

Bachelor's Programme in International Business

Effects of Foreign Ownership on Football Fans' Involvement and Satisfaction

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Abstract

This thesis researches the differences in involvement and satisfaction of fans of locally owned football clubs and foreign owned European football clubs. The main goal is to deduce if there are any negative effects on football clubs' fanbases' sentiments due to a club's owner being from a foreign country. Furthermore, Middle Eastern owned clubs are investigated more thoroughly to see if Middle Eastern ownership effects a fanbase's sentiments more significantly. The literature review investigates existing literature on foreign ownership in European football and some of the effects the large influx of money has had on the landscape of European football. For further research, a survey was conducted to investigate if fans of locally owned clubs have different levels of satisfaction and involvement than fans of foreign owned clubs. The survey found no significant differences between the fanbases, however the respondents of the survey were virtually all Finnish. One difference found through the survey was that Middle Eastern owned clubs had significantly less representation which could imply that further research could prove the existence of some significant differences in fans' sentiments.

Keywords Foreign investment, Football, Fans, Middle East, Fan involvement

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Tiivistelmä

Tämän tutkielman tarkoitus on tutkia paikallisesti omistettujen jalkapalloseurojen ja ulkomaalaisten omistamien eurooppalaisten jalkapalloseurojen fanien osallistumisen ja tyytyväisyyden eroja. Päämääränä on selvittää, onko jalkapalloseuran omistajan ulkomaalaisuudella negatiivisia vaikutuksia seuran kannattajakunnan osallistumiseen ja tyytyväisyyteen. Lähi-idästä kotoisin olevien sijoittajien omistamia seuroja tutkitaan tarkemmin selvittääksemme, vaikuttaako Lähi-idästä oleva omistaja kannattajakunnan tuntemuksiin merkittävästi enemmän kuin muu ulkomaalainen omistaja. Kirjallisuuskatsauksessa tutkitaan olemassa olevaa kirjallisuutta ulkomaalaisomistuksesta eurooppalaisessa jalkapallossa ja sitä, miten suuri rahavirta on vaikuttanut eurooppalaisen jalkapallon maailmaan. Syvempää tutkimusta varten toteutettiin kysely, jolla yritettiin selvittää, eriävätkö paikallisesti omistettujen seurojen kannattajat ulkomaalaisten omistamien seurojen kannattajista heidän osallistumisessaan ja tyytyväisyydessään. Kyselyssä ei havaittu merkittäviä eroja kannattajakuntien välillä, mutta kyselyn vastaajat olivat lähes kaikki suomalaisia. Yksi ero vastauksissa oli, että Lähi-idästä olevan omistajan omistamilla seuroilla oli merkittävästi vähemmän kannattajia, mikä voisi viitata siihen, että lisätutkimus voisi todistaa olemassa olevien merkittävien erojen olemassaolon.

Avainsanat Ulkomainen sijoittaminen, Jalkapallo, Kannattajat, Lähi-Itä, Kannattajien osallistuminen

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Preface and acknowledgements

I want to thank my thesis supervisor, Paurav Shukla, for their good advice and guidance.

Mikkeli, 14. April 2024
Matias Pitkänen

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In the current landscape of European football, foreign ownership of football clubs has increased drastically. Specifically numerous top English football clubs have been acquired by foreign investors. In the cases of Manchester United, Liverpool FC and Arsenal by American investors and Middle Eastern investors at Manchester City and Newcastle United. (Rohde & Breuer, 2016) Foreign owners are not as present in many of the other European leagues due to the ownership models, but foreign money is still present in other leagues, for example Italy's AC Milan and FC Internazionale Milano have received large sums of money from Silvio Berlusconi and Massimo Moratti respectively at the end of seasons (Lang et.al. 2010)

Already in the beginning of 2008, half of the teams in the English Premier League were majority foreign owned (Nauright & Ramfjord, 2010). With these wealthy investors comes the opportunity to acquire more expensive players and pay higher salaries. The influx of money has created an atmosphere in European football, where players get valued at high prices after only a relatively short time of good performance. New transfer sum records are being broken almost every season with little concrete reasons as to why, other than the continuous inflation of player values. In the 2023/24 season, the British transfer fee record was broken with Moises Caicedo's move to Chelsea FC with the third most expensive transfer happening also with Declan Rice to Arsenal FC. These transfers were 115 million pounds and 105 million pounds respectively (Sheth, 2023). This inflation also poses a problem for locally owned clubs who might not have the funds to keep up with star players' prices resulting in a drop in performance for these teams. Caicedo and Rice both came from relatively smaller clubs, who could not afford to keep these star players in their own squads. With this in mind, what are the sentiments of fans about extremely wealthy foreign investors acquiring most of the teams in their national league. Are fans readily accepting these investors or might they be put off by their favourite team being bought by an oil billionaire from another continent.

The aim of this thesis is to discern the differences between the involvement and satisfaction of fans of locally owned clubs and fans of foreign owned clubs with a survey and a more in-depth focus on Middle Eastern owned clubs using existing literature on the matter. Factors affecting fan

involvement and satisfaction include club performance, playing talent, financial stability, and financial power.

1.2 Research problem

In the football world, club owners tend to stay out of the spotlight with the club's staff and players taking most of the attention. This does not mean that the owner does not have any effect on the club's image or the fanbase. Many fans might have problems for example regarding Middle Eastern owners with Saudi Arabia's human rights violations and Qatar's discrimination against women and LGBTQ people. A recent example of human rights violations was Qatar's preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In addition to poor working conditions in hot weather, dehydration and physically demanding work, the workers were paid very low salaries. British newspaper The Guardian reported that guards at the World Cup Park were paid only 35 pence per hour (Simkhada et.al. 2022). Others might be put off by an American tycoon acquiring their favourite club only as a way to make more money, while not actively being involved with the club's activities. Therefore, the research problem for this thesis is to analyse the differences in involvement and satisfaction between fans of locally owned and foreign owned football clubs.

1.3 Research questions

These research questions are used to answer the topic of "effects of foreign ownership on fan involvement and satisfaction in European football".

1. How does the involvement and satisfaction of fans differ between locally owned and foreign owned football clubs?
2. Does Middle Eastern ownership have a bigger effect on the fan involvement and culture of a club than other foreign ownership?

1.4 Research objectives

The research objectives for this thesis were formed based on the research questions for this topic.

1. To analyse differences in fan involvement and satisfaction between locally owned and foreign owned football clubs.
2. To determine the effects of Middle Eastern football club owners on fan sentiments.

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this literature review is to comment on and critically analyse the literature concerning Middle Eastern investments and acquisitions in European football and their effects on public acceptance and on the organizations' image. This literature review will first analyse current literature on the background of Middle Eastern investment in European football and the following effects. This review will identify the numerous aspects affecting the public perception and acceptance by fans of European football clubs with Middle Eastern ownership and their implications. Additionally, this review will analyse literature pertaining to Middle Eastern ownership's effect on fan involvement and participation in European football. Furthermore, Middle Eastern ownership's effects on a football club's performance and the performance's effects on fan motivation and sentiments will be examined. Due to scarcity of literature on this topic, other literature on similar topics will need to be analysed as well for reference on the main topic.

2.2 Overview of Middle Eastern investment and acquisition in European football

2.2.1 Background of Middle Eastern private majority investors in European football clubs

Since the inception of football, Europe has been at centre stage, with all of the largest clubs and majority of the best players originating from Europe largely due to the popularity of the sport on the continent. The largest European leagues are located in Europe's most populous countries, England, Germany, Italy, France and Spain (Szymanski, 2007). Through increased commercialization, foreign investors have become more prominent in European football. The presence of wealthy Middle Eastern and other foreign private majority investors in European football clubs has had a notable effect on the financial aspect of football club ownership, player salaries and transfers.

Franck (2010) references Deloitte (2009) Annual review of football finance, which shows that in the 11 previous years from 2009 only two of the “big five” European football leagues were able to turn a moderate consolidated operating profit. The trend of European football clubs’ money usage has shifted more towards “a genuine arms race and “overspending” on playing talent” Franck (2010). This shift towards “overspending” on players is especially apparent in wealthy private investors. Deloitte (2012) annual review of football finance shows that in England’s Premier League, domestic private owners paid an average salary of 66€ million to their players while clubs with distributed ownership or clubs controlled by its member association paid an average of 60€ million. Clubs with foreign ownership paid a significantly larger amount of 137€ million on average (Rohde and Breuer, 2016).

Lang et al. (2010) references Kuper (2009), who states that two financing models remain for football clubs. One that works only for “about six clubs”, which relies on the image and brand of the club to generate enough money to pay good players. The alternative and more recently emerging model is the “sugar daddy”, where the club gets a wealthy, often Middle Eastern sheikh or other foreign investor to buy the club in order to afford the increasingly expensive players. Furthermore, the benefit of a “sugar daddy” for a club, comes from the fact that these owners seem to not take into account the financial losses from injecting money into the club (Lang et al. 2010). To combat this issue, football’s governing body UEFA, implemented financial fair play rules in 2011, which limit the amount of monetary loss a club can have without breaching financial fair play rules. To an extent, this prevents wealthy club owners from spending exorbitant amounts of money to overpower other clubs in their respective leagues.

Caglio et al. (2019) fittingly states that during the discussion about implementing these rules football was largely an unprofitable business with 50 percent of clubs operating at a loss and European top divisions’ net losses more than doubled to 1.5€ billion from 2007 to 2010. (Caglio et al. 2019) analyse different parameters of European football clubs from operating profits, debt, break-even incomes and expenditures to sponsor revenues. All of these figures point towards the financial fair play rules having a positive impact on clubs’ finances with every one of them showing improvements for clubs targeted by these rules. For example, targeted clubs reached the level of non-targeted ones in profit before tax and surpassed them in break-even results.

2.3 Notable investments and acquisitions

Several European football clubs have been acquired by Middle Eastern investors during the 21st century with the most significant acquisitions being Paris

Saint-Germain by Qatar Sport Investment, Manchester City by Abu Dhabi royal Sheikh Mansour and Newcastle United by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF). From 2008 to 2010, Manchester City's owner Sheikh Mansour invested £395 million into the club (Lang et al. 2010). In 2012, Qatar Sport Investment became the sole owner of French club Paris Saint-Germain, while Al Jazeera bought broadcasting rights for French League 1 matches for 61€ million during the same year. Al Jazeera's and Qatar Sport Investment's director is the same person (Garcia and Amara, 2013). With player transfer data gathered from transfermarkt.com, the increase in spending is immediate after the ownership change of Paris Saint-Germain. In the two years prior to the acquisition, PSG spent close to 25€ million on buying players, but in the two following years PSG increased spending on players by over 1000% to almost 260€ million (Transfermarkt, 2009-10-11-12). In 2016 PSG acquired Brazilian superstar Neymar Jr. from FC Barcelona for a record fee of 222€ million (Poli et al. 2021) further showing the effects of Middle Eastern ownership and the arising trend of overinvestment into players.

2.3.1 Overinvestment

Strong inflation of player prices has been a prevalent theme in the world of football in recent decades. CIES Football Observatory (2023) data shows that spending on transfer fees has increased significantly from 2013 to 2023. Worldwide spending by football clubs on transfer fees during the 2013/14 season was 3,861 billion euros with that figure increasing to 9,120 billion euros in the 2022/23 season. Meanwhile the average transfer fee increased from 3,17€ million to 4,64€ million. According to Dietl et al. (2008) the factors that increase incentives to overinvest include: a strong correlation between talent investment and league performance, a system of promotion and relegation, which is used in the top leagues in Europe and the increase in inequality between first and second divisions of domestic leagues. Additionally, leagues that offer exogenous prizes like qualification for other competitions, see more incentive to overinvest into playing talent. These aspects of European football competitions increase the value of overinvesting for the investors, leading to a transformation of European football.

2.4 Factors affecting fan sentiments

2.4.1 Current state of fan involvement in football

Chan et al. (2019) aptly states that smartphones have remodelled the ways consumers consume entertainment and information. Furthermore, use of smartphones for sports content has certain implications on fan involvement and behaviour. Merten et al. (2023) recognizes that due to multiple factors such as increased availability of content and information, international sport marketing is becoming increasingly important and understanding interests of fans is crucial for effective marketing.

Merten et al. (2023) states that even though traditionally fans support their favourite team, recent player transfers have shown that many fans follow their favourite player and support the player's new team. Players with this kind of influence include Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. As Merten et al. (2023) correctly states that football fans identify more with their favourite team than favourite player and that usually the teams exceed their players in fan identification by a large margin. Additionally, these findings seem to suggest that athletes are not taking full advantage of their large audiences on social media.

Hognestad (2012) identifies two types of spectators in football, hot and cold spectators. The "hot" spectators are called the "supporters" and cold spectators are called the "followers". The hot spectators are presented as a traditional supporter who has a long-term relationship with the club they support. This type is likely to hold a season ticket, travel to away games and buy supporter gear making this type of fan essential for the longevity of football clubs. The "cold" spectators are still heavily interested in football but show less involvement with a specific club and might develop relationships to multiple clubs including foreign ones. Additionally, Hognestad (2012) emphasizes that fans of national teams most often fall into the category of "cold" spectators due to participation happening mostly on game days instead of being grounded in local communities. In the paper an additional type of spectator is also introduced, called the "flaneur". This type is presented as an opposite to the "hot" spectator. The "flaneur" participates in carefully chosen events and does not participate in the fan culture or rivalries. The presence of these different types of spectators gives football clubs various opportunities to interact with their fans and gain fan involvement. On the other hand, engaging with the different types of spectators requires specific strategies from clubs.

2.4.2 Effect of club ownership on fan sentiments

Ludvigsen (2018) studied the views of Norwegian Liverpool FC fans on the club's ownership, which is owned by Fenway Sports Group (FSG), an American sport holding conglomerate. The study found that 21,6 percent of the fans in the study had a good overall impression of the ownership, while 17

percent had a negative view of the ownership. While FSG is not a Middle Eastern investor, this demonstrates European views on non-European ownership. Some concerns of the fans were that FSG is using Liverpool FC only to make money, while not being concerned with the club and that they are incompetent in managing the team, bringing negative sport results. One of the reasons pointed out for the negativity is the lack of locality, which comes from having the owner of the club operate on a different continent.

A study by Llopis-Goig (2014) found that some Spanish interviewees felt the presence of foreign investors could lead to loss of the club's identity, since these investors would not be ruled by the same criteria as the local managers in Spain. Furthermore, it is accepted as a significant factor in influencing the culture and traditions of football clubs, which demonstrates the "resigned" character of many Spanish football fans. Some fans however think the arrival of foreign investors is inevitable and possibly desirable due to the difficult financial situation of Spanish football. This notion goes in line with the findings of British researchers, who state that contrary to what is commonly recognized, foreign owners are not always rejected by fans (Brimson, 2006; Coombs & Orborne, 2008). The research with Spanish fans has indicated that foreign investors taking control of a club is not directly rejected due to the performance of the club being the main concern. In conclusion, if the fans deem the long-term financial stability a more pressing issue, the incorporation of a foreign investor is often accepted as the lesser evil.

2.4.3 Effect of investments on club performance

The amount of money a club has at its disposal can have a major effect on their performance in the sport. One standout example of the effect of money on performance is the resurgence of British Premier League club Manchester City after the 2008 takeover by Sheikh Mansour from the United Arab Emirates. Following the takeover Manchester City started buying more and more expensive players to build up their squad. In the six seasons prior to the takeover, Manchester city spent a total of roughly 100€ million on acquiring players. When observing the six following seasons, Manchester City spent a total of around 750€ million on player transfers while only totalling around 210€ million on player sales (Transfermarkt, 2002-14).

Another clear indicator of the investment's effects is Manchester City's significant increase in performance. The club had not won the Premier League in many decades, but following the takeover of 2008, they won the Premier League in the 2011/12 season. After the 2011/12 season Manchester City has won the league an additional six times with their worst placement being fourth place in the 2015/16 season.

Another significant event in the realm of football club investments was the Qatari takeover of French club Paris Saint-Germain. Returning on the topic of overinvestment, Hogan and Massey (2021) found that the club spent 140€ million more than was necessary for winning the French Ligue 1 championship. Furthermore, PSG is estimated to have overspent by roughly 600€ million since the year 2011 until 2021. This further enforces the notion that wealthy investors in the world of football have little to no concern on making a profit with their investment. Additionally, this brings into question the motives of these investors with one possible motive being sportswashing to gain popularity and acceptance in the Western world.

One of the most recent takeovers by Middle Eastern investors is the Newcastle United acquisition by the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) in 2021. Jones et al. (2023) points out, Newcastle United was at the bottom of the Premier League. Due to the recency of the takeover, Newcastle United have not had any major successes to this day, but the qualification into the Champions League can be counted as major achievement considering their prior performance. As Jones et al. (2023) correctly states, the takeover of Newcastle United was controversial due to human rights concerns in Saudi Arabia. Boykoff (2022) argues the takeover has expanded Riyadh's propaganda effort designed to better perceptions of Saudi Arabia. Boykoff (2022) marks 2022, the year after the Newcastle takeover as the year of sportswashing with the main event of sportswashing being the 2022 Qatar football World Cup. The lead up to the World Cup being held in Qatar has been a constant inflow of new Middle Eastern investments into European football.

2.4.4 Human rights concerns in Middle Eastern countries

A human rights concern, that is fresh in the minds of football fans around the world is Qatar's preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. During the process an official report by the International Trade Union Confederation claimed there had been over 1200 deaths of workers, with the projected amount going to 4000 deaths by the finishing of construction (Al Thani, 2021). Al Thani further explains a big problem for migrant workers in Qatar, which is the "Kafala" system. This system requires a migrant worker to have a sponsor who is responsible for their housing, wages and insurance. This system provides the sponsor with powerful leverage towards the workers, making them easily exploitable.

Gender inequality in Saudi Arabia is a current problem women there face. Saudi Arabia is one of the most gender-segregated countries in the world with non-related men and women being separated at all times, women being required to wear a long black dress and head covering, women being prohibited

from driving and required to live under supervision of a legally recognized male guardian (Tailassane, 2019).

These are some examples of human rights concerns in Middle Eastern countries which could alter how fans see the owners of some football clubs.

2.5 Conclusion

To conclude, the effects of Middle Eastern ownership of European football clubs is a scarcely researched topic in current literature. Similar effects can however be found in literature concerning American ownership of English football clubs, which research the reactions of fans to ownership changes. With the literature on this specific topic being so scarce, other linking factors need to be observed to draw conclusions on fan and spectator behaviour concerning the acceptance of new owners and involvement in a club's activities.

The effects of a club's ownership seem to be lesser than what was expected. A key factor for the lesser effect is the desire for success in fans. A major portion of a fan's enjoyment in supporting a football club comes from the club succeeding in winning games and championships. Ultimately for fans of a club, the performance and success are the most important factors in getting involved with and following the club.

2.6 Conceptual framework

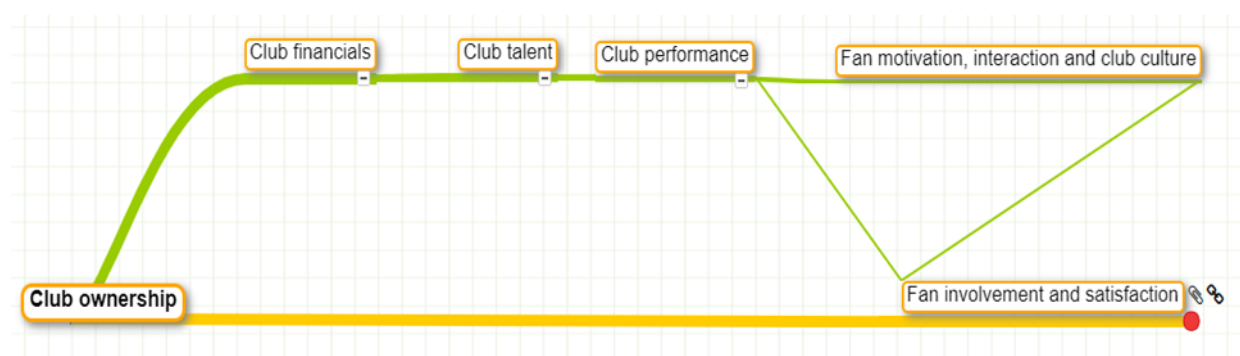


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework illustrates the factors affecting football fans' involvement and satisfaction in their respective football clubs. Within the context of this literature review club ownership is in the middle of everything, since it has an effect on the financials of a club and the financials have a major

effect on a club's playing talent, which subsequently affects the club's performance. All of the aforementioned factors can largely affect the fanbase's interaction with the club, motivation and their shared club culture. Ultimately these factors lead to changes in fans' behaviours and sentiments, which are some of the main factors in deciding fan involvement and satisfaction.

In this study involvement and satisfaction are the main factors that are looked at among football fans. Involvement is thought of as the fans' participation in club events and culture, frequency of the fans following their favourite team's games and the overall pride the fans take in being a fan of their favourite team. For satisfaction, the main factor is how satisfied the fans are with their favourite team's performance compared to how the team is expected to perform. Additionally, how happy the fans are with non-game related decisions the team has made like ownership changes, player changes and manager decisions.

3 Methodology

This study analysed the opinions of football fans about their favourite teams and whether the presence of local owners or foreign owners has an effect on the fans' involvement and satisfaction. Additionally, this study looked at the effects of Middle Eastern ownership on the fanbases of football clubs.

The study in this thesis is descriptive and done with a quantitative approach, meaning the aim is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics by gathering and analysing numerical data. A positivism philosophy with a deductive approach was also utilised for this study, meaning the data and other information were looked at without prior hypotheses affecting judgement.

The approach for this research is described and justified to achieve the research objectives. After which, the survey design is looked into along the instruments used for it. Additionally, an explanation for how the data was collected and the sample selection process. To conclude, an analysis of the data that was collected.

3.1 Research approach

The study for this thesis was done utilizing primary data collected via survey. The goal of the survey was to acquire quantitative data on the differences in fan involvement and satisfaction between locally owned and foreign owned football clubs.

3.2 Survey instrument

The survey for this research was created using an online questionnaire platform called Webropol and it included 19 questions. The goal of the survey was to examine the differences in fan involvement and satisfaction between locally owned and foreign owned football clubs. The survey was made for people who at least moderately follow football.

In the beginning, the respondents were asked what their favourite football team is. If they did not have one, the hope was they will not continue with the survey since a favourite team was required for significant answers. Questions 2 to 7 took the approach of Kosciolk (2015), by using single-item scales for the questions with a 5-point Likert scale. Questions 2 to 5 were about how often they attend their favourite team's games, how often do they follow their games and news in media, how often they discuss with others about their favourite team and how often they buy their favourite team's merchandise.

Questions 6 to 10 were about the level of identification with their favourite team and their satisfaction with the team's performance. Question 6 was about the level of identification they feel with their team, question 7 about their satisfaction with their team's performance, question 8 about how important it is for them that their team wins, question 9 about how strongly they see themselves as fans of their team and question 10 about how strongly their friends see them as a fan of their team. Questions 8 to 13 were based on a scale called "Sports Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS)" by Wann and Brascombe (1993) and they were on a 5-point Likert scale as well. One item in the scale wasn't relevant to this study and had a low Cronbach's alpha, so it was removed from the scale for this study.

Question 11 was about how often they follow their team on media during the season, which can give more insight on how much effect the season being ongoing has on the fans' involvement. Question 12 is about how important being a fan of their favourite team is for them. Question 13 was how often they display their team's logo or name, which is an indicator of their pride in their team. Question 14 asked how long they have been a fan of their team and question 15 was about what sport they are interested in other than football. The last four questions were their age, gender, highest level of education and nationality to get more information on the respondents' demographics.

3.3 Survey sample and data collection

For the sample, a non-random convenience sampling method was used due to resource and time limitations. The survey was only targeted towards football fans. The responses were gathered from a Finnish Facebook group for football fans. The survey results were collected in Webropol with a set maximum number of respondents of 300.

The sample size was 286 respondents, but 67 answers about the favourite team were deleted due to invalid answers or convenience for analysis. Answers dismissed due to convenience, were dismissed because many teams were only answered less than 3 times, which makes analysis more complicated, and the focus of this thesis is on larger clubs. Participation was voluntary for everyone and exiting the survey at any point was possible. The data collected was used only for research purposes.

3.4 Data analysis

For data analysis the IBM SPSS software was used. The data is presented in different graphs and figures from varying tests in different parts of the survey. Tests that were performed are ANOVA, correlation and t-tests.

3.5 Limitations

There were several limitations in doing the study for this thesis. In data collection a major limitation was not being able to post on international forums that have big populations due to links not being allowed usually and the general distaste for people trying to get clicks on their post. Almost every attempt at posting the survey link on a forum ended in the post being denied, but one Finnish football forum allowed the post and had enough people to fill the number of responses needed. This resulted in respondents being almost completely Finnish when the goal was to have the majority of respondents from the UK or other larger football countries. Time limitations were present as well since the subject can be quite intricate to analyse with widely differing opinions of fans.

The reliability of the research done with the survey can be put to question, since the respondents were virtually all Finnish, meaning the clubs they support are not their own hometown clubs. The effect of the club being from your own city could have a major impact on how the club's ownership affects the fans' involvement and satisfaction with the club.

4 Findings

4.1 Demographics

Respondents' age

From the respondents, 78 were 15 to 25 years old, 59 were 26 to 35 years old, 45 were 36 to 45 years old, 31 were 46 to 60 years old and 6 were over 60 years old.

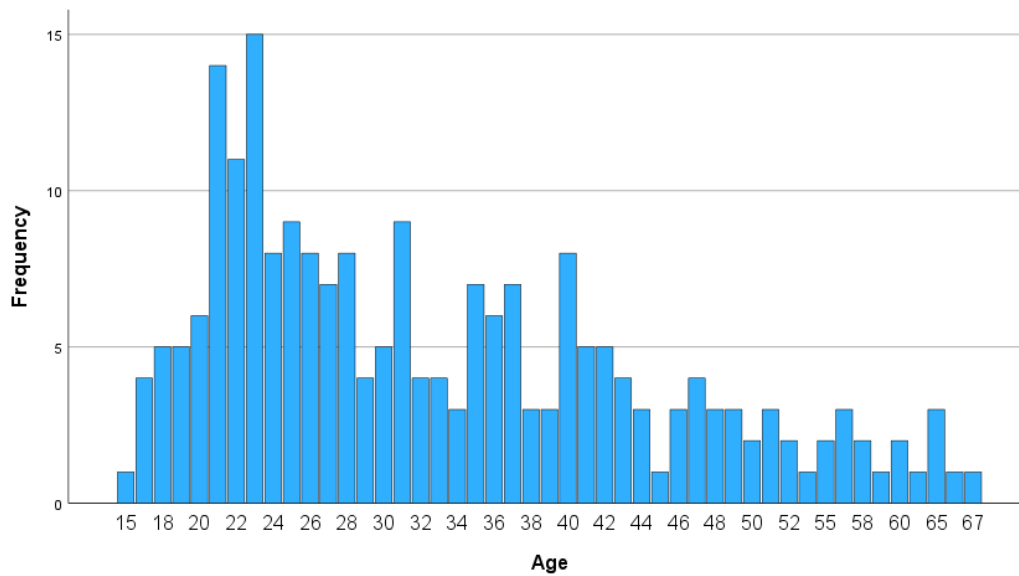


Figure 2: Bar chart showing the ages of respondents.

Gender

Out of the respondents, 200 were male and 19 were female. 91,3 percent male and 8,7 percent female.

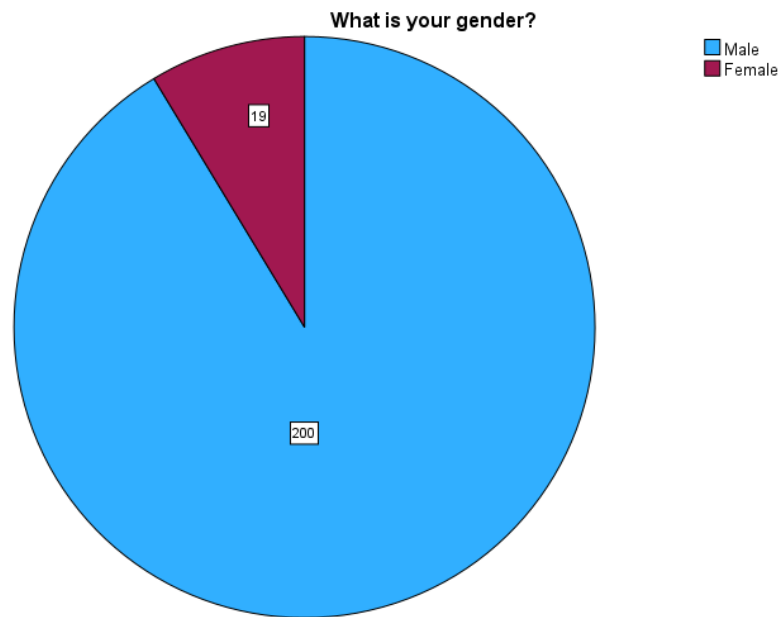


Figure 3: Pie chart showing the gender of respondents.

Nationality

Since the survey was posted on a Finnish forum, 96,8 percent of respondents were Finnish with one respondent from Bulgaria, Vietnam, United Kingdom, Argentina and Kosovo and 2 respondents from Somalia.

4.2 Reliability analysis

For the “Sports Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS)” by Wann and Brascombe (1993), a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.843 was calculated. A Cronbach’s alpha of over 0.7 means a scale is reliable and can be used in the research. For the other questions in

the survey reliability analysis cannot be done since they were done on single-item scales.

Table 1: Table showing number of questions scale and it's Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.843	6

4.3 Football clubs from survey answers and their frequency

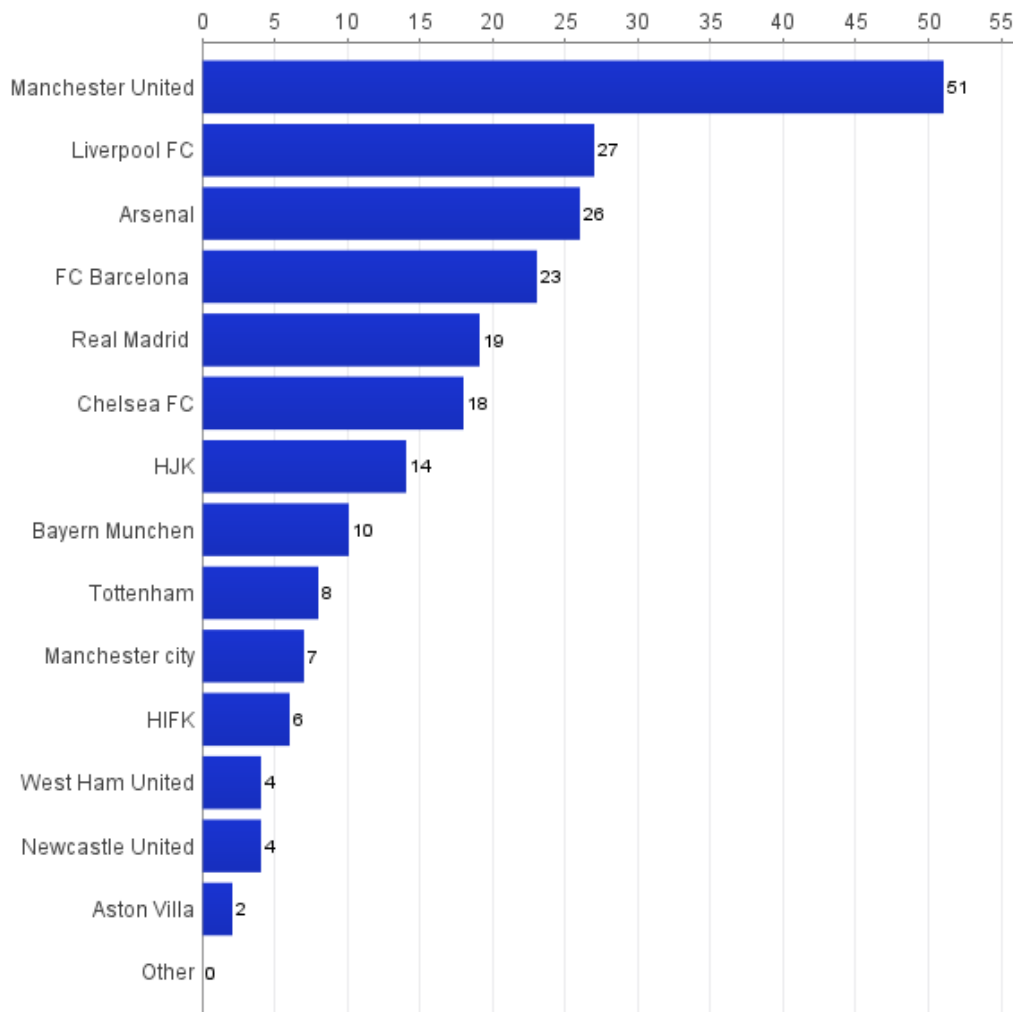


Figure 4: Bar chart showing clubs and their frequencies in the answers

From the survey answers for these teams, 139 favourite clubs are foreign owned and 80 favourite clubs are local owned. Foreign owned clubs from this chart include Manchester United, Liverpool FC, Arsenal, Chelsea FC, Manchester City, West Ham United, Newcastle United and Aston Villa. Local owned clubs include FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, HJK, Bayern München, Tottenham and HIFK.

4.4 Research objectives testing

ANOVA test for questions 8 to 13 to determine variance between foreign owned and local owned football clubs' fans' identification levels towards their favourite teams. The F-test shows values of under 2.5 meaning the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means there is not enough variance to determine a difference in the identification levels of fans of locally owned football clubs and foreign owned clubs.

Table 2: Analysis of variance in questions 8-13 of the survey

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
question_8	Between Groups	.723	1	.723	1.116	.292
	Within Groups	140.629	217	.648		
	Total	141.352	218			
question_9	Between Groups	.030	1	.030	.042	.837
	Within Groups	152.390	217	.702		
	Total	152.420	218			
question_10	Between Groups	.000	1	.000	.000	.987
	Within Groups	205.105	217	.945		
	Total	205.105	218			
question_11	Between Groups	.106	1	.106	.269	.604
	Within Groups	85.437	217	.394		
	Total	85.543	218			
question_12	Between Groups	.512	1	.512	.754	.386
	Within Groups	147.524	217	.680		
	Total	148.037	218			
question_13	Between Groups	.515	1	.515	.493	.483
	Within Groups	226.590	217	1.044		
	Total	227.105	218			

A two-tailed t-test was performed to determine correlation in identification levels of fans between local owned and foreign owned clubs. With the sig. (2-tailed) value being over 0.01 on all questions, a significant correlation is not present in any of them.

Table 3: Correlation analysis of questions 8-13 in the survey

		Owner	question_8	question_9	question_10	question_11	question_12	question_13
Owner	Pearson Correlation	1	.072	-.014	.001	.035	.059	-.048
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.292	.837	.987	.604	.386	.483
	N	219	219	219	219	219	219	219

Questions 2,3,4 and 6 were about how often fans attend their favourite team's games, how often they follow their team's matches and news in media, how often they discuss their team with friends and how often they purchase their team's merchandise. The p-value of the t-test does not come close to the threshold of 0.05 for significance, meaning there is no observable difference in the involvement of local owned clubs' fans and foreign owned clubs' fans.

Table 4: Independent samples test of questions 2, 3, 4 and 6 of the survey

		Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p					
question_2	Equal variances assumed	.007	.932	-1.142	217	.127	.255	-.21151	.18527	-.57668	.15365	
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.146	166.792	.127	.253	-.21151	.18456	-.57588	.15286	
question_3	Equal variances assumed	.525	.470	.657	217	.256	.512	.05656	.08614	-.11322	.22635	
	Equal variances not assumed			.670	175.150	.252	.504	.05656	.08441	-.11004	.22317	
question_4	Equal variances assumed	1.549	.215	.418	217	.338	.676	.04478	.10718	-.16647	.25604	
	Equal variances not assumed			.448	199.604	.327	.655	.04478	.09994	-.15230	.24187	
question_6	Equal variances assumed	.113	.737	-.577	217	.282	.565	-.07086	.12286	-.31302	.17130	
	Equal variances not assumed			-.586	172.725	.279	.559	-.07086	.12097	-.30963	.16791	

5 Discussion and Analysis

Through the literature review, this study found that differing opinions on football clubs' owners can be very visibly present in some instances, but with the survey's mostly Finnish respondents no real difference could be observed when comparing local owned clubs to foreign owned ones. The three most supported teams in the survey were all foreign owned, further displaying the relatively small effect the club's owner has on the fanbase. However, Middle Eastern owned clubs were not at all prominent in the survey's answers. The most supported Middle Eastern owned club was Manchester City with only 7 supporters compared to Manchester United's 51 or Liverpool FC's 27.

When looking at the research questions for this thesis and the data gathered, there is no visible difference in the satisfaction and involvement of fans of locally owned clubs compared to foreign owned clubs. However, looking at the second research question, some difference can be seen between Middle Eastern owned clubs and other clubs. Very low support for Middle Eastern owned clubs could show some signs of the negative effects of the ownership. However, the reason could also be the fact that most of the Middle Eastern owned big clubs are not as traditional as Manchester United and Liverpool FC for example. Especially Manchester United is one of the most recognised and loved football clubs in the world with millions of fans around the world. With a larger sample size and many more nationalities involved, the specific effects Middle Eastern ownership has on the fans could be studied much more in-depth.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Main Findings

From the tests done in the survey, there is an apparent lack of difference in involvement and satisfaction between fans of foreign owned clubs and local owned clubs. The three most supported clubs in the responses were all foreign owned, although the most supported Middle Eastern owned club, Manchester City, came in at only 10th place indicating there could be a distinction to be made between Middle Eastern ownership and other foreign ownership. However, there are many other factors that could affect this as well. The number of foreign owned clubs' fans in the responses could point towards foreign ownership being the preferred option, since they are usually wealthier and more willing to spend money than local owners. On the other hand, sometimes foreign owners can become troublesome for the club. In the case of Chelsea FC, Roman Abramovich had to sell the club due to him being from Russia. So, in some cases a foreign owner can bring harm to a club's wellbeing.

6.2 Implications for International Business

Due to the results not showing significant differences between the fanbases, marketing towards fans would stay the same for fans of foreign and local owned clubs. However, when looking for investors, it could be taken into account that the origin of the investor is often inconsequential to the satisfaction of the fans. This means investments from Middle East could be taken with no further thought as long as the specific investor is not overly controversial. This could be proven wrong as well if the low support for Middle Eastern owned clubs in this study's survey proves to be a real concern for companies. Notable differences could possibly be found between the fans of foreign owned and local owned clubs, which could affect how marketing and promotions are done for the specific fans.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Like mentioned in limitations, a significant improvement for research on this topic would be to perform the survey on a wider scale. This would need to include people especially from England, Spain, Germany, France and Italy. Another improvement could be to choose specific clubs' fans to have a more controlled experiment between local and foreign owned clubs. Also constructing the survey in a way that singles out Middle Eastern owned clubs in a way that local owned, Middle Eastern owned and otherwise foreign owned clubs' fans could be compared, would make it possible to further investigate the idea that Middle Eastern ownership could in some cases have significant negative effects.

With the rapid increase of Middle Eastern investment to Europe within the last 20 years, furthering the research done in this study could prove useful to football clubs or any companies looking to get investments from the Middle East. The current research into this matter is very slim, meaning new findings could very well be made from even surface-level research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey

Football fan involvement and satisfaction survey

 Mandatory questions are marked with a star (*)

Dear participant,

Thank you for participating in this survey!

I am Matias Pitkänen, a student at Aalto University and this survey is a part of my Bachelor's thesis about the differences in fan involvement and satisfaction between local owned and foreign owned football clubs.

The survey is done anonymously and should take 2-4 minutes to complete. By clicking "Submit" at the end of the survey, you consent to participating in this survey.

If you have any questions, you can contact me by email at matias.pitkanen@aalto.fi.

1. What is your favorite football team? *

2. How often do you attend your favorite team's games? *

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

3. How often do you follow your favorite team's news and matches in media? *

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

4. How often do you discuss with others about your favorite team? *

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

5. What is your identification level with your favorite team? *

- None
- Low
- Medium
- High
- Very high

6. How often do you buy your favorite team's merchandise? *

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often

7. What is your satisfaction with the recent performance of your favorite team? *


- Very low
- Low
- Ok
- High
- Very high

8. How important to you is it that your favorite team wins? *

- I don't care
- Not very important
- Moderately important
- Important
- Very important

Next

Football fan involvement and satisfaction survey

 Mandatory questions are marked with a star (*)

9. How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of your favorite team? *

- Not at all
- Not very strongly
- Moderately
- Strongly
- Very strongly

10. How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of your favorite team? *

- Not at all
- Not very strongly
- Moderately
- Strongly
- Very strongly

11. During the season, how often do you follow your favorite team in media? *

- Not at all
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

12. How important is being a fan of your favorite team for you? *

- I don't care
- Not important
- Neutral
- Important
- Very important

13. How often do you display your favorite team's name or logo where you live, on clothing or media? *

- Not at all
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

14. How long have you been a fan of your favorite team? (in years) *

15. What sport are you most interested in other than football? *

16. How old are you? *

17. What is your gender? *

- Male
- Female
- Other

18. What is your highest level of education? *

- High school
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- PhD or higher
- Prefer not to say

19. What is your nationality? *