethnography into research procedures. They contend that a deeper understanding of how local fans interpret the changes brought about by tourism can be obtained by qualitative, sentiment-driven research, such as the analysis of fan reviews, blogs, and social media posts. The emotional impact of these changes is also captured by this method, which is sometimes missed in solely economic studies.

Collectively, these gaps point to the need for a more nuanced understanding of football tourism—one that prioritises local fan perspectives, includes input from smaller clubs, and embraces methodological innovation.

2.7 Theoretical Framework for Understanding Football Tourism

In order to investigate the connection between local supporter culture and football tourism, this study first applies Cultural Tourism Theory. According to Kim and Jamal (2007), tourists frequently look for "existential authenticity"—meaningful encounters that give them a feeling of place and identity. In the context of football, this means that foreign fans are drawn to the ambiance, customs, and passion generated by local supporters. However, as these tourists increasingly occupy matchday spaces, they may inadvertently dilute or disrupt the very experiences they came to witness. This theory is particularly helpful in understanding the paradox of global fans seeking authenticity while contributing to the commercial dynamics that threaten it.

The Sport Value Framework, created by Woratschek, Horbel, and Popp (2014), is the second framework used. It suggests that sport organisations should balance three types of value: experiential, social, and economic. In reality, this means that clubs have to balance the value of community identity and fan pleasure against the financial advantages of tourism, such as higher ticket sales and brand exposure. When comparing the leadership approaches of different teams, this model is particularly helpful. For example, FC Bayern Munich prioritises equality and accessibility through fan ownership, whereas clubs like FC

Barcelona and Liverpool FC have embraced more commercially orientated tactics. Sustainable growth in tourism football necessitates structures of governance that actively maintain local fan culture while attracting global audiences, as noted by Tobar, Ramshaw, and Oliveira (2024). The study's view of how football tourism affects access, identity, and match day experience is influenced by these frameworks.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a mixed-methods research methodology, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to thoroughly examine how football tourism affects stadium access, ticket prices, and local fan experiences. Since it enables the integration of social insights and numerical data, a mixed-methods approach was selected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of complex social processes (Creswell, 2014). This design is particularly effective in tourism research, where statistical trends and personal experiences are crucial to understanding visitor behaviour and local impact (Jennings, 2010).

This study's quantitative component was conducted using a standardised survey called "Football Tourism and Fan Accessibility." According to Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014), surveys are commonly acknowledged as a dependable technique for gathering standardised data from sizable participant groups. To represent the linguistic diversity of the target audience, the survey was created in both English and Catalan to ensure accessibility for both domestic and foreign respondents. The survey was distributed online via fan forums, and social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook Instagram and various other messaging platforms) and applied a convenience sample approach, which is frequently used in social science research to swiftly and effectively reach a wide population (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

The purpose of the survey was to gather information on several important topics, such as respondents' knowledge of ticketing regulations, how often they attend games, how they feel about ticket availability, and whether they believe local supporters should be given preference when it comes to ticket distribution. The questionnaire also looked at respondents' opinions of how the matchday atmosphere has changed and their emotional responses to foreign visitors in stadiums. To enable a more thorough examination of replies depending on age, geography, years of club support, and willingness to pay for tickets, demographic data was also gathered.

The qualitative component of this study was based on direct observational research, which is an established method for capturing natural, real-world behaviors and interactions (Kawulich, 2005). Specifically, three separate matches were attended as part of this research: Liverpool vs Sparta Prague (Europa League) on Thursday, 14th March 2024 at Anfield, FC Barcelona vs Girona (La Liga) on Sunday, 30th March 2025 at Spotify Camp Nou, and Andorra FC vs Nàstic Tarragona (Spanish 3rd Division) on Sunday, 4th May 2025. These excursions were carefully chosen to capture a variety of football contexts, ranging from a local league match between two lower-tier Spanish clubs to a top-tier La Liga fixture involving a globally recognized club, and finally, a major European competition featuring one of the world's most famous teams. This strategic selection allowed for direct observation of how football tourism impacts fan dynamics, ticketing practices, and matchday atmospheres across different competitive levels. Fan demographics, ticketing procedures, fan behaviour, and the geographic distribution of domestic and foreign supporters were the main areas of observation during each visit. Important observations were recorded using field notes and photos, which were then used to enhance the qualitative analysis.

Given the nature of the research topic, the mixed-methods methodology employed in this study is justified. Football tourism is a qualitative experience influenced by perceptions, feelings, and cross-cultural encounters, as well as a quantitative phenomenon that ticket pricing, attendance statistics, and spending trends can quantify. This method combined quantifiable patterns with firsthand observations from the stadium setting to provide a thorough knowledge of how football tourism impacts local supporters. Combining these two types of data aligns with mixed-methods research principles, which highlight the need to triangulate data to increase the validity of conclusions (Creswell, 2014).

A wide range of respondents, mostly between the ages of 18 and 34, made up the final sample; most of them identified as foreign-based supporters who resided outside of the nation where their favoured club was based. Many had been club supporters for more than ten years, and some considered themselves lifelong supporters. Due mostly to geographical limitations, many participants only rarely attended matches, although some were frequent attendees. This distribution offers a rich foundation for examining perception variations between domestic and foreign supporters and represents the globalised character of modern football fan bases.

64 people completed the survey, which is a fair sample size for this kind of exploratory research, but it has limitations. Although the sample offers enough information to examine important themes and the study prioritises depth of understanding over breadth, conclusions should be interpreted cautiously when

applying to larger fan populations around Europe. Considering the foreign bias in the respondent pool, this is very crucial.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

To collect quantitative data from a large number of football fans, structured questionnaires were used. The Tailored Design Method, which emphasises the significance of question clarity, survey duration, and respondent engagement to improve response rates and data quality, was used to create the survey (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). In order to evaluate fan demographics, match attendance frequency, ticket purchasing habits, and views on inclusivity and accessibility, the survey had both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. To reach a varied and representative sample of both domestic and foreign fans, the poll was disseminated online via a number of channels, such as fan forums, social media groups, and club mailing lists.

In addition to surveys, firsthand observations were made during three football games: Andorra FC vs. Nàstic Tarragona (4th May 2025), FC Barcelona vs. Girona (30th March 2025), and Liverpool vs. Sparta Prague (14th March 2024) to gather qualitative data. These games were chosen to reflect a variety of football settings, including local league matches and well-known international tournaments. Fan interactions, stadium ambience, ticketing procedures, and the availability of tourist-oriented facilities were the main points of observation. To give the survey results more context, field notes were made to record firsthand observations on the matchday experience.

This study attempts to triangulate results and offer an in-depth analysis of how football tourism impacts fan experiences across various club contexts by blending survey data with observational insights.

3.3 Sampling Strategy

This study used a combination of convenience sampling for the quantitative component and purposive sampling for the qualitative component, following the mixed-methods research design. This method guarantees both depth and breadth in understanding the dynamics of football tourism and how it affects the experiences of local and foreign fans.

Convenience sampling was used for the distribution of the survey. This entailed distributing the survey to both domestic and foreign football enthusiasts via internet channels such as fan forums, and social media groups. This approach is frequently employed in exploratory research when the main objective is to find

patterns and trends, even though it does not ensure a representative sample. It is also efficient in quickly reaching a wide audience (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Purposive sampling was used in the qualitative component to choose certain football games that reflected a variety of settings within the football tourism spectrum. The matches that were observed were: The match between Liverpool and Sparta Prague on March 14, 2024, representing a high-profile competition. Girona vs. FC Barcelona, a domestic top-tier league game, March 30, 2025. A lower-tier local league game on May 4, 2025, between Andorra FC and Nàstic Tarragona. These games were specifically picked to represent varied fan participation levels, stadium ambiences, and the impact of tourism at various football levels. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling enables the selection of cases with a wealth of information that offers profound insights into the topic being studied (Creswell, 2014).

Using both purposive and convenience sampling supports the mixed-methods approach and makes it easier to gather extensive information that meets the goals of the study. With this approach, the study can use quantitative data to investigate broad trends while using qualitative observations to obtain a deeper understanding. The validity and reliability of the research findings are improved by this combination (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014).

Although the survey was shared across a variety of platforms, such as social media and fan forums, these were mainly English- and Catalan-language platforms. Due to this, the sample likely under-represents local supporters who are local fans to the club they support. Some of the respondents do not speak English and there are those who are older or from lower-income groups who might not be as engaged online. This channel bias potentially limits the diversity of perspectives included in the findings.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to analyse the quantitative data gathered from structured surveys. In order to summarise fan demographics, match attendance frequency, ticket purchasing behaviours, and views of inclusivity and accessibility, this entailed calculating frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency. To investigate correlations between variables, such as comparing the ticket-purchasing habits of domestic and foreign supporters, cross-tabulation was used. Subsequent qualitative analysis was informed by the fundamental understanding of the patterns and trends in the data that this statistical analysis offered.

Thematic analysis, a well-known technique for finding, examining, and summarising patterns in qualitative data, was used to examine the qualitative information gathered from field observations during the three football games that were chosen. To guarantee a thorough comprehension of the data, field notes from every match were examined several times before the analysis started. Important findings from this approach were emphasised, such as stadium ambiences, fan interactions, and the distribution of domestic and foreign supporters.

Once familiar with the data, initial codes were generated by systematically identifying recurring ideas, behaviours, and interactions observed during the matches. These codes were then carefully organized into broader themes, such as "local fan identity," "tourist-driven commercialization," and "ticket accessibility tensions." The themes were subsequently reviewed to ensure that they accurately represented the data, with adjustments made to refine their focus and clarity.

Determining and naming the topics was the last step in the thematic analysis process, which provided an organised overview of how football tourism affects the matchday experience for both domestic and foreign supporters. A thorough investigation of the social and cultural dynamics in the stadium setting was made possible by this thematic approach, which provided insights that enhanced the quantitative survey results.

Through a process of triangulation, which involved comparing and contrasting findings from both data sets to validate results and provide a more thorough knowledge of the research problem, quantitative and qualitative data were integrated. By confirming information from many data sources, this method improves the validity and credibility of the research conclusions (Creswell, 2014).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

When conducting research, especially with individuals, ethical integrity is crucial. To safeguard the rights of participants and the legitimacy of the research process, this study complied with recognised ethical guidelines. The goal, methods, potential risks, and advantages of the study were all thoroughly explained to the participants. They were told that there would be no consequences if they chose to stop participating at any time and that it was completely optional. This strategy emphasises the need for informed consent in research involving human subjects, which is consistent with the ethical guidelines provided by Creswell (2014).

All acquired data was anonymised to preserve participant privacy. Since no personally identifiable data was captured, it was impossible to link any particular participant to any particular response. Only I had access to the safely stored data, which was used exclusively for this investigation. According to Creswell (2014), these steps are in line with the best standards for protecting research confidentiality. The purpose of the study was to reduce participant discomfort and potential injury. Sensitive subjects were carefully avoided in survey questions, and non-intrusive observational techniques respected the natural environments of the activities being watched. As emphasised in research ethics literature, this approach emphasises the ethical duty to protect participants from harm (Creswell, 2014).

The research proposal was reviewed and approved by the relevant institutional ethics committee before data collection. This procedure made sure the study adhered to all legal and institutional criteria for research involving human subjects, as well as ethical norms.

Chapter 4: Findings & Discussions

4.1 Introduction

The main findings of the study on how football tourism is changing stadium accessibility, tickets, and the fan experience are presented in this chapter. A total of 64 respondents completed the online survey, providing insights from a wide demographic of football supporters, including both local and international fans. The study's objectives were to determine whether the growth of football tourism benefits or harms traditional supporters, how it affects the cost and availability of tickets, and how it changes the atmosphere on match days

A quantitative survey of football fans and qualitative field observations from three stadium visits in England, Spain, and Andorra served as the main sources of data. An examination of survey data, case studies from stadium visits, a thematic discussion connecting findings to earlier research, and a concluding summary comprise this chapter's four primary sections.

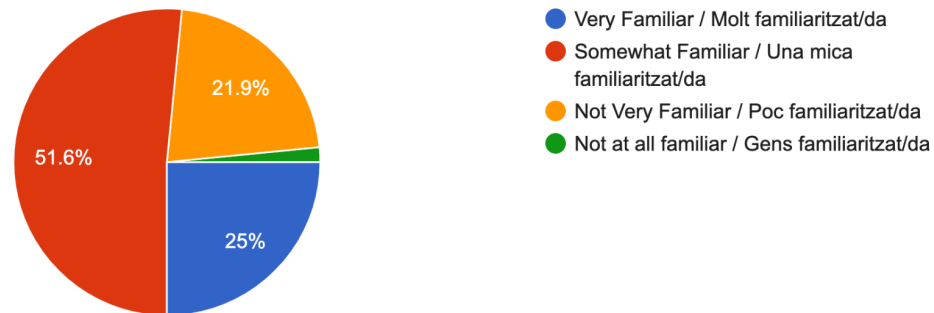
4.2 Quantitative Results: Survey Data

Familiarity with Club Ticketing Policies

Although knowledge varied by years of support and place of residence, the majority of respondents said they were at least somewhat familiar with their football club's ticketing regulations. Regular residents frequently had more in-depth information, including the specifics of memberships and loyalty schemes, whereas foreign fans were typically less familiar with the intricacies of local ticketing systems. Dolles & Söderman (2013) note that more involved match goers grow in procedural knowledge, which is consistent with this tendency.

1) How familiar are you with your football club's current ticketing policies? 1) Quina familiaritat tens amb les polítiques actuals d'entrades del teu club de futbol?

64 responses

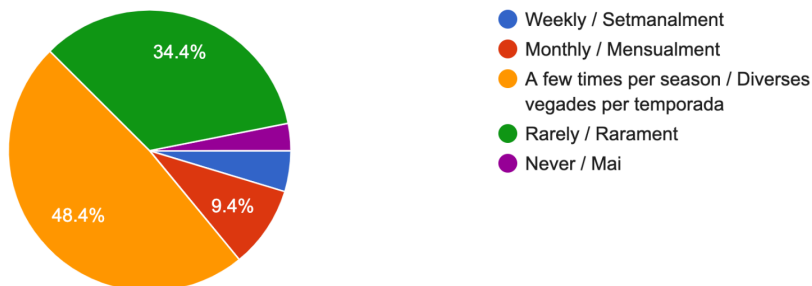


Frequency of Attending Live Football Matches

Participants' frequency of attendance varied greatly. Even while a sizable portion of the population went to games frequently throughout the season, many others only occasionally or never went, with distance from the team being a major contributing reason. In line with the findings of Giulianotti & Robertson (2009), who explain how globalisation has increased the number of "remote" or "tourist" supporters while decreasing the proportion of local regulars, fans who live overseas were particularly likely to rarely visit.

2) How Often do you attend live football matches? 2) Amb quina freqüència assisteixes a partits de futbol en directe?

64 responses

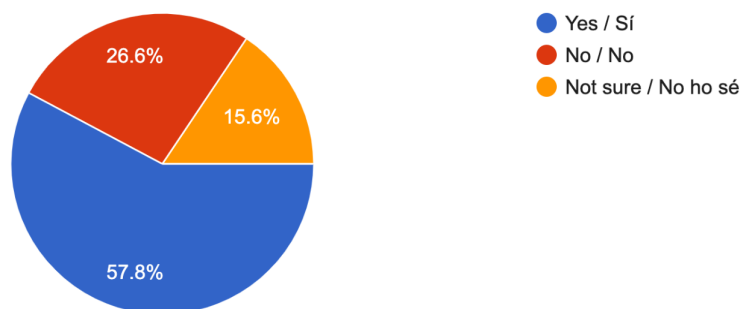


Perceived Change in Ticket Availability or Difficulty

The majority of respondents said that recent years have seen changes in ticket availability and simplicity of purchase, usually in a negative way. The most often mentioned issues were the rise in tourists, the impact of resale websites, and more strict membership or loyalty programs. The findings of García & Welford (2015), who have shown how increased global demand can result in new exclusionary pressures on locals, are in line with these results.

3) Have you noticed a change in the availability or difficulty of purchasing match tickets in recent years? 3) Has notat un canvi en la disponibilitat o ...icultat per aconseguir entrades en els darrers anys?

64 responses



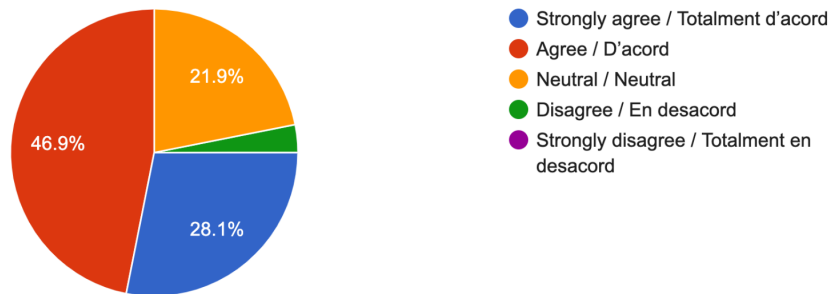
Whether Football Matches Are Becoming Less Accessible for Long-Term Supporters

The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the claim that regular football fans are finding it harder to attend games. The belief that teams today put business interests ahead of their long-standing

communities was particularly strong among elderly and local supporters. Similar to this, García & Welford (2015) contend that traditional supporters' status may be jeopardised by changing governance frameworks.

4) To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Football matches are becoming less accessible for long-term supporters." 4) Fins a quin ...nys accessibles per als aficionats de tota la vida."

64 responses

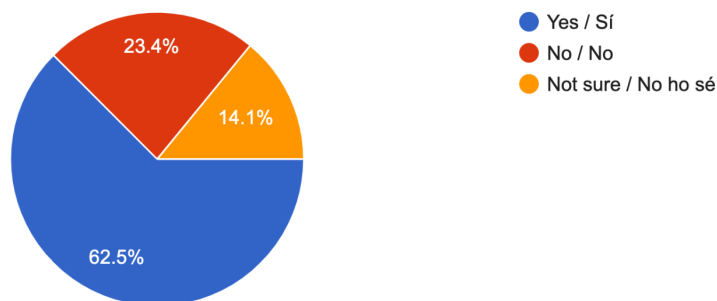


Should Clubs Prioritise Local Fans in Ticket Allocation?

When distributing tickets, the majority of fans preferred to give preference to locals since they felt that having devoted local supporters was crucial to preserving the club's identity and tradition. According to Giulianotti (2012), there is a disagreement between customer-oriented and community-oriented methods, with a minority emphasising inclusivity and the importance of global support.

5) In your opinion, should football clubs prioritize local fans when allocating tickets for matches? 5) Creus que els clubs de futbol haurien de prioritzar e... locals a l'hora d'assignar entrades per als partits?

64 responses

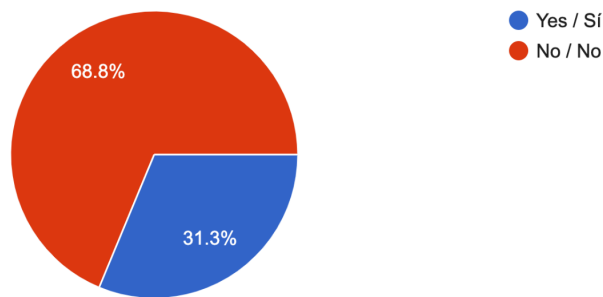


Changes in the Connection Between Fans and Clubs Due to Ticketing, Crowds or Atmosphere

Reactions were mixed, with many supporters claiming that growing commercialisation and the influence of visitors had eroded their bond with their club. While some, especially foreign supporters, reported a greater sense of inclusion, others said the matchday experience had lost its authenticity. This tension is noted by Kennedy & Kennedy (2012), who point out that globalisation can both broaden and dilute football identities.

7) Do you feel your connection to your club has changed in recent years due to ticketing, crowd makeup, or atmosphere? 7) Sents que la teva connexió..., el tipus de públic o l'ambient del dia de partit?

64 responses

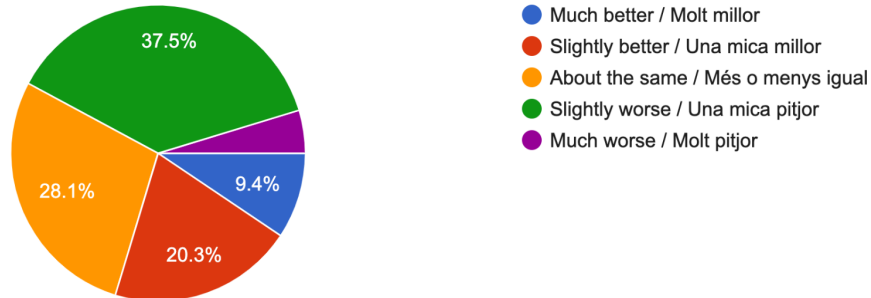


Description of Matchday Atmosphere Compared to Previous Years

Most participants highlighted a decline in crowd intensity and the deterioration of regional customs as reasons why the matchday atmosphere is worse now than it was in the past. However, other people welcomed the fanbase's globalisation, seeing it as a worldwide aspect of the experience. These findings are consistent with research by Kennedy & Kennedy (2012) and Giulianotti & Robertson (2009), who examine how, as clubs grow more globalised, new forms of involvement frequently replace local rituals.

8) How would you describe the matchday atmosphere now compared to previous years? 8) Com descriuries l'ambient dels partits actualment en comparació amb fa uns anys?

64 responses



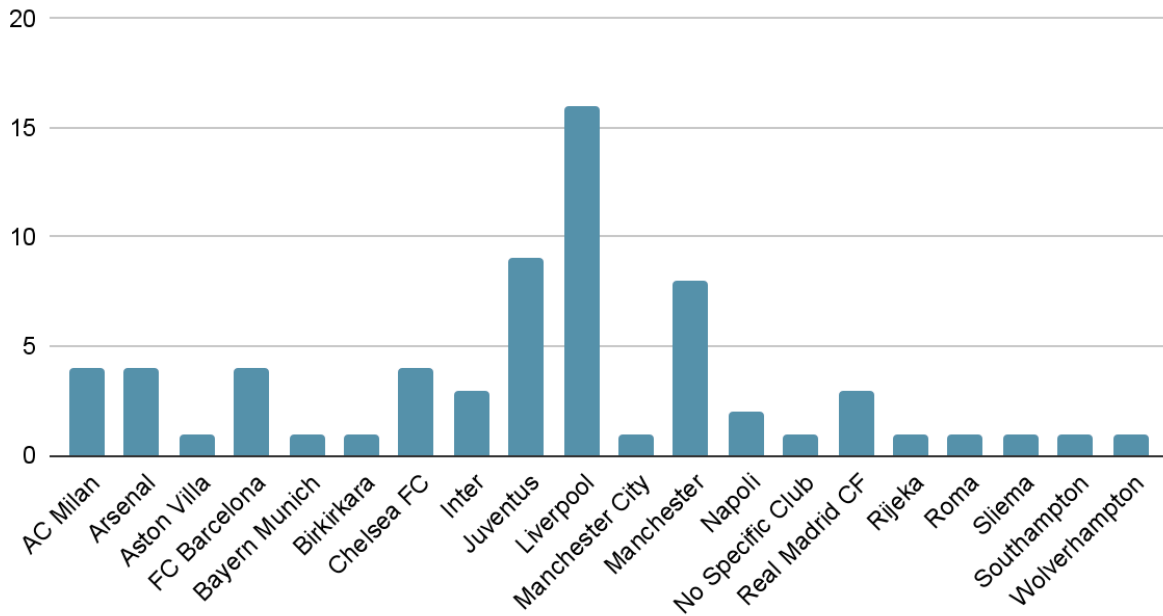
Clubs Supported

The variety of club affiliations among survey participants is depicted in the chart. There is a noticeable concentration of support around a few global powerhouses, namely Liverpool, Manchester United, Juventus, and FC Barcelona, even though a wide variety of European teams are represented. This trend highlights these elite clubs' strong brand identities and considerable international appeal, reflecting their established supremacy in both the global fan marketplace and athletic success.

Smaller fan bases for teams like Chelsea, Inter, Bayern Munich, and others show how different other elite teams are. The fact that one respondent selected "No Specific Club" may depict a problem of football tourism, in which people may place a higher value on attending well-known games than being devoted to only one team.

These findings are consistent with Giulianotti and Robertson's (2009) analysis of football globalization, which notes that the most commercially successful European clubs tend to attract a disproportionate share of international fans, contributing to their continued commercial growth and influence on global fan culture.

Clubs Supported

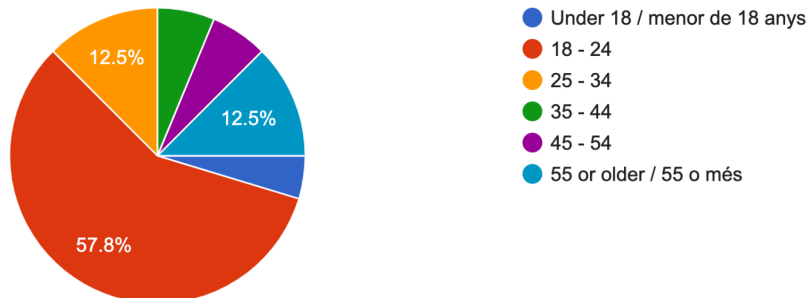


Age Group

Respondents ranged across all adult age groups but were mostly younger adults (18–34). This demographic’s prominence is important, as younger supporters are more mobile, digitally engaged, and may have more flexible notions of fan identity.

11. What is your age group? 11. Quina és la teva franja d’edat?

64 responses

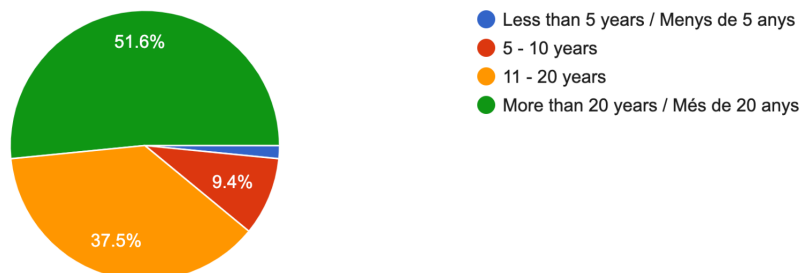


Length of Time Supporting the Club

Many respondents had supported their club for over a decade, with a significant number describing themselves as lifelong fans. This group was particularly likely to feel alienated by recent changes in ticketing and atmosphere, in line with García & Welford's (2015) identification of "legacy" supporters as vulnerable in the modern football economy.

12. How long have you supported this club? 12. Des de quan ets aficionat/da d'aquest club?

64 responses

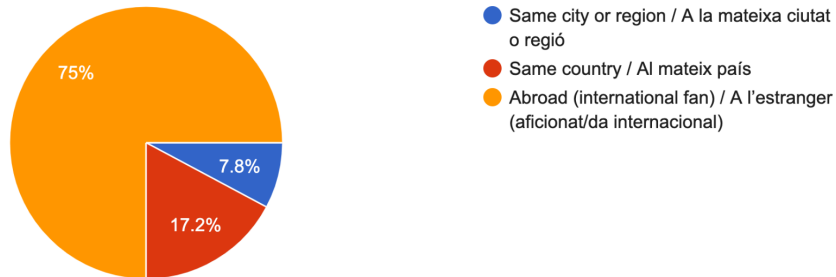


Respondents' residence in relation to the club they support

The vast majority of respondents identified themselves as foreign supporters who reside overseas in relation to the team they support. The fewest resided in the same city or area as their club, while a smaller but important group lived in the same nation. According to Giulianotti & Robertson (2009), this trend demonstrates the significant worldwide influence of major football teams and supports the idea that football tourism has become a phenomenon that transcends national boundaries. The sample's dominance of foreign supporters further highlights the growing significance of football tourism and the need for teams to take into account both domestic and international interests when developing ticketing regulations and fan interaction plans.

13. Where do you live in relation to the club you support? 13. On vius respecte al club que segueixes?

64 responses

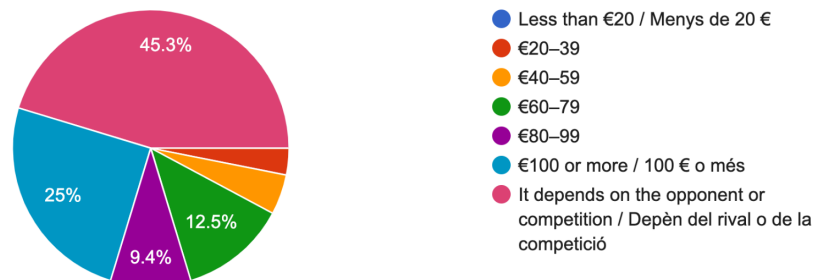


Willingness to Pay for a Single Matchday Ticket

The distribution reveals a great deal of variety in willingness to pay. A significant percentage of supporters, especially those who are foreign or tourists, indicated that they would be willing to pay €100 or more for a regular ticket, even though many local fans set their limit in the more moderate price ranges (such as €40–79). Furthermore, a sizable portion of respondents stated that the cost "depends" on the particular match or situation (e.g., opponent or competition). This fluctuation illustrates how the "special occasion" mentality of football tourists and worldwide demand are changing the ticketing industry's profitability. The literature on football commercialisation highlights the conflict that could result from the existence of a high-spending international section pushing average prices upward and possibly pricing out regular, local fans.

14. What is the maximum amount you would be willing to pay for a single matchday ticket (regular seating, not VIP or hospitality)? 14. Quin és l'import...da de partit (seient normal, no VIP ni hospitalitat)?

64 responses



4.3 Interpretation of Open-Ended and Qualitative Data

Beyond what can be measured by survey statistics, the qualitative replies and field observations provide detailed insights into how football supporters interpret changing ticketing procedures and football tourism. In addition to being more competitive than in the past, many participants commented that the ticketing process was less transparent. Long-time supporters generally felt that their historical allegiance no longer ensured them access. Rather, the growth of dynamic pricing, digital ticketing, and secondary markets have distorted the playing field in favour of those who have more money or more flexibility, which is typically foreign tourists.

Fans' descriptions of their encounters reflected this perception as well. As clubs have embraced new commercial techniques to draw in tourists from around the globe, many local and lifetime followers recalled experiences of being "squeezed out" or out-priced, especially for high-profile events. Some fans explained that because tickets for important games are quickly taken by individuals with more money or by organised tour groups, programs like memberships or point systems that were initially created to reward loyalty have turned into extra obstacles. This is in line with the worries expressed by Woratschek et al. (2014), who point out that commercialised ticketing structures run the risk of giving priority to immediate profits over the long-term benefits provided by a loyal local audience.

Many respondents who were asked to consider whether clubs should give preference to domestic or foreign supporters said they were strongly committed to the idea of the club as a community institution. These fans believed that local supporters' attendance was crucial to preserving the customs and practices that give the match-day experience its distinct character. They expressed concern that although the increase in tourism might be profitable, it may also weaken the cultural bonds that distinguish football from other entertainment. On the other hand, other participants adopted a more inclusive stance, arguing that since football appeals to people of various backgrounds, it is only natural for its passionate supporters to be accepted and recognised.

One recurrent theme was the conflicting effects of foreign travel on the match day experience. Some supporters praised the excitement, diversity, and international spirit that the international crowd offered, calling it evidence of football's widespread appeal. Others, particularly those who had seen significant changes in their home stadiums, criticised the absence of strong local support, pointing out that more passive modes of participation, such video or social media posting, frequently took the place of chanting, singing, and traditional rituals. Kennedy & Kennedy (2012) draw attention to this shift, contending that

the club's historic identity may be weakened as fan bases grow more global and event-focused, occasionally alienating or disengaging devoted followers.

Among individuals who felt excluded by current trends, changes in affiliation with the club were particularly noticeable. Some reported feeling alienated and even resigned, implying that the atmosphere in stadiums has become more "corporate" or "tourist-oriented." These supporters contended that a consumer-focused atmosphere with less consideration for regional tradition or history has replaced the distinct sense of community and shared identity that formerly characterised their game day routine. However, some respondents described a greater sense of connection and inclusion, which was made possible by the clubs' increasing ticket accessibility for people outside of their traditional geographic locations.

When combined, these first-hand reports highlight a conflict at the foundation of modern football. On one end, football tourism has given clubs new chances and provided supporters from around the globe the chance to participate in historic matchday events. On the other hand, it has created new difficulties in terms of pricing, accessibility, and maintaining local club culture. The development of football as a worldwide tourism attraction presents both growth prospects and threats to the social ideals that have traditionally supported the sport.

4.4 Case Study Observations

These three case studies were selected not only for their geographic and structural diversity, but also for how each exemplifies one of the core dynamics examined in this thesis: the tension between commercial tourism and local fan accessibility. Sparta Prague vs. Liverpool serves as an example of how elite teams determine their price for entry to crucial European matches, placing traditional fans at a financial disadvantage. The La Liga match between FC Barcelona and Girona was selected as it illustrates how tourism dynamics, specifically the composition of the audience and the diluted match day atmosphere, may alter even local matches at international clubs. Lastly, the lower-league matchup between Andorra FC and Nàstic Tarragona shows how local character and affordability are preserved when clubs are less commercialised. The case studies offer well-founded insights into how tourism impacts fan accessibility and authenticity at various competitive levels by contrasting these three football categories.

Liverpool Vs Sparta Prague Europa League Round of 16 14/03/24

The qualitative case studies carried out at Andorra FC, Liverpool FC, and FC Barcelona highlight significant variations in the ways that ticketing and football tourism strategies appear at various club contexts and different levels of the game.

During my visit to Anfield for Liverpool vs. Sparta Prague, several aspects stood out that both confirmed and challenged my prior assumptions about the football tourism experience. The cost of the match tickets, which stood at about €200, highlights the substantial financial obstacle that many traditional supporters face. On the other hand, Liverpool's centrally situated and moderately priced accommodation reflected the city's larger infrastructure for accommodating both local and foreign tourists.

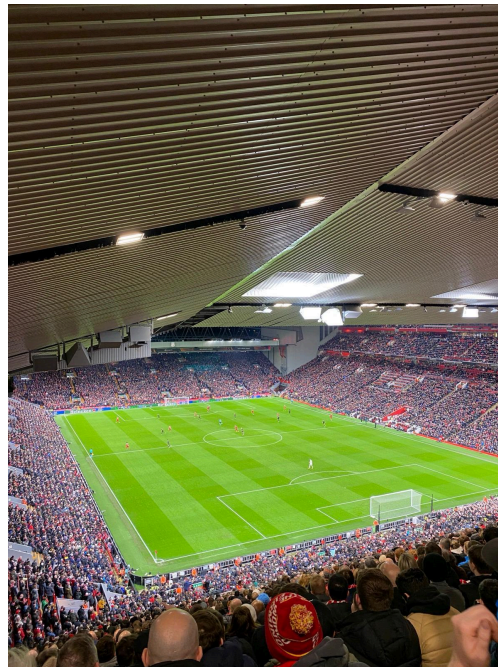
Figure 1: Outside Anfield stadium a few hours before kick off, with several fans already gathering



Atmosphere-wise, my expectations were genuinely surpassed. Despite having previously perceived a decline in Anfield's matchday energy when watching games on television—often attributed to the growing number of tourists preferring to take photos rather than participate—the reality inside the stadium was quite different. My expectations were truly exceeded in terms of the atmosphere. The reality inside the stadium was very different from what was previously regarded as a loss in Anfield's matchday energy when watching games on television, which is sometimes attributed to the growing number of

visitors who would rather take pictures than participate. The crowd engagement was consistently high, and the atmosphere was electrifying from beginning to end. This implies that although tourists are present (as indicated by the frequent over-hearing of foreign accents and conversations), their presence does not always hinder the iconic atmosphere of Anfield, at least not on significant European nights. In reality, on this occasion, the combination of eager tourists and fervent local support seemed to produce a positive and cohesive experience.

Figure 2: Inside Anfield stadium during the match with 59,581 fans in attendance.



Yet there was also a noticeable commercial aspect to the matchday experience. The pricey food and merchandise available around the stadium further supported the idea that going to a football match has become an expensive activity, particularly for visitors from abroad. Even while the atmosphere was better than I had anticipated, I admit that this might not always be the case; in multiple instances, the stadium excitement as shown on television seemed dull or muted. This fluctuation adds validity to the idea that, although football tourism might occasionally heighten the spectacle, it also runs the danger of disrupting the customary match day experience (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2012).

Overall, my trip demonstrated how complicated and unpredictable the effects of football tourism are at famous stadiums like Anfield. The combination of local and international fans can, in the right situations, maintain or even enhance the genuine atmosphere that teams like Liverpool are renowned for, despite the

obvious obstacles of high ticket costs and commercialism. These results emphasise the value of context, the significance of fixtures, and striking a balance between accessibility and international appeal—all crucial concerns for any significant football organisations as they negotiate the shifting terrain of modern fanbases.

FC Barcelona Vs Girona La Liga 30/04/25

The experience of attending the FC Barcelona vs. Girona game was very different from the visit to Anfield, especially in terms of the crowd composition, ticketing, and atmosphere. Interestingly, tickets were far less expensive—roughly €110 as opposed to €200 at Anfield. Although this reduced cost could indicate better accessibility, the experience was a stadium setting that was primarily defined by the presence of spectators rather than supporters. This was evident right away from the variety of languages spoken as well as the absence of customary match day activities.

Figure 3: Inside the Camp Nou moments before kick-off, with 48,258 fans in attendance.



The atmosphere at Anfield was lively and there was a lot of engagement, but the fans at Camp Nou were mostly inactive. Small groups of local, passionate fans made multiple attempts to start chanting, but these attempts were rarely successful and soon faded. Despite several attempts by small groups of local, passionate supporters to ignite chanting, these efforts rarely gained momentum and quickly dissipated.

The sense of unity and intensity that is often associated with historic football venues was largely absent, replaced by a more spectatorial and consumptive approach to the event. This observation is consistent with larger concerns in the literature that, as football tourism increases, the expectations and actions of tourists who see game attendance more as a spectacle or travel experience than as a social ritual run the risk of overshadowing the genuine local culture and participatory traditions (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2012; Giulianotti & Robertson, 2009).

FC Barcelona's status as a popular worldwide tourist destination was further highlighted by the fact that, despite its accessible location, accommodation there was a little more expensive than in Liverpool. In the end, even if tickets for the FC Barcelona game were less expensive, the overall experience was still noticeably worse than at Anfield. Price alone does not ensure an authentic or memorable matchday experience, as evidenced by the absence of lively crowd engagement, the preponderance of tourists, and the muted mood.

This case highlights the difficult trade-offs that clubs must make: more affordable and easily accessible tickets may draw in more foreign fans, but if not handled properly, they may also dilute the match-day atmosphere and the club's historic character. The results indicate that the actual worth of the football experience is determined by the crowd's composition and level of participation in addition to the price.

Figure 4: Spectators exiting the stadium after the game.



Andorra FC vs Nàstic Tarragona Primera Federació 04/05/25

A different aspect of modern football was demonstrated by the experience of watching Andorra FC vs. Nàstic Tarragona, which stood in stark contrast to the games at Liverpool and FC Barcelona. The match's price and inclusivity were the first and most noticeable differences: a ticket only cost €20 and even included a free drink and hot dog. Since the game was a part of a simple day excursion, there was no requirement for accommodation, in contrast to the other two games. This highlights the informality and accessibility that still define lower-league football.

I was pleasantly surprised by how lively the atmosphere was, regardless of how the stadium was smaller. The Andorra supporters were incredibly enthusiastic throughout the game, which defied my first thoughts that a smaller venue could find it difficult to provide the same level of enthusiasm as large arenas. Despite the small crowd size, their evident interest and participation in chanting provided a dynamic atmosphere. Particularly noteworthy was the nearly total lack of tourists; aside from my friends and I, the majority of the audience was made up of local supporters.

Figure 5: Andorra FC's stadium after the game concluded.



Andorra stood out from the larger, more commercialised events at FC Barcelona and Liverpool because of the strong sense of community there. The sense of community, the bond between supporters and the team, and the collective sense of place were all considerably stronger. The academic research characterises the "traditional" or "authentic" football experience as being based on accessibility, location, and real supporter involvement, and this setting is very similar to that (Woratschek et al., 2014; García & Welford, 2015).

This degree of community involvement served as a welcome reminder of football's grassroots beginnings. It emphasised how there are still areas inside the sport where the it's inclusiveness and communal roots endure, in contrast to the increasingly commercialised and globalised contests witnessed at Europe's top teams. Andorra FC represents a type of football culture that is in danger of disappearing as the sport continues to commercialise and appeal to a tourist audience, while Anfield maintains some of this tradition despite its global reach and FC Barcelona seems to have lost it somewhat. Thus, this case study provides a valuable balance to the current discussion regarding the future of club identity and football fandom.

4.5 Linking the Findings to the Literature

The findings of the research support a number of the main issues brought up in the literature on the growth of football tourism and how it affects traditional fan access and experience. The results of the survey and case study, for instance, are consistent with criticisms made by Bühler and Nufer (2013) and Jason (2024) regarding how demand from tourists has increased ticket costs and reduced accessibility for local fans. The vast majority of respondents agreed that dynamic pricing and membership limits have made football less accessible for devoted fans, which clearly supports previous research by García and Welford (2015) regarding how commercialisation might alienate "legacy" supporters. Liverpool serves as a concrete example of this change, with Europa League tickets costing up to €200.

The study also supports previous claims that the increase of tourists is changing the overall atmosphere of stadiums. Comments from participant surveys and observations at Camp Nou support Cordina et al. 's (2018) finding that although visitors seek out genuine match day energy, their presence frequently dampens it. This supports Kim and Jamal's (2007) existential authenticity theory as well: visitors seek out real emotional experiences, yet the act of drawing big crowds of people can also undermine the environment that initially fosters such authenticity. One of the main conflicts arising from the study is this

paradox: visitors are both maintaining and reducing the match day experience. At Anfield, the energy remained strong due to a mix of locals and invested tourists, but in Barcelona, the spectatorial behaviour of many foreign fans contributed to a more muted experience.

By incorporating a third-tier example that few previous studies have looked at, Andorra FC vs. Nàstic Tarragona, this study expands the discussion. This difference shows how lower-tier clubs are also at risk when regional tourism increases, yet they are still mainly immune to pressures from the global economy. This observation challenges the literature's exclusive focus on elite teams and backs Ardeleanu's (2020) proposal for local clubs to receive more consideration in tourism planning. Regarding governance, the study affirms the importance of fan-owned organisations such as FC Bayern Munich, where fan accessibility is still a fundamental principle. According to the Football and Tourism Report (2023), Bayern is a unique example of striking a long-term balance between inclusion and financial success. The results, on the other hand, cast doubt on the idea that traditional membership structures, such as those at FC Barcelona, safeguard local access. The case study showed that when combined with strong demand and few limitations on resale platforms, such methods can nevertheless allow tourists to dominate the market.

This study both supports and complicates the collection of previous material. It validates that football tourism propels growth in the economy, but it additionally raises issues of identity, authenticity, and accessibility. By including lesser-known clubs, it broadens the research's focus and provides a more complex picture of fan diversity. It demonstrates, depending on how clubs strike a balance between tourists and devoted fans, internationalisation may promote both inclusion and alienation.

Chapter 5: Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate how football tourism impacts matchday experiences and fan accessibility, with a focus on the effects of international travel on conventional local fan bases. The study's mixed-methods methodology, which included survey data, on-field match observations, and a thorough literature analysis, revealed several recurring patterns in both elite and lower-tier European football teams.

Many of the issues brought up in earlier scholarly research were confirmed by the results. Accessibility and ticket costs have emerged as major concerns, especially for internationally popular teams like FC Barcelona and Liverpool FC. In his case study of Liverpool FC, Jason (2024) points out that the rise in demand from overseas has had a substantial impact on locals' access to and affordability of tickets. This was confirmed by survey results, which showed that most respondents felt less bonded to their team than before. This was a reflection of the commercial demands that are taking over matchday experiences.

Meanwhile, stadium observations at these clubs revealed a dilution of the traditional atmosphere, echoing Cordina et al. (2018), who highlighted the essential role local fans play in crafting the authentic, emotionally rich environment that tourists come to witness. However, the paradox lies in the fact that tourist-driven revenue strategies — such as dynamic pricing and global marketing campaigns — inadvertently crowd out the very supporters who help create the “authentic” product clubs are selling.

FC Bayern Munich, on the other hand, was seen to continue taking a more inclusive stance. According to research and literature, the fan ownership structure of this team is essential to upholding community values (Bühler & Nufer, 2013). Even during events with strong demand, locals' access seems to be prioritised, and ticket costs are still reasonably modest. Despite being less affected by international tourists, Nàstic de Tarragona and Andorra FC showed strong community links and rather stable ticketing systems; but, as their exposure increases, they may become more susceptible to implementing commercial methods.

5.2 Scope and Limitations

The research's geographic focus is limited to European football, and the clubs that were chosen offer a fair mix of teams from both top-tier professional leagues and minor divisions. Institutions that differ greatly in their exposure to tourism and dependence on outside revenue streams can be compared due to this arrangement.

A number of constraints need to be noted. First, some historical parallels are provided to illustrate the growth of fan culture and accessibility, even though the study focuses on recent changes. Second, the scope of football tourism is limited to actions associated with spectatorship, such as frequent match attendance and stadium visits; mega-events like the UEFA European Championship or World Cups are not included. Third, the main emphasis is still on how changes brought about by tourism impact local supporters, even though foreign supporters are acknowledged when appropriate. Fourth, internal business

strategies and confidential information were not accessible because data collection relies on publicly available sources such as academic literature, official club statements, price records, and survey data.

The survey sample's composition, which was disproportionately made up of international fans, is another significant limitation in the study. The experiences and opinions of devoted local supporters may not be fully represented, which leads to response bias even though this fits with the research focus in football tourism. Additionally, non-digitally engaged or linguistically diverse communities would have been left out by the usage of English and Catalan channels. Multilingual and offline distribution techniques may help future research reach a more representative sample of football fans.

Despite the fact that 64 people completed the questionnaire, the small sample size limits how the results can be applied to the larger football fan community. Given the complex nature of fan identity and football tourism, more extensive research would be required to confirm the trends seen here. Nonetheless, the sample size was sufficient to detect significant patterns and to verify with qualitative information gathered from fieldwork and case studies. The purpose of this study was to investigate new conflicts and attitudes in a quickly evolving football environment rather than to statistically quantify the issue.

Finally, because the researcher is not proficient in either Spanish or Catalan, the lower-tier Spanish case study faced special logistical obstacles pertaining to limited access to stakeholders and linguistic limitations.

5.3 Recommendations

Club Governance

The findings have a number of consequences for destination managers, lawmakers, and club executives. First and foremost, football teams, especially those in the top divisions, have to think about implementing official price guidelines that safeguard local fans' access. Biscaia et al. (2013) and Bühler and Nufer (2013) claim that fan satisfaction and enduring loyalty are directly correlated with affordability. Clubs run the danger of losing their most devoted fans and eroding their sense of historical identity when their pricing policies are only influenced by consumer demand and tourism earnings. The FC Bayern Munich example shows how important governance structure is to ensuring inclusivity. Encouragement of fan ownership or significant supporter representation is necessary, particularly as clubs grow economically. Rebuilding trust between teams and their long-standing fan bases can be facilitated by community-oriented policies such as transparent ticket distribution, price caps for general admission, and

giving locals priority access. This is in line with the Sport Value Framework (Woratschek et al., 2014), which advocates for sport organisations to balance economic, social, and experiential value.

Tourism Strategy

Football tourism must be managed by local tourism boards and clubs as more than just a means of making money. Successful sports tourism, according to Ramshaw and Gammon (2010), relies on maintaining the event's cultural diversity rather than selling it. Merchandising, museum visits, and hospitality packages should enhance match day traditions rather than take their place. While stricter control of third-party resale platforms is desperately needed to prevent price inflation and speculative reselling, tourist earnings should be channelled into projects that benefit both residents and visiting fans (Football and Tourism Report, 2023). Football should be viewed as a cultural as well as an economic asset by governments and destination management groups. Localised approaches should make sure that the primary fan culture that first draws people to football isn't undermined by tourism growth.

Fan Engagement

Club strategies must continue to prioritise fan engagement. It is possible to prevent globalisation from destroying identity by involving fans in decisions about stadium renovation, ticketing regulations, and atmosphere. Fans are extremely concerned about the loss of genuine match day customs, as evidenced by survey results and case studies. Maintaining what Kennedy and Kennedy (2012) refer to as the "emotional ownership" that characterises football fandom requires giving preference to devoted, local supporters through standing sections, loyalty programs, or reduced prices. More focus should also be placed on the significance of lower-tier clubs in the larger football tourism ecosystem. Andorra FC vs. Nàstic Tarragona case study findings show how community-driven teams preserve inclusivity, accessibility, and a vibrant atmosphere. These grassroots approaches could be more effectively incorporated into regional tourism planning and provide an alternative to the top clubs' commercial logic. Supporting small clubs enhances local identity and offers untapped tourism potential, as noted by Ardeleanu (2020).

Summary Of Actionable Recommendations

Area	Recommendation
Club Governance	Introduce supporter input in governance; cap prices for locals; promote transparency.
Tourism Strategy	Separate matchday access from tourist packages; regulate ticket resale platforms.
Fan Engagement	Prioritise locals in ticketing; preserve matchday rituals; involve fans in decisions.

5.4 Final Reflection

By offering a comparative, mixed-methods approach that considers both elite and grassroots realities, this research contributes to the growing body of academic literature on football tourism. With its comparative, mixed-methods approach that takes into account both elite and grassroots realities, this study adds to the expanding corpus of scholarly work on football tourism. It moves the discussion away from measurements that are solely commercial and towards topics such as accessibility, inclusivity, and identity. The study supports the notion that football teams are civic organisations rooted in geography, history, and culture rather than only being entertainment brands.

Balancing the pressures of globalisation with social responsibility requires deliberate policy-making. Clubs must recognise that their long-term sustainability depends not only on international reach, but also on preserving the unique fan cultures that give football its emotional power. Future research could expand on this work by exploring the role of digital fandom, post-COVID changes in travel and stadium attendance, and further investigation into fan-led governance models across different league systems.

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7. Appendices

This statement is being written by Nicholas DeBono who is a certified coach possessing a UEFA B Licence, with over 10 years of coaching experience. I am writing this statement to confirm that I have fully understood the questions which are being planned for the research that Shaun Tortell is carrying out for his dissertation project. The questions are clear and from our point of view, we understood what the researcher is intending to reach by carrying out this research question. I remain at the disposal of Shaun Tortell throughout his research and shall be willing to aid in areas with said research. Should the need arise for any clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me on +356 99161296, I will be more than happy to help.

Kind Regards,

Nicholas DeBono (518996 M)

This statement is being written by Andrea Vella Grech, who is a qualified coach (UEFA PRO). This to confirm that I have understood the questions which were planned and presented for the research that Mr. Shaun Tortell has carried out his dissertation project. The questions are clear and I understood what the researcher is looking for once the data collection will commence. If Mr. Tortell requires any further support throughout his study, or assistance in connecting with other local coaches, I will be available to help out. Do not hesitate to contact me should you need any clarification on +35699203574.

Kind regards,

Andrea Vella Grech (0209090M)

Football Tourism and Fan Accessibility / Turisme Futbolístic i Accessibilitat dels Aficionats

This questionnaire is part of a Master's thesis exploring how football tourism influences ticket pricing, stadium access, and fan experience. Your responses are anonymous and used only for academic purposes.

Aquest qüestionari forma part d'un projecte de recerca per a una tesi de màster que explora com el turisme futbolístic influeix en els preus de les entrades, l'accés als estadis i l'experiència dels aficionats. Les teves respostes són anònimes i només s'utilitzaran amb finalitats acadèmiques.

* Indicates required question

1. **1) How familiar are you with your football club's current ticketing policies?** *

1) *Quina familiaritat tens amb les polítiques actuals d'entrades del teu club de futbol?*

Mark only one oval.

- Very Familiar / Molt familiaritzat/da
- Somewhat Familiar / Una mica familiaritzat/da
- Not Very Familiar / Poc familiaritzat/da
- Not at all familiar / Gens familiaritzat/da

2. **2) How Often do you attend live football matches?** *

2) *Amb quina freqüència assisteixes a partits de futbol en directe?*

Mark only one oval.

- Weekly / Setmanalment
- Monthly / Mensualment
- A few times per season / Diverses vegades per temporada
- Rarely / Rarament
- Never / Mai

3. **3) Have you noticed a change in the availability or difficulty of purchasing match tickets in recent years?** *

3) Has notat un canvi en la disponibilitat o dificultat per aconseguir entrades en els darrers anys?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes / Sí
- No / No
- Not sure / No ho sé

4. **3.1) If you answered "Yes" to question 3, explain briefly**

3.1) Si heu respost "Sí" a la pregunta 3, expliqueu breument

5. **4) To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Football matches are becoming less accessible for long-term supporters."** *

4) Fins a quin punt estàs d'acord amb la següent afirmació: "Els partits de futbol cada vegada són menys accessibles per als aficionats de tota la vida."

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree / Totalment d'acord
- Agree / D'acord
- Neutral / Neutral
- Disagree / En desacord
- Strongly disagree / Totalment en desacord

6. **5) In your opinion, should football clubs prioritize local fans when allocating tickets for matches?** *

5) Creus que els clubs de futbol haurien de prioritzar els aficionats locals a l'hora d'assignar entrades per als partits?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes / Sí
- No / No
- Not sure / No ho sé

7. **5.1) Please explain your answer to question 5** *

5.1) Expliqueu la vostra resposta a la pregunta 5

8. **6) How does the increasing presence of international tourists at matches make you feel as a football fan?** *

Com et fa sentir la presència creixent de turistes internacionals als partits?

9. **7) Do you feel your connection to your club has changed in recent years due to ticketing, crowd makeup, or atmosphere? ***

7) Sents que la teva connexió amb el club ha canviat en els darrers anys a causa de modificacions en la política d'entrades, el tipus de públic o l'ambient del dia de partit?

Mark only one oval.

Yes / Sí

No / No

10. **7.1) If yes, how? / Si la resposta és sí, com?**

11. **8) How would you describe the matchday atmosphere now compared to previous years? ***

8) Com descriuries l'ambient dels partits actualment en comparació amb fa uns anys?

Mark only one oval.

Much better / Molt millor

Slightly better / Una mica millor

About the same / Més o menys igual

Slightly worse / Una mica pitjor

Much worse / Molt pitjor

12. **9. How would you summarise the impact of football tourism on your experience as a fan?** *

9. En una o dues frases, com resumiries l'impacte del turisme futbolístic en la teva experiència com a aficionat/da?

13. **10. What football club do you support?** *

10. Quin club de futbol segueixes?

14. **11. What is your age group?** *

11. Quina és la teva franja d'edat?

Mark only one oval.

- Under 18 / menor de 18 anys
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 or older / 55 o més

15. **12. How long have you supported this club? ***

12. *Des de quan ets aficionat/da d'aquest club?*

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 5 years / Menys de 5 anys
- 5 - 10 years
- 11 - 20 years
- More than 20 years / Més de 20 anys

16. **13. Where do you live in relation to the club you support? ***

13. *On vius respecte al club que segueixes?*

Mark only one oval.

- Same city or region / A la mateixa ciutat o regió
- Same country / Al mateix país
- Abroad (international fan) / A l'estranger (aficionat/da internacional)

17. **14. What is the maximum amount you would be willing to pay for a single matchday ticket (regular seating, not VIP or hospitality)? ***

14. *Quin és l'import màxim que estaries disposat/da a pagar per una entrada de partit (seient normal, no VIP ni hospitalitat)?*

Mark only one oval.

- Less than €20 / Menys de 20 €
- €20–39
- €40–59
- €60–79
- €80–99
- €100 or more / 100 € o més
- It depends on the opponent or competition / Depèn del rival o de la competició