

SPONSORSHIPS IN THE HIGHEST DUTCH FOOTBALL LEAGUE

An exploratory study of the motives/goals of sponsors in the highest Dutch professional football league and the degree of their involvement.

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Abstract

The last few years the football industry is struggling with professional football clubs which are in financial distress. For that reason, it is important to know in which area revenues of professional football clubs could be improved. In the selection of the topic for this study took into account an essential source of income of professional football clubs, namely sponsorship. This study investigated motives that sponsors have to sponsor a professional football organization, based on the literature and the data obtained from the field. This is done to find out why most organizations want to become a sponsor of a professional football organization. Due to responding better on customer's demand sponsor income should increase. Also there is examined what the clubs, participatin in this study, can offer their potential and current sponsors to achieve their sponsorship goals. Empirically research has shown that participating sponsors usually have brand recognition as main motive in sponsoring a football club. This is in line with the literature. Additionally, customer relationship management and networking are also mentioned several times by particapating clubs as important motive entering into a sponsorship. This study also measured the level of involvement of sponsors in the sponsorship policy of clubs and to what extent clubs and sponsors encourage this involvement. This study has revealed that all participating clubs will encourage more involvement. It is also found that sponsors who are very satisfied with the current sponsor collaboration also the sponsors are which are currently much involved in the sponsorship policy of clubs. Conversely the sponsors who are satisfied to a lesser extent compared with the very satisfied sponsors are less currently involved.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Football has become worldwide popular and is also evident in the field of research. Beside the high number of published books, the media coverage of the sport is enormous. Nowadays newspapers are full with football stories and business newspapers such as The Guardian have a daily sport page where much attention is paid to football stories.

Football clubs in Europe are facing more and more the consequences of the financial crisis. Figure 1 from a research from KNVB Expertise (2014) shows that in season 2012/'13 clubs in the Dutch Eredivisie achieved an operating loss of €18.6 million. This loss was more or less at the same level as the previous season. An important fact is the big difference between the best and worst operating results of €33 million. The operating results are seen as one the main measures of financial health of a club. Operating result is calculated by the net turnover minus the operating expenses and do not take account the result on fees and depreciation of players and incidental incomes (transfers) and expenditures (KNVB Expertise, 2014).

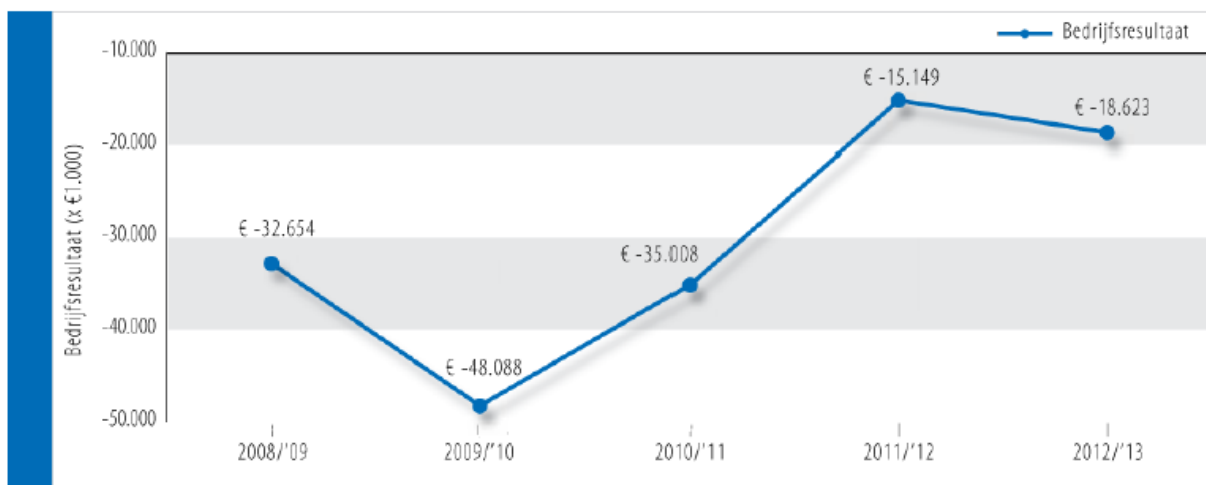


Figure 1: Operating results clubs in the Dutch Eredivisie 2008-2013

Source: KNVB Expertise (2014)

Professional football clubs such as RKC, Willem II and Roda JC get into financial distress and this distress is becoming more visible. This is reflected in various media - in the form of newspapers, TV, radio or internet - where there appear more and more messages about the financial problems of football clubs. An official press release of the Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) shows that early this year it has strengthened its supervision on the financial balance of football clubs (KNVB, 2009). This means that the clubs in question, in order to maintain their professional license, a minimum number of players should be contracted. In addition, with

the new regulations the KNVB has higher demands on the solvency and fiscal discipline of a professional club. Losing the professional license means that a club is no longer eligible to play for the honorary or first division. At least ten of the twenty first division clubs (Jupiler league) are under curatorship by the license committee of the KNVB (Volkskrant, 29-4-2009), but there are also examples from the league, as Feyenoord and NEC Nijmegen. These clubs with financial problems tend to ask financial support from companies or municipalities.

In addition, the Dutch football league (Eredivisie) football clubs have increasingly trouble to get stadiums full. A research from the Volkskrant (2012) shows that in the first ten game rounds in 2012 more than 259.000 seats were unoccupied in stadiums. In 2011, this amount was 216.000. Due to this decline in visitor numbers football clubs will miss a lot of income. According to Speed & Thompson (2000) sponsoring is still the most important revenue stream for professional football clubs. Besides the declining of the number of spectators the financial crisis also have negative effect on the sponsoring of professional football clubs in the Eredivisie. For instance, sponsors have less money to spend, terminate their sponsorship, or even go bankrupt. In other words, the financial crisis has hurt the professional football clubs in Holland. Within the professional football sector there are two major groups of customers, namely:

- Supporters; this group of customers have an emotional relation with a professional football organization. They support their favorite team by buying a match- or season ticket.
- Sponsors; the second group of customers are the sponsors. The intention of these customers' groups are more to build up a business relation and little to none emotional relations. Often sponsors expect from professional football clubs that they offer opportunities to invite and meet other business people during matches to build up other relationships.

Given the fact sponsoring is one of the most important revenue stream for professional football clubs in Holland this research will focus on the second group.

Sponsors and professional football clubs both have commercial incentives with their relationship. This study will investigate which factors are decisive entering a sponsorship. For this research it is also important to know, from existing literature, what outcomes sponsors want to achieve from their investments.

1.2 Problem statement

Professional football organizations are getting more and more trouble to derive positive financial results and survive. Nowadays, it is more difficult for professional football clubs in the highest Dutch league to generate more sponsorship revenue. For most clubs sponsor revenues decrease and that situation will be worsen.

1.3 Research Gap and Objective

Due to the growth and awareness of the benefits of sponsorships it is becoming more common that sponsorship has moved from an additional role to a keystone of the whole marketing strategy (Meenaghan,1998). Nowadays this "sponsorship-linked marketing" is in most cases led by senior managers. The reason for this is that organizations extremely needs long-term sponsoring contracts in order to survive, and therefore it is important that the process is seen as a strategic part of the business instead just a choice for a communication medium (Fahy, Farrelly, Quester, 2004). It is also true that the growing complexity of sponsorship relationships has ensured that marketers are more aware of the need for clear strategic justification to justify their choice of partners Farrelly (1999).

Because of these observations, it is vital for clubs to optimize their sponsoring policies as much as possible. To gain a better insight, the foremost motives of sponsorships must be mapped out. Due to such an enhanced insight clubs should be more able to anticipate potential sponsors and enhance the likelihood of "capturing" more sponsors.

The current theory as regards sponsoring, and especially in the sporting world, has little facts about how much factors such as involvement decide the choice of sponsorship. For example, there is no further research into the involvement of clubs' policies towards sponsors with whom they have entered into a sponsorship. There are theories, such as the stakeholder involvement theory, that explain that the stakeholders' involvement is a key factor for a successful management regime (Pomeroy & Douvere, 2008). They apply this theory to the marine industry, from which they surmise: *due to the interdependency that exists between the ecosystem resources and its users, success implementation of ecosystem-based management depends on the identification and understanding of different stakeholders, their practices, expectations and interests (Pomeroy & Douvere, 2008. Pag 1).* The primary goal of the research is to determine which motives are important to organizations for entering into a sponsorship and how clubs use this. This research will also look into the degree of involvement present in the current sponsoring policies of AFCs in the Eredivisie and determine the interest in involvement from both parties.

1.4 Central research question and subquestions

The research question of this study is:

- *What are the foremost motives/goals for a sponsorship of an Association Football Club and to what degree will more involvement from sponsors leads to more/longer sporting acquisitions?*

Subquestions:

- What motives do organisations have to become a sponsor ?
- What do clubs do the recruit and maintain sponsors?
- How do AFCs and (potential) sponsors view the concept of involvement ?

1.5 Research approach

After formulating the research question, relevant literature will be investigated. This literature will be discussed in chapter 2, in which this literature review will function as a framework for this research. This chapter will discuss subjects that pertain to the main research question. In this fashion, the football sector, sponsorship, motives for sponsorship and participation/involvement will be researched from the viewpoint of the available literature. Relevant literature will be investigated after having formulated the research question. Subsequently, chapter 3 will be used to describe the used research methods. This will make clear why said methods were used. The following chapter concerns the data results of all parties involved, which will be analyzed. By way of empirical research the 2 sub questions will be answered and the conclusions of this research will be presented, including possible recommendations and a discussion which may serve as a catalyst for further research.

1.6 Relevance

Sports is being accepted more and more as an industry in the literature, one which concerns a great deal of money (Chadwick & Arthur, 2008). Football can be viewed as one of the most popular sports in the world. According to Gwinner & Swanson (2003), the importance of sport can be seen by the increasing rates for broadcasting rights, but also by the number of sport-related programs on television and radio. One example are the increasing revenue in international sport sponsoring, wherein modern sponsorship has made a switch from a mutually advantageous business arrangement between sponsors and the sponsored (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). Previously, this was mostly charity. According to Speed & Thomspons (2000) and Cornwell & Maignan (1998) there is very little academic research regarding sponsorship. The organizations of association football have greatly professionalized in the last few years, making it interesting to research how the cooperation between commercial departments and the sponsor is handled.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Football sector in general

In addition to the before mentioned increased popularity of football, nowadays the football sector is considered in the most countries of the world as a well-established business. According to Jones (2003) on average sixty per cent of the football stories nowadays are about business-related topics. There are also authors who regret the commercialization of the football game. For example, Conn (2001) argued that “ football is converted from something which belonged to fans of the sport, to a business”. Besides the opponents of the commercialization of football there are also authors who believe that the transition of the sport to a business is a positive development. “Professional football can be seen as a business in an industry which offers a worldwide product for a global audience “(Ehrke and Witte, 2002).

Buhler (2006) came with a few indicators why football should be considered as a business. First of all, he pointed toward the huge amount of money what is involved in the football game. Another reason why Buhler (2006) associated football with a business is because of the fact that clubs increased the quality and quantity of their commercial management staff. They involve more and more businesspeople in the organization which has led to a business-like way of thinking. In addition, with these businesspeople clubs became an organization with a more consumer-orientated marketing approach. Clubs such as Real Madrid, FC Barcelona, Manchester United, Bayern Munchen and Liverpool can be compared with big multinationals in terms of turnover and employees. Buhler’s (2006) final reason to consider football as a business is because of the fact that football clubs have to deal with many stakeholders and to satisfy the consumers with the product they bought like every other company.

Despite of before mentioned reasons to consider the football sport as a business, authors like Dempsey and Reilly (1998) stated that the football sector differs from other sectors. In the football industry clubs need each other to produce their product (football game). Thus it is not like the most industries whereby companies are aiming to gain a monopoly position, because they cannot perform without their competitors (Koning,2010).

The intense emotional relationship between stakeholders and the clubs differs the management of sport organization like football clubs from that of a normal business. This intense emotional relationship in the football sector has led to a high attention from the media, which is for normal businesses at a lesser extent. This makes it for football clubs very important to perform on the field. Despite the fact that long term business performance should be the criterion for measuring the viability of a football club, most of the clubs are focused on their short term sportive

performance on the field. According to Szymanski (1999) there is causality between the performance on the field and the level of financial possibilities. He suggests that the club performance on the field will lead to higher revenues and that is why football clubs are always eager to perform well on the field. Next to this view there are authors which state that the relationship of performance on the field and revenues has to be considered on the other way around. In order to win games economic capital is very important for football clubs (Cooper and Joyce, 2013). This is because the fact that there is a correlation between investment and success. In this case, investment means buying and keeping expensive football players and managers. Cooper and Joyce (2013) conclude that the financial aspect of clubs is an important component in order to achieve success on the field.

2.2 Sponsorship

Sport is one of the most important institutions in our society today and it is estimated that the sport industry generates around \$200 billion dollar each year. Shank (2005) states that this revenue amount is based on various areas within the industry and it involves advertising, sponsorship, media broadcasting rights and spectators spending.

Mullin, Hardy & Sutton (2007) came with following definition of sport marketing: “ *Sport marketing consists of all activities designed to meet the needs and wants of sport consumers through exchange processes. Sport marketing has developed two major thrusts; the marketing of sport products and services directly to consumers of sport, and the marketing of other consumer and industrial products or services through the use of sport promotions.*” (Mullin et al, 2007. Pag 13)

Van Heerden (2001) concluded that sport sponsorship is an element of the marketing communication mix as well as the sport marketing mix. In his view sport sponsorship falls under promotion, which is one of the traditional 4 P's (product, price, place and promotion). Cornwell & Maignan (1998, pag 1) argue that sponsorship has two main activities: (1) *an exchange between a sponsor and the sponsored, whereby the latter receives a fee and the former obtains the right to associate itself with the activity sponsored* and (2) *the marketing of the association by the sponsor*. These activities are both crucial to give meaning to the investment made (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). Sponsorship is an important instrument in the marketing communication mix. This is due to the fact that we are living in an era of increasing media fragmentation and subsequent consumer confusion whereby sponsorships create potential opportunities to be in the same space and place as the intended target audience, which could be enormous attractive to marketers (Van Heerden, 2001). The place of sponsorship is illustrated in Figure 2. Van Heerden (2001) discussed the importance of certain factors that affect sport sponsorship decision-

making in South Africa. These factors could be: the relationships between sport sponsorship objectives, leveraging the sport sponsorship through integrating other marketing communication mix variables into the sport sponsoring and measuring the effectiveness of sport sponsorships (Van Heerden, 2001).

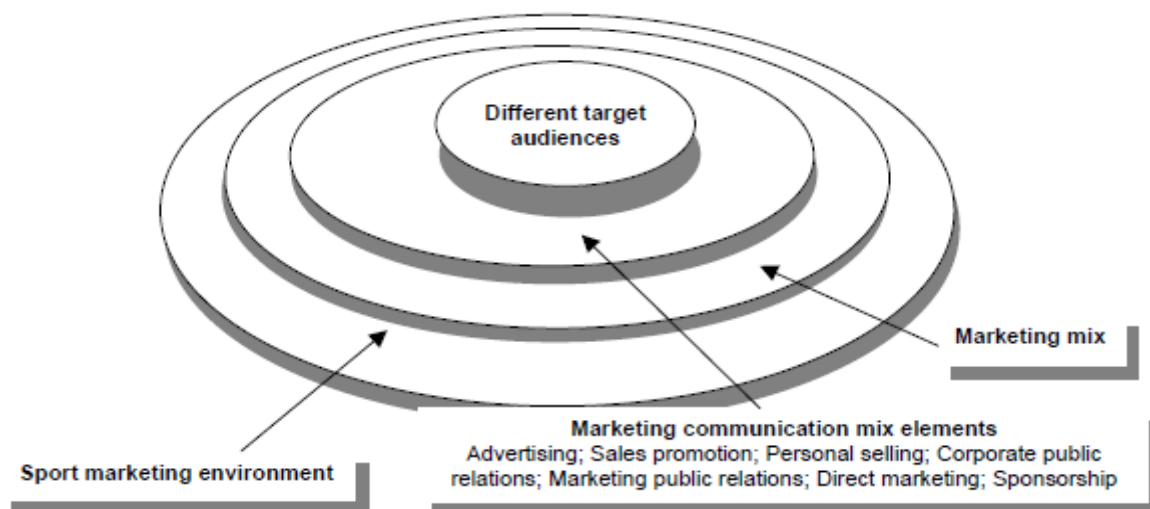


Figure 2: The place of sponsorships in the Marketing mix

Source: Mullin et al (2007)

Beside the fact that sponsorship can impact on sales performance the marketing tool plays also a major role in creating a long-term relationship with the sport event/activity and the community.

Franck (2009) argued that the football industry differs from other types of industries in a few aspects. He says for example that financial profitability has a small effect on the football clubs and that the importance of financial profitability in other business can be seen as the key to understand their viability. The financial profitability of football clubs in general is problematic and when it comes to the financial aspects they perform poorly. According to Franck (2009) football clubs competitiveness is not anymore dependent on the profitability, but of their spending power. Thus, the clubs with the biggest spending power has the largest competitive advantage in the football industry. This is due regulations and commercialization within professional football that has created an environment that drives for overinvestment (Franck, 2009).

2.3 Goals of sponsorships

As mentioned before sponsoring is a very important revenue stream for professional football clubs. Acquiring sponsor deals should therefore be considered as a major part of policy by clubs. According to Fahy et al. (2004) having an experienced sponsorship manager in the organization is important because he is able to make good critical decisions. The experience and intuition that he acquired over time can lead to competitive advantage in sponsorships and experienced sponsors may attract the most promising sponsorship proposals (Fahy et al., 2004). Grohs, Wagner, Vsetecka (2004) add that it is crucial for sponsorship managers to use people with experience and skills who can convince potential sponsoring firms. For example, during the process of sponsor acquisition trying to ensure that exposure is high and using this information when negotiating sponsorship.

Grohs, Wagner, Vsetecka (2004) presented in their research insights into the importance of event-sponsor fit as well as sponsorship leverage. They came with evidence about the fact that sponsorships are worthwhile for increasing sponsor awareness and improving brand image, and are especially successful if sponsors and sports marketers jointly design the favourable circumstances.

Based on the research done by Hoek, Gendall, and West (1990), the following objectives can be set for companies who entered into a sponsorship: improving goodwill, improving image, increasing profits, brand awareness and management interest. According to Mount and Niro (1995) these goals are mostly for the marketing and communication of large companies. Smaller companies use sponsorship as a tool to support their community and make regional relationships (Mount & Niro, 1995). Cornwell & Maignan (1998) write that improving brand awareness and image are goals to enter into sponsorships. Furthermore, they also write sponsoring is a way for them to participate in relationship marketing, due to the development of relations with customers, employees or communities which the sponsoring influences. Sponsoring is also a tool for B2B, which might lead to bonding with different business partners active in the same network (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998).

According to Ferrand et al. (2007) sponsoring objectives can be distinguished between commercial and corporate communication. A similarity between these two forms of sponsoring objectives is that both are aiming at enhancing brand awareness. However, the difference is that commercial communication aims at enhancing brand awareness to get increasing sales, brand loyalty and purchase frequency, whereby corporate communications aims at enhancing brand awareness for the company's social image (Ferrand et al., 2007).

Rajshekhar G. Javalgi, Mark B. Traylor, Andrew C. Gross and Edward Lampman (1994) discuss about the fact that corporate sponsorship can enhance corporate image, but that such an outcome is not automatic. According to them it is also possible that a company already had a good image before the sponsorship.

Franssen (2007) came with a list of motives for organizations for sponsoring football clubs. Personal motives for sponsoring football clubs is the first one he mentioned. This could be for example when a manager has an emotional link with a club. In this way, the manager supports his favourite football club through sponsoring it. However, nowadays this motive for sponsoring football clubs is seldom applicable for the policy of organizations. Another motive Franssen (2007) mentioned in his work is brand awareness. Sport sponsorship can be used to create, maintain or increase brand awareness. In the literature brand awareness is cited as the main motive of sports sponsorship. Sport is an ideal opportunity for businesses to increase brand awareness in an affordable way. The favoured clubs for companies to sponsor are those that receive much attention in written and visual press. Another motive of sport sponsoring is to differentiate the product with that of competitors.

Van Maren (1997) came with another motive for sponsoring football clubs. This motive has to do with external communication. For organizations it is crucial to have and maintain long term relationships with key customers. According to Van Maren (1997) organizations use football matches as an opportunity to build relationships with key business contacts outside office hours. Hereby the sponsor is often looking for the intimacy of a particular contact, and tries to create the sense of connection with the business relationship at the special atmosphere of the football match. Last but not least, revenue generation is as mentioned earlier also for sponsoring firms a motive to sponsor professional football clubs. Sponsorship does not only cost money, it also simply can bring money (Franssen, 2007).

2.4 Participation/ Involvement

There are several ways to form the policy of organizations. Policy which required stakeholder involvement is also called interactive policymaking. Interactive decision making is an approach in which the attempt is made to integrate the values and wishes of the different players into the solutions devised during the interactive process (Edelenbos and Klijn, 2005). This interactive approach provides stakeholders the opportunity to become involved in the definition and implementation of policy. For the proper conduct of policy processes, cooperation in planning and implementation is essential. With this type of policy organizations attempt to increase

acceptance through participation, and so making the policy more effective. Interactive policy is a design for public authority to involve of civilians, companies, or other authorities at an early stage. This involvement is used to interact and collaborate to prepare, determine, execute and / or evaluation policy (Propper & Steenbeek, 1999).

When governments, interest groups, intermediary organizations or companies use the interactive policy design, they organize the design process by working at an early stage of the policy process with stakeholders (Peppel & Prummel, 2000). For this process, open interaction and cooperation are very important.

According Propper and Steenbeek (1999), in addition to this open exchange of work and cooperation, equality and mutual debate are also important to mention this policymaking interactive.

In his research, Edelenbos (2000) describes interactive governance as a way to determine policies, by way of involving stakeholders in the first stages of the process. These stakeholders of the governance policy may include: citizens, social organisations and enterprises. The major difference as opposed to the procedures of more traditional public policy, is that interactive governance involves the different players before the policy proposal are made.

Pomeroy and Douvere (2008) researched the degree of stakeholder participation and involvement in the marine spatial planning process. According to them, stakeholder participation and involvement is only meaningful when implemented in an early stage of the process. Furthermore, participation and involvement most also take place often and in a sustained manner. Consequently, the stakeholders must feel involved, possibly leading to trust between both parties. Stakeholder participation and involvement is an essential factor of successful ecosystem-based management (Pomeroy & Douvere, 2008).

These authors believe that early interaction can discover potential problems and explore possible solutions to come along with them to the appropriate policy. According to Edelen- & Monnikhof (1998) a motivation for implementing the interactive policy is that this approach can improve qualitatively the content of policies by the different perspectives that come up with the process.

Edelenbos and Klijn (2005) made a comparative analysis of six interactive processes in the Netherlands. They conclude in their research into Managing Stakeholder Involvement that the main motives to involve stakeholders in interactive decision making are to increase the quality of decision making by using information and solutions from different players, to decrease the veto power of some players in decision making, and bridging the growing dichotomy between

citizens and elected politicians. Quality improvement through interactive policy could be relevant for this study, because in this research there will be a focus on how professional football clubs can improve the quality of the sponsorship policy in order to increase sponsorship revenue in the future.

In the total quality management approach customer focus is a key component. Alam & Perry (2002) argue that customer involvement is an important factor for successful product and service development. Pivik, Rode, & Ward (2004) researched the involvement of consumers in the healthcare industry. They concluded consumer involvement has the advantage that different perspectives can benefit policy development. Furthermore, consumer involvement may help fine-tuning policies to the needs and wishes of the customer (Pivik et al, 2004). According to Kaulio (1998), the participation of customers goes further than relating their problems, needs and wishes. However, for the process of developing and selecting design solutions customers will be actively included (Kaulio, 1998). User involvement is described as the participation of representatives of the target user group in the system development process (Ives & Olson, 1984). Based on the results of Kujala (2003) and Ives and Olson (1984), developers receive more accurate user requirements by involving users than when this involvement is lacking. By way of involvement, questions and demand are better synchronised, leading to positive effects on system success and user satisfaction (Kujala, 2003).

2.5 Concluding part theoretical framework

The literature review has shown that sponsoring is a key revenue stream for professional football clubs and necessary to generate these revenues to stay alive and competitive. There has, however, been a development because of the increased popularity of the sport. This has led to the commercialisation of the sport. Authors like Con (1999) regret that football, because of this commercialization, converted from something which belonged to fans of the sport to a business. In addition, other authors like Ehrke and Witte (2002) find that the commercialization is a positive development, because it can be seen as a business in an industry which offers a worldwide product for a global audience.

The literary study shows that the emotional link with the football club, brand awareness, differentiate products with respect to competitors, showcasing products and external communication are the motives of organisations that sponsor association football club (Franssen, 2007; Van Maren, 1997). There is little literary evidence regarding this subject.

Through this research I would like to figure out the motives of organizations to sponsor professional football clubs and if these motives are similar to those which are described in the

literature review. By doing this it will be clear whether the practice matches with the theory about determining factors for organizations to sponsor. In addition, by means of interviews with the commercial staff of the participating clubs I want to know how clubs operate with current and potential sponsors.

In the literature there is little known about involvement of sponsoring organizations, about sponsoring issues and policy at professional football clubs and if this could be a crucial factor for current and potential sponsors to continue doing business. In other words, beside the question about what the motive/factors of sponsorship are, I want to investigate if clubs and (potential) sponsors prefer more involvement during policymaking in the field of sponsoring, and if this involvement of organizations will lead to better insight for clubs to meet more the demands of the organizations. With the result that this should entail more sponsor acquisitions and contract renewals what will lead to sportive and financially healthy club. This is shown in figure 3.

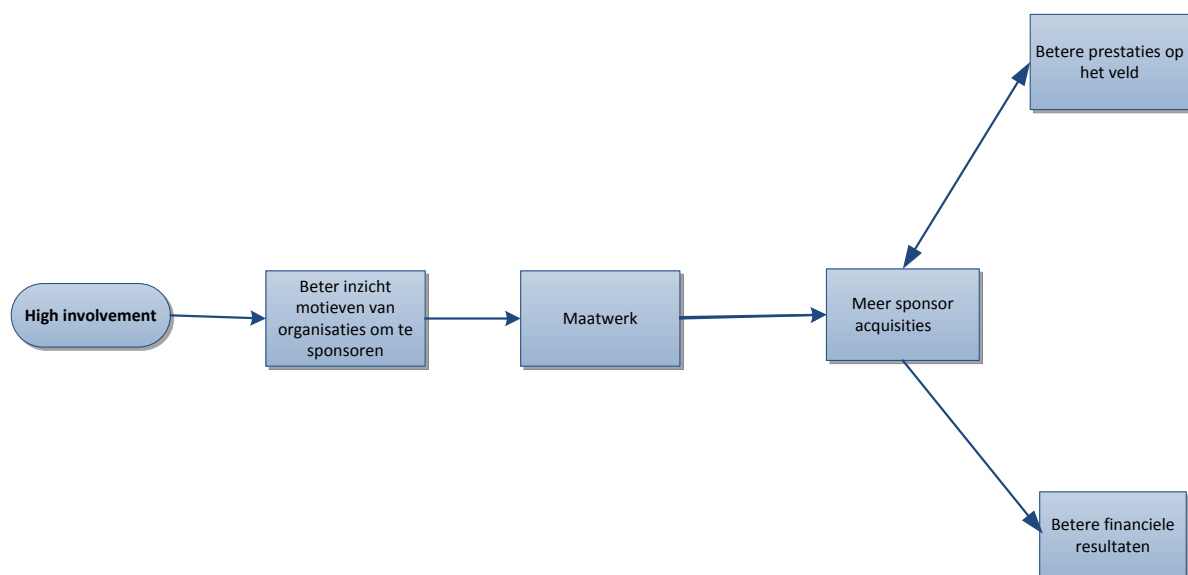


Figure 3: Model involvement within the policy of sponsorships

3. Methodology

3.1 General methodology information

In this chapter the methodology used to give an answer to the research question will be discussed. It will be made clearly how, step by step, work has been done to gain more insight for answering the main question. There is used a qualitative research method. The reason for this is that there is little knowledge available about this topic. According to Lewis, Thornhill & Saunders (2007) has an explorative way of research as goal to find out how a situation is and finding new insights. Swanborn (2010) is of the opinion that an explorative research approach is logical when there is little known about the research object. This research shall therefore have an explorative character. For this research use has been made of a qualitative data method, by which different sources have been used. A multiple case study is addressed for gaining the necessary information for answering the research question. Eisenhardt 1989 defines the case study as: *A research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings* (Eisenhardt, 1989. Pag 534).

According to Yin (1981) case studies can relate to single or multiple cases. Anderson (1993) sees case studies as an approach to find out how and why things happen. The case study method is seen as useful when problems or situations need to be understood, by which cases deliver useable information.

3.2 Sample design

As mentioned above for this research an explorative research approach has been chosen because there is little to be found about this topic (Swanborn, 2010). There are also authors that criticize the case study method. For example Jonhson (1994) is of the opinion that there is a lack of scientific rigor and reliability and that the generalizability of case studies also need to be doubted. This is grounded by Gummesson (1991) who sees case studies as an ideal means to show a holistic view of a phenomenon or series of events.

Despite the criticism on these methods, a multiple case study has been chosen for this research, because through this a clearer picture can be created around the research topic. A multiple case study is used instead of a single case study because the picture will be clearer than when having used a single case.

This research is limited till the Dutch Eredivisie because else multiple factors from different countries (like local legislation, regulations national soccer federations etc.) should have been taken into account. There is not chosen for random sampling because there are clubs in the Eredivisie that belong to the top, middle section and downgrades through which the generalizability is at risk. Hence, as much as possible is tried to make a good selection of clubs that belong to the top till the downgrades clubs.

The goal of this multiple case study is to gain a good picture of how the sponsorship policy of participating clubs is, what the motives for sponsoring are in their eyes and to what extent they involve large sponsors within their sponsorship policy. On the basis of these different cases it needs to be found out what the primarily motives for sponsoring are, how is responded to that and how both parties look upon involvement in the sponsorship process.

A different selection criteria is to select as many different clubs as possible which fall in a different region. With this it is also ensured that the generalizability of the results is enlarged. The clubs that are selected for the research are:

PSV Eindhoven: PSV Eindhoven was founded in 1913 and is in the Netherlands seen as a top club. The Eindhoven soccer club wants to go for the championship every year. Is also has the ambition to play Champions League and strives for a top sport climate with professionalism on and around the field (PSV, 2015). I have spoken with Tom van Dijk (25 years) employee Sponsoring & Events.

FC Twente: FC Twente is a club from the east of the Netherlands which has gone through an enormous growth the last couple of years, financially as well as sportively. This successful development can deliver useable information for this research, thus explaining the contribution of this club to the research. Jakko Slot (32 years) has spoken with me and works as Head of Sales at this club.

AZ Alkmaar: AZ Alkmaar is included because the last couple of years it is near the top and thus sportively seen a firm club. To enlarge the generalizability of this research also a club from North-Holland is included. Frank Jonker (34 years) Marketing employee.

SC Heerenveen: SC Heerenveen is a club that has managed to commit a lot of people. The club has grown enormously the last couple of years (SC Heerenveen, 2015). It is a regional club in the north which is usually seen as a stable sub top club. At SC Heerenveen I have spoken with the Commercial Account manager Peter de Vries (45 years)

Heracles Almelo: Heracles Almelo belongs to one of the oldest soccer clubs in the Netherlands. A club with a rich history. The last couple of years also a stable middle class club established in the east of the country. I have conducted the interview with Thijs Houwing (33 years), Commercial and Marketing employee.

The interviews have been conducted with people of the five before mentioned clubs. After consultation within the clubs, every club appointed a person who was available to do the interview. The people with whom I have conducted the interview are:

Name	Position	Club	Age	Duration (hours)
Tom van Dijk	Employee Sponsoring & Events	PSV	25	1.5
Jakko Slot	Head of Sales	FC Twente	32	1
Frank Jonker	Marketing employee	AZ	34	0.45
Peter de Vries	Account manager	SC Heerenveen	45	1.5
Thijs Houwing	Commercial & Marketing employee	Heracles	33	1

Table 1: Interviewee

Further, also different sponsors of the concerning clubs have participated in the research. For this is chosen to gain more insight from the perspective of sponsors about the experience and thoughts regarding sponsorship. A questionnaire has been answered by email or phone. Next to the current sponsors there has been phone contact with potential sponsors, by which mainly has been asked about the idea of the involvement. Potential sponsors addressed how they look upon more involvement with regard to the policy of sponsoring, thus coming closer to the chain.

During the interviews with the participating clubs, I tried to find out which companies would be open to sponsorship. This was very difficult because it could disturb the negotiation process. This information was given to me on the condition that these companies would be anonymous in the report. Since the finding of potential sponsors for this research proved to be difficult, I did accept their proposal to use the data without stating the names.

3.3 Data collection

Data that the researcher has specially developed or collected for the research project is called primary data. Secondary data is already collected by someone else than the researcher or used for different purpose than the current research project (Babbie, 2007). In this research, in first instance, secondary data has been used, namely a literature research and a desk research. A literature research is a method by which scientific or theoretical information about the topic is searched for in the form of research conclusions of other scientists. Desk research is the collecting of information about a topic from sources as websites, databases, catalogues, newspapers, magazines, and archives, in electronic or paper form and the integration of that information with existing knowledge (Babbie, 2007). Scientific articles from the database of the University of Twente (Google Scholar) are used to collect a proper base about the topic. Google Scholar offers a large database, online books, papers and articles from which relevant information can be used. Next to that, use has been made of the official websites of the involved soccer clubs, the website and publications from the KNVB, newspapers and soccer research publications.

On the basis of semi structured interviews data has been gained from the participating professional soccer clubs. This way of interviewing is used because it gives structure and space to go deeper into certain aspects, during the interview (Boeije, 2005) I have chosen this research design because I think it is the most appropriate one to come in contact with the people I need. Other designs should be more intense and time consuming for clubs. As a result, the likelihood for participating should be lower. The strength of the methodologies I used is that what doesn't come forward in the literature research can be complemented with the information gained from the qualitative interviews. The strong points of the interviews are, for example, that the focus lies directly on the study topics (Yin, 1981). But a weakness is that the interviewee gives what the interviewer wants to hear (Yin, 1981). These interviews were held with employees of the club which had different positions within the commercial department. Each interview took about an hour and started with some general questions to warm up into the conversation and get a general picture of the state of affairs of the club. I approached these people per email and phone to plan a meeting for a face to face interview. Before each interview it was stated that it was possible to process the data confidentially in the research, if they wanted that. To make the processing of the data easier also permission was asked to record the interviews. This was possible for all interviews. According to Boeije (2005) there are many advantages of audio recording during interviews. Next to the advantage that it is easier for the processing, it guarantees and expands the quality of the data.

To also illustrate from the perspective of the sponsors how they look upon sponsorship, it was decided to send a questionnaire to the participating organizations. The choice for a questionnaire has been made because quickly and easy relevant data can be gained in this way. Questions have been listed that will reveal the expectation pattern and points of improvement of organizations that are willing to sponsorship. Through the questionnaires, it was found out what the motives/goals were for the sponsors to engage into a sponsorship. This is of essential importance to the research; to find out whether question and offer are aligned. The selection of the organizations was a random one. In first instance, I looked at which companies were sponsors of the participating clubs. This information I could gain from the websites of the participating clubs. Next, contact has been sought with the respondents by phone and email, By means of this methodology I will be able to acquire sufficient information to give a substantial answer on the research question.

3.4 Cross case analysis

On the basis of the information gained from the desk research, literature research, qualitative interviews and questionnaire, there is looked at what 'under determining factors' means for clubs and (sponsoring) firms for the commitment of a sponsorship.

This is compared to each other to find differences in views (supply and demand), which can lead to points of improvement for AFC's sponsor policy. From the questionnaires comes forward what companies expect when they seal a sponsorship agreement. By comparing the cases, it will show which clubs do this well and how improvements can be made.

4. Data

4.1 Case study

The previous chapter has explained why, what and how I have come to the answering of the main- and subquestions. In this chapter the different cases shall be further processed with the concerning data. Besides that, the relevant data from the questionnaires, submitted by the participating organizations, will also be processed. In paragraph 5.1 the results from the interviews with the commercial people of the AFC's will be discussed. The next paragraph will deal with the answers obtained from the current sponsors and in paragraph 5.3 potential sponsors will be set out.

4.1.1 Case 1: PSV Eindhoven

General

PSV Eindhoven stands for Philips Sport Association and is officially founded on the 31st of August 1913 (PSV, 2015). The club belongs to the top of the Netherlands for many years now. It is a club that has Champion League ambitions and wants, at least, to be once in every two year champion of the Netherlands. PSV always strives for the highest achievable goal by means of a top sport culture. The climax of PSV in the club history was the season 1987-1988 in which PSV won the Europa Cup I (PSV, 2015). The stadium in which the home matches are played is the Philips stadium. The capacity of the stadium is 35.000.

Sponsoring

The estimate of PSV lies around 60 million Euro of which the sponsoring share is about 20%.



There is a general director who leaves the commercial part to a responsible person who leads the commercial division. At this division the core of business lies with the recruiting/enlisting and keeping of sponsors. The enlisting is done in different ways. There is 1 person who does 'new business' and who is actually really looking for new potential clients. There is a way by which is sought for new potential clients within the PSV network. By this way often the current sponsors are addressed in the hope that they know people who could be interested in a sponsorship at PSV. This way of enlisting sponsors is experienced as the most successful. There is also the so called 'cold approach' by which companies are approached for sponsorship, but without those companies have given reason for it. Details of companies are obtained by, for example, the Chamber of Commerce. This approach is more complicated because companies themselves have not asked for a conversation about a possible sponsorship.

PSV thus also uses a cold approach and because PSV often has a certain attraction, this is seen as an advantage by them.

To keep clients contact moments have been planned to find out how things are going and what perhaps could be better in future. The contact moments differ per layer of the so called 'pyramid'. At the top of the pyramid stands Philips as head sponsor. Below that stand the partners (like FREO, NIKE, BAVARIA and the Lage Landen). Underneath that stand the sponsors (the bit smaller sponsors like: PSE, Telecom, Sint Anna, CSU) and next the suppliers (even smaller companies). Then the business rooms and business club (MKB). The contact moments that PSV has with its sponsors are also always dependent of the need of the sponsors. In general, twice a year there are contact moments for the members of the business club and once in every two weeks with the sponsors and partners. It is thus different, since it is aligned with the needs of the client. The duration of the contracts differs also a lot. In the past it was that for a minimum of 3 years a contract was sealed, nowadays that is different. This is because clients indicate that because of the financial crisis, they cannot predict how it will go with their company. On the basis of that development PSV has become more flexible and offers flexible package of for example a couple of matches per season.

Motives and offer

The motives of sponsors can be different, since every company can have a different objective. One company, for example, really focusses on hospitality and therefore reserves a lot of chairs for the inviting and amusement of its relations. Another company has as objective to raise its brand recognition and exposure. With exposure one can think of, for example, raising of the market share. The sponsors of the business club have as main objective networking.

The larger sponsors, such as Philips, Mercedes and FREO, of which the names can be seen on the boarding during matches, are mostly involved for brand awareness.

PSV has several business rooms and a restaurant on offer at Philips Stadium. Customers therefore have access to multiple business areas. These places are ideal for doing business with fellow entrepreneurs. PSV sponsors also have the possibility of using the digital PSV Network Guide, and using PSV as an intermediary to come into contact with persons of interest. Aside from these facilities, sponsors can also participate in such activities as: the PSV Golf Tournament, networking conventions, receptions and company visits. One example is a business rally at Mercedes; PSV sponsors can sign up to participate. These types of activities can help organizations to come into contact with one another. Sponsors can also rent the business areas in the Philips Stadium at a 50% discount.

The manner in which PSV meets the needs of a (potential) customer is by always listening to what a relation or organization says. Based on this, effort is made to offer a custom-made package as much as possible. Especially larger companies are analyzed for their goals, which then form the basis of how PSV can help them achieve these goals. The customer's needs are met as much as possible, but must be financially possible. PSV will also hire an external marketing agency from time to time to help brainstorm on how the best custom-made work can be offered to potential customers. Based on the ideas of PSV and the agency, a combination of concrete plans and packages is devised. This has often turned out to be successful. The "attentive ear" and customized offers derived from this have turned out to be the key to success for PSV.

Obstacle

Where negotiations often fail relate to financial matters. In the last few years, the financial crisis has truly left its mark. Organizations are forced to be more and more accountable for how they handle their finances. AFCs therefore face an enormous challenge to offer the boards of companies something very good to convince them sponsoring will be a good investment. Aside from financial reasons, there can also be a lack of time or the fact that the organization has no feeling for PSV, but is, for example, fan of AJAX.

Involvement

Every sponsor is important to PSV and they are truly listened to, but they do not have much influence. The degree of influence also depends on the importance of the sponsor. For example, Philips making demands is responded too much more quickly than a business room sponsor. There is a type of board in PSV that represents the interests of sponsors, but it does not have much influence. PSV is set on determining its own policy.

4.1.2 Case 2: FC Twente

General

FC Twente is a major league football club that has shown tremendous growth in the past 7 years. De Grolsch Veste is the club's home base and has a 23,000 seating capacity. Since its foundation in 1965, FC Twente has gained several successes, with winning the national title in 2010 as a highlight. In the area of sports, the club has set the goal of gaining a spot in the top 5 of Dutch football clubs and to qualify for European football each year. FC Twente furthermore strives to



reach the semi-finals of the cup tournament every 3 years, at least. The financial goal is to obtain the highest possible budget with a matching expenditure. FC Twente has chosen to invest in the stadium, which is straining the budget considerably. This long-term plan must eventually ensure the club spends less money on interest and repayments on the stadium, as well as creating more financial capacity to invest in, for example, a new players group.

Over the course of seven years of turbulent developments, FC Twente's budget has increased from 13 million euros to 42 million euros. 19 million euros of this latter figure consists of sponsoring revenue.

Sponsoring

FC Twente is doing well when it comes to sponsoring. With 6,500 business seats occupied they occupy the top spot in the Netherlands. According to Mr Slot, FC Twente and PSV have high marks in this area due to their good facilities. The time period for sponsorships has been decreased at every level of sponsoring. Sponsors do not always wish to be tied to a contract for great lengths of time, seeing as there is still financial insecurity. Also, sponsors also indicate they no longer have the time to sponsor an entire season. When compiling the sponsor packages, FC Twente has become much more flexible. Sponsors are given the choice to sponsor a certain number of matches, against relatively higher rates.

FC Twente has an office and field staff, with 3 account managers who are occupied full-time with acquisitions and customer relationship management. There are also a number of former players active as relationship managers. FC Twente utilises both the "cold" and "warm" approach when recruiting sponsors. Most revenue is garnered by the "warm" approach. This means that FC Twente contacts the relations of current sponsors concerning future sponsorships. Current sponsors are asked to name a certain number of people in their network who are also interested in becoming a sponsor. People and companies have become much more critical nowadays, with sponsoring having become a real company decision. The goal of companies is usually to network, meaning a club has to be better at and more actively offer the facilitation of such a network. Companies are more interested in ascertaining the yield of sponsoring. At this point in time, sponsoring is seen as a tool within the complete sales and marketing strategy of companies.

Another striking difference is the cooperation with the main sponsor. Before, FC Twente had a main sponsor with a goal of increased brand awareness. This organization would already be pleased if their name was shown on television. Nowadays, FC Twente really makes a cooperative agreement with these types of main sponsors. The club has two full time staff members

dedicated to cooperation to thus influence the market together. For example, the club is actively selling products of this sponsor within their network and vice versa. According to Mr Slot, this way of cooperation has been a gift to FC Twente and partially responsible for its enormous growth in the last few years.

Aside from its excellent hospitality, FC Twente also has high marks in the area of creativity. One example is former player Eddy Achterberg still visiting companies celebrating their jubilee with a gift and tickets to a home match. Afterwards, they're contacted and asked how to found the experience and if an account manager can come by for a talk. They are constantly busy exploring the market for links that can be used to sit around with companies for a conversation. The focus lies on how they can adapt their proposition to a company, so that they will be viewed as a marketing partner instead of an FC Twente sponsor. FC Twente is concerned with giving organisations the feeling that it's not just a sponsorship, but more a chance for strategic growth by having FC Twente as a marketing partner.

With the larger sponsors, or the *cooperative partner* such as XXIMO and Menzis, FC Twente has daily contact to see what needs attention and extra work. Weekly or monthly evaluations regarding the current cooperation are also set with these *cooperative partners*. FC Twente also utilizes questionnaires sent each year to determine what sponsors thought about the cooperation. FC Twente strives to visit the other sponsors twice a year, but which is generally based on the needs of the customer. This is, however, quite difficult, seeing as they number roughly 2500 businesses. FC Twente is trying to make improvements in this area. It present a danger when your club becomes larger. This sense of bonding is very important and is therefore a large focus for improvement. One example is that sponsors are e-mailed beforehand in case of important events, before these appear in the media. This gives sponsors the feeling of being involved in the club.

Motives and offers

There is a difference between the motives of cooperative sponsors and those with business chairs. Business chair sponsors are mostly motivated by networking and for relationship marketing. When networking, a sponsor becomes part of the business club and can there meet fellow entrepreneurs. Relationship marketing includes things such as inviting esteemed customers to a match.

With the cooperative partners (such as XXIMO, Huisjes-Kokkeler, Menzis and Grolsch), FC Twente is involved in cooperative marketing. As a club, you're a part of the marketing strategy FC Twente is used as a way of creating brand awareness or for using the club's database. Both

parties look together into ways of using each other's strengths to make something better. For a short time now, FC Twente has hired someone whose task is to continually observe and determine how partners can be set up amongst themselves. This has been derived from FC Bayern Munchen, where it has turned out to be a great success. For example, Audi is set up with T-Mobile to start a cooperative campaign/activity. FC Twente sees this as a point for development and has recently started working on this. These kinds of development issues can help FC Twente measure up to AJAX, PSV and Feyenoord. FC Twente has the desire to develop themselves even further in this area. FC Twente organizes business club evenings, network evening, exchange dinners with a retrospective report and photographs, through which customers are given the opportunity of coming into contact with one another, and where FC Twente takes on the role of intermediary. During the exchange dinner, there are continually 8 different people seated together (appetizer, main course, desert), and each round offers the possibility of introducing yourself and what your line of business is. The network days are divided into levels of sponsorship. FC Twente has an extensive number of facilities for its customers. They believe that one must excel at this. What happens on the field can hardly be influenced. Everything around the football must be perfectly arranged. Customers need to experience an exceptional evening. Customers must be properly escorted to their seats, must be served outstanding food when dining or an extra tickets must be ready in time, when needed. These types of affairs must be organized perfectly, eventually ensuring the club's commercial success. This goal is the reason for the strong focus on this area.

Obstacles

The negotiations with potential sponsors can fail due to all kinds of details. Negative news may also be a cause (financial difficulties at Twente). It is not always the financial aspect that stalls negotiations with potential customers – FC Twente doesn't work with very standard packages. When the club signs a cooperation, the goals of the company sponsoring are ascertained and assessed for viability. If FC Twente has no confidence they can meet these goals, there will be no cooperation.

Involvement

'Involvement binds', according to Mr. Slot. At the moment you involve a sponsor, they feel connected and part of the club. FC Twente is making much headway with its cooperative partners in this respect. There is also a type of members board for business chair sponsors, in which around 40 companies participate and feel an ambassador for FC Twente. The club meets with these companies 3 times a year, to know the themes that concern the sponsors. Good and bad aspects are discussed. This board therefore has a binding function between the club and the

sponsors. This allows FC Twente to better anticipate developments and adapt to them. The club taker sponsor involvement with the club very seriously.

Every sponsorship layer in FC Twente has such a board – for example, there is a skybox board, in which six skybox companies represent the interests of the remaining skybox owners. As individual evaluations don't always bring everything to the surface, these boards often inform the clubs as to what matters to sponsors.

Future plans

FC Twente wants to further increase the level of service. For example, it is not always readily apparent to FC Twente which sponsors bring which guests to a match. This could include people interested in a sponsorship. FC Twente wants to work with this and thus make another step in aftersales. Thus, every Monday after a home match, an e-mail is sent to the sponsors in which a player thanks them for being present and expressing hope to see them again. The e-mail will also be a referral for people wanting to contact the commercial department. FC Twente assumes the e-mail will be passed along to the relations they brought along, hoping it will lead to more. The club is furthermore busy with a pilot copied from FC Bayern Munchen, who have had success with it. This experiment has now been active for three matches and will last a maximum of 5 matches. It will then be evaluated for its success. This measurement may take months, as sponsorships decisions aren't made the very next day. The pilot concerns a skybox for which the current sponsors are asked to bring guests from their network to during a future match. Also, potential sponsors will be invited in the hopes that mutual trades will occur. This will then serve as a positive experience for potential customers, giving FC Twente hope that they can incite sponsorships. The guests in the box are asked to leave their contact data, so that FC Twente knows who came and thus possibly contact them at a later stage.

4.1.3 Case 3: AZ Alkmaar



General

AZ Alkmaar was founded in 1967 and emerged from a merger between Alkmaar '54 and FC Zaanstreek. AZ managed to win the national title twice during its history. AZ plays its home matches in the AFAS Stadium in Alkmaar, which has a capacity of 17,023 seats. Football comes first for AZ and they want to reach the European league each year, preferably in AZ style – with

dominant and attractive football. The financial goal is to make the budget, which is put at 25 million euros each year.

Sponsoring

The theory has indicated sponsoring is a very important source of income for clubs. AZ confirms this, as 10 million of their 25 million budget is derived from sponsoring. The managing director is ultimately responsible for the whole budget. There are a number of managers beneath the managing director. Sponsoring is part of the commercial department, where three account managers work and three people in the back office. The commercial manager is responsible for the commercial department. The commercial manager is also on the management team, which holds a bi-weekly meeting in which strategic decisions are made.

Mr. Jonker indicated that at the core of the commercial department's work is the recruiting and keeping sponsors. The three account managers are constantly in contact with those sponsors who bought business seats with AZ. Each account manager is responsible for around 200 sponsors. In case of any shortcomings or the like, sponsors can always contact their account manager. Recruiting is often done via existing sponsors. During each conversation with a sponsors, they are asked if they know of anyone interested in an AZ sponsorship. Another way of recruiting customers is by way of the regional promotion campaign. A specific target group is selected for this. Subsequently, a match is selected and the target group is invited to experience the match encounter. After the match they are approached to inquire into their experience and whether it met their expectations. They are also asked if they would be able to use it for their own network or if they could meet new people via the AZ network. Should they be interested, they could be possibly be offered a sponsoring contract.

AZ has four different sponsoring options:

- Business seat
- Business balcony seat (including foods and drinks)
- Skybox
- Main or sub sponsorship

Previously, buying a business balcony seat would be for a 3-year contract. Looking at current market changes and people first wanting to see if a product meets their expectations, this is no longer the minimum requirement. Each sponsor also has their own account manager, who plans an appointment at least once per year, to measure satisfaction and determine any shortcomings. But the match days (usually twice a month) are also seen as contact moments. Furthermore,

there is also intermittent contact via e-mail or telephone, through which the account manager maintains the relationship with the sponsor.

Motives and offers

According to Mr Jonker, it differs per sponsor layer what the motives are. For sponsors with a business seat, business balcony seat or a skybox, relationship marketing is usually key. They can bring their own relations to their seats and completely pamper them. In this way, companies create a bond with their customers. AZ also offers its own network. For example, if a company has more need for customers, AZ looks at who within the AZ network might be interesting to sit around the table with – AZ taking on the role of an intermediary. Sponsors join an AZ network where, each month, they can visit an AZ network event at the stadium or on site. During matches there is also a platform on offer by AZ, where companies can get to know one another. A network day can consist of an evening party with a celebrity performer or a so-called “quick date session”. This involves inviting around 50 companies from the AZ network who each have around five minutes of speaking time at one of the lounges, to leave a good impression and network with others.

The main and sub sponsors will more likely enter into a sponsorship for brand awareness. Companies are screened first, though, so that AZ can better meet the wishes of (potential) sponsors. There is also a screening, especially for main and sub sponsors, if the company fits AZ. AZ has a number of core values, such as the ambition to play Dutch-style football and being sober and accessible. Preferably, AZ would like sponsors that fit these value. Sponsors partially create your image, after all.

With AZ’s facilities, they manage to attract sponsors. AZ has modern stadium with something for everyone. The Kees Kist lounge, for example, is a cosy meeting place during matches, where contacts can be made with the 1850 visiting entrepreneurs. When you would like your customers to be more attended to, there is the George Kess lounge or the Grand Café Van Gaal with dinner possibilities. AZ is additionally very accessible and easily approached, which according to Mr Jonker, is a success factor for good relations with sponsors.

Obstacles

The usual reason for sponsors to cancel their services at AZ or potential sponsors declining, is due to budgetary reasons or not being able to be present at all 17 home matches. AZ is therefore trying to be flexible in their offers, seeing as how for the last few years there has been more demand for packages featuring less matches. Nowadays, there are more possibilities than just the sponsoring contracts for at least 17 home matches, or one season.

Involvement

According to Mr Jonker the degree of satisfaction is very important and is continually appraised by way of questionnaires and questions by account managers. However, policy is strictly in control of AZ. Involvement by sponsors would be of little use, according to Mr Jonker, as in most cases it would only amount to being cheaper and offering more. This would jeopardise making the budget, which is why AZ has no real interest. Nonetheless, sponsors' opinions are considered important and it is vital to know what they want and what they consider shortcomings. Therefore, while evaluations also look somewhat at how prices can be reduced, the focus lies with how AZ can be of more help to the sponsor.

Future plans

For the future, Mr Jonker would like to see the development of a focus group within sponsors. A small group of loyal sponsors with different profiles (from aficionados to networkers) who represent all sponsors. They can be invited to a meeting once every now and then to see what is currently of interest to sponsors. That advice can then be used by the club and made into a focal point.

4.1.4 Case 4: SC Heerenveen

General

SC Heerenveen plays its home matches at the Abe Lenstra Stadium. The stadium's capacity, after several enlargements, is now 21,600 seats. Despite the club's growth during the last several years it is still quite accessible, transparent and belongs to everyone (SC Heerenveen, 2015).



Everyone who plays a role, both within and outside the lines, is valuable to SC Heerenveen.

The sports goal for SC Heerenveen is to belong to the sub top (top 8) by playing attractive football. Furthermore, SC Heerenveen strives to reach European football.

The financial goal is to make the 20 million budget. The goal is to be operationally quits or make a profit, and is therefore not dependant on player transfers to fill financial holes. SC Heerenveen has had a tough year (2013/2014), suffering an operation loss of € 4,5 million. Causes for the loss in sponsor revenue, according to Mr De Vries:

- *The economic situation:* the economic crisis effecting businesses are the reason for many ended contracts. Companies must also be more accountable for their finances, due to the crisis, when for example invested in an AFC.
- *Promotion of regional clubs:* another development that has not helped SC Heerenveen was the promotion of PEC Zwolle and Cambuur Leeuwarden 2 years ago, as they are in

the same working area as SC Heerenveen. Before these clubs became League members, they went to SC Heerenveen for their sponsors who wanted to take guests to League matches. At the moment, it's like three people fishing the same pond, which had led to a decline in sponsor revenue.

- *Way of playing football:* SC Heerenveen placed 5th in the 2013/2014 season, under the leadership of trainer Marco van Basten. Despite the high end result, there were few positive remarks on the play. An effective, but boring, counter strategy was used, something that wasn't appreciated by sponsors and customers. This, however, was SC Heerenveen's own fault, as they themselves hired a trainer with a vision.
- *Board changes:* The departure of club icon Riemer van der Velde is still creating interference. This too is something the club has direct control over, as they choose their own board members.

Sponsoring

SC Heerenveen has recently gotten new management for commerce, in which two people are ultimately responsible for commerce. Commerce includes: the fan shop, the ticketing department, communication and commerce for internal and external services. SC Heerenveen has a yearly budget of 20 million euros, of which sponsoring accounts for almost 50 per cent. There are four account managers, of whom Mr De Vries is one. The account managers are divided into regions. Mr De Vries was the last account manager to be hired and travels throughout all regions. On average, the account managers are responsible for around 210 customers. This appears to be the maximum capacity. Despite there being someone ultimately responsible for the commerce department, the account managers are responsible for their own customer portfolio themselves. The main responsible manager has the main sponsors and several additional managers.

SC Heerenveen classifies sponsors in a type of pyramid. On top is Univé, as main sponsor, and below are the categories *Business partners*, *Promises*, *Suppliers* and *Co-sponsors*. This division is for SC Heerenveen's own administration, meaning sponsors cannot choose their own category, as is the case at AZ Alkmaar. This division is made to determine the number of contact moments for each sponsor. The club strives to contact the main sponsor and *business partners* once every six weeks. This may happen per telephone, but an effort is nonetheless made to have 10 to 12 physical meetings per year with these sponsors. This is meant purely for maintaining relations. Sponsors sometimes indicate they only wish to meet once a year, which is also a possibility SC Heerenveen offers. For the remainder of the sponsor categories in the pyramid, there are at least two contact moments per year. There is also frequent contact at home matches. Contact

moments are seen as selling moments. Sponsoring, according to De Vries, is a substantial form of revenue, requiring expertise to keep what you have and supplement with new options to grow. Aside from the external service, in which account managers hit the road to recruit customers, SC Heerenveen has grown by using their own network – asking the people in your network if they know potential sponsors who might be interested. Any indication for interest is taken seriously and immediately acted upon, by means of the cold approach or via the own network. An account manager will call to set up a meeting. The person or company representative is also taken to a match for the experience. About a week later, contact is renewed to see what they thought. Practice shows that the cold approach is really effective, certainly not in these economic times. The difference between the cold approach and looking within your own network is the lack of “warmth” between both parties when using the cold approach. To create this “warmth”, young employees (for example, recently graduated with a part time contract) are used to do the start-up phase. This can be done either by telephone or face to face with companies not yet approached by SC Heerenveen.

SC Heerenveen’s sponsor contracts used to be 3-year agreements. Due to companies being more insecure, a 3-year agreement is too big a risk. This is why SC Heerenveen has become more flexible when offering a contract.

SC Heerenveen has noticed that customers prefer a business environment in which they can actually network with their business relations. Potential customers are reviewed to determine their wishes (motives, such as brand awareness, bringing along relations) and then giving them advice as to how these wishes can be best achieved. The skybox must offer the possibility of giving a corporate presentation. SC Heerenveen therefore has many themed boxes, including the Food Lodge where food-related companies can network. The networking moment is the match itself and must be maximally utilised. SC Heerenveen has no real special networking days.

Motives and offers

Based on his experience, De Vries indicated that many companies view SC Heerenveen as an approachable club with which many companies would like to be associated. SC Heerenveen is a club to which companies enjoy bringing their relations. In the last few years, SC Heerenveen’s expenditure has been looked into with a much more critical eye. ROI models are extensively used nowadays, which indicate what a sponsor company should benefit in terms of revenue. This development has become increasingly noticeable over the last few years, making it more difficult for SC Heerenveen to keep or recruit sponsors. Companies use SC Heerenveen to increase brand awareness, for networking and thus wanting to be associated with the

trustworthy club that is SC Heerenveen. Vice versa, sponsorship is a win-win situation, as Univé has also made the club's image rise. According to De Vries, this win/win situation should be present for every sponsor, so careful review is made whether or not to get involved with a sponsor.

Obstacle

In case of a cancellation, a talk is held with the company to determine the cause. In most cases, companies cancel due to financial considerations. Companies do not see the added value for the amount of investment. Despite the bureau they use to determine the value of the sponsoring, it is not enough for many companies. Another cause may be that sponsors do not have sufficient time to be present at all matches. Herein, SC Heerenveen has also become more flexible to prevent cancellations caused by this reason. Customer are presented with other arrangements that better suit their timetable and budget. This is a way of keeping their business.

Another development worth mentioning, is that the branch of accountancy companies such as Deloitte & Touch have been reprimanded. These types of businesses are no longer allowed to deduct such expenditures from their taxes, thus making it less interesting.

Involvement

SC Heerenveen has the Ondernemers Sociëteit Sportclub Heerenveen (OSSH, Entrepreneurs' Society Sport Club Heerenveen) board. This is the board for all sponsors, in which 6 sponsors represent the interesting of all sponsors. The OSSH translates that which SC Heerenveen's management finds important. It can be viewed as an internal union of sorts for the SC Heerenveen sponsors. Of course, it differs per sponsor whether the signals are taken seriously – as signal from Univé, for example, will be taken very seriously. SC Heerenveen believes the OSSH board to be of added value.

4.1.5 Case 5: Heracles Almelo



General

Heracles Almelo was founded in 1903 and is one of the oldest football clubs in the Netherlands. Heracles Almelo has a rich history with a number of national championships. The club's mission is to become a stable mainstream club, that occasionally makes it to the European league. The club's goal at the moment is to maintain its place in the Dutch League. Heracles' stadium has a 8,500 seating capacity, but will soon be expanded to 13,500. The current financial goal is to be healthy and remain healthy.

Sponsoring

The budget of Heracles Almelo is around 8,5 million euros. Sponsoring amounts to roughly 2/3^{rds}. Under the leadership of commercial director Toussaint are 3 account managers who mostly operate the external services. There are a further 2 internal services employees. Mr Toussaint therefore leads a team of 5 at the commercial department. Recruiting sponsors at Heracles is mostly done via their own network, in which existing customers are asked if they know of any potential sponsors in their network. This has turned out to be the most successful approach. Furthermore, companies are approached that have not given an indication to want to become a sponsor.

Every account manager works in his own operating area. The region of the (potential) sponsor therefore determines the account manager. An organisation is always asked why they want to sponsor Heracles Almelo. This could be due to one of the following motives:

- Increasing brand awareness by way of exposure (led boarding)
- Increasing network via business evenings
- Working on relations
- Emotional tie to Heracles Almelo (fan)

The account managers then take over to fulfil the goal in question as best they can. For example, if the goal was expanding the network, Heracles can introduce them to their own network. Sport achievements are often difficult to influence. If the football is good, that's a positive bonus for sponsor revenue, but the additional business surrounding match days is where the importance lies, to offer the sponsor as much as possible. Experience shows that networking is one of the primary motives of sponsors, which pays off.

Heracles Almelo can also convince sponsors by way of exposure analysis. This measures how often a sponsor (logo) has been on screen, what the viewing numbers were, how large the logo was featured). This then produces an exposure value which can be communicated to the sponsors. Thus allowing to roughly assess the value of the investment. There are furthermore at least 17 home matches, business evenings, exposure (Fox Sports, summaries and, naturally, Heracles Almelo's network). Together with the customer, the goals of the sponsorship are determined. The before-mentioned facilities and additional newspapers and magazines released a number of times per year are how Heracles Almelo tries to convince the customer. Most sponsorship contracts run for one year. Sponsorship contract of one year with automatic extension. They can be stopped by way of a registered letter due before April 1st. There are also contracts that run for multiple years. Customers are visited at least once a year, but contact may of course also be made via e-mail, telephone or at one of the 17 home matches. Some sponsors

indicate they would like less contact moments, and are accommodated herein. These contact moments serve as an opportunity to evaluate the situation. Heracles is constantly busy to do all they can for a customer. If contracts are due for renewal, a meeting is planned for an evaluation of positive points and points for improvement. KNVB Expertise (2003) research shows that Heracles Almelo has the best networking possibilities in the Dutch League. The reason for this is that Heracles Almelo has only one business club. All customers with a business club ticket therefore have access to that one business club where everyone can meet everyone. They also have access to the skyboxes, making it all very low key. This, however, does not mean one can simply walk in, but this can be arranged beforehand.

Heracles Almelo also scores points for their contact moments, where customers feel heard. Compared to other clubs, especially the high-ranking clubs, shows the customers experience Heracles Almelo as very warm, as the account managers have less customers in their portfolio, this making contact more personal. Heracles Almelo furthermore wishes to compete with Fox Sports in the area of comfort and is currently placing new seats which are wider (less seats per skybox). The primary reason for organization to not (no longer) sponsor is financial. The crisis has forced companies to be more transparent before entering into a sponsorship contract with clubs. The money can be used for other matters. Additionally, the sportive results on the field can also be cause to cancel a contract or prevent new contracts being signed.

Involvement

The following answer was given to the question how Heracles Almelo views involvement of its sponsors with regards to policy: *“The commercial department and marketing department work together closely. The sales plan is made by the marketing manager, together with the commercial department. The sales plan describes where we are and which B2B actions will take place each season. We furthermore work together with our biggest sponsors. For example in cooperative projects and sales for which Heracles Almelo gives input with regards to communication, marketing and exposure. By doing this, we give the sponsor a little something back and strengthen the bond between us,”* says Thijs Houwing, commercial employee at Heracles Almelo.

4.2 Current sponsors

This paragraph will give an overview of the answers of current sponsors. These are mainly big sponsors who have been the sponsor of the participating AFCs for a long time. Based on these answers it will become clear how these sponsors view the current sponsoring policy and how they feel improvements can be made. These answers have been collected by way of questionnaires, e-mails or per telephone.

4.2.1 FC Twente main sponsor XXIMO

XXIMO has been FC Twente's main sponsor for 2 years and is satisfied with the current sponsor deal so far. The company researched a suitable Dutch League club themselves with which they wished to associate their company. XXIMO's main reason was increasing brand awareness and thought this was best realized via an AFC in the Dutch League. The determining factors for the company to enter into the sponsoring deals were:

- not be the main sponsor (no sponsored shirts)
- suitable club to be associated with
- non-polarizing (not having half the population for them and half the population against, as is the case with Feyenoord and Ajax)

By entering into the sponsorship with FC Twente, XXIMO expected exposure and hospitality as compensation. There are monthly evaluations to see if these expectations have been met. As main sponsor, XXIMO is closely involved with FC Twente's sponsoring policy. There are weekly sessions with FC Twente representatives to discuss important issues and possible improvements. XXIMO is very pleased with this arrangement.

4.2.2 FC Twente former main sponsor Menzis

Menzis has been FC Twente's loyal sponsor for 20 years. The company started out buying a few seats and later grew into a true partner of FC Twente, where there was a true win-win situation. Contracts were continually made for 3 years. The main reasons for Menzis to sponsor FC Twente were both commercial and social – namely, increasing brand awareness, regional involvement, relation management (networking), recruiting insured, getting people exercising and working on regional health with the help of FC Twente. The partnership has been transformed in the past few years into a social partnership, with which the company truly wishes to work on people's health (examples are: Scoring with health, FC Twente cup, football courses, etc.). The diverse possibilities of FC Twente were the determining factor for Menzis to enter into the sponsoring deal. To gain recognition both regionally and nationally. Diverse compensations were given such as advertisements on boarding, a skybox, a mascot, projects with neighborhood scoring, FC Twente club insurance policy, etc. Menzis is satisfied about the close cooperation and involvement with FC Twente. However, the departure of a loyal FC Twente marketer was considered sad, as the company has formed a strong relationship with him.

4.2.3 AZ Alkmaar main sponsor AFAS Software

AFAS Software became the main sponsor of AZ Alkmaar in the 2010-2011 season. A 3-year contract was signed at first, but annulled a year early and extended with five years until 2017. AFAS Software was approached by AZ Alkmaar to become a main or sub sponsor. The company wanted to increase its brand awareness and researched themselves what the best way of doing

so was. Their research showed that sponsoring a Dutch League club was the best option. Furthermore, the core values of AZ Alkmaar and AFAS Software also matched and the club had never had negative emotions or discord regarding its supporters. These were the deciding factors for AFAS Software to enter into the sponsorship.

There are regular evaluations about the sponsorship and the brand awareness is also regularly measured. The sponsor indicates they are happy with the current status quo. As compensation for the sponsorship, AFAS Software has given the stadium and the new training complex its name. Furthermore, each shirt of the main team and all youth teams features their name and AFAS Software has its own skybox and seats at home matches. Despite the smaller degree of involvement of sponsors within the AZ sponsoring policy, AFAS Software is satisfied with the current situation. The contacted employee was positive about the idea of increased sponsor involvement in the club's sponsoring policy. More customized options could be offered and increase bonding.

Possible points for improvements are discussed with AZ and were not made public for this research.

4.2.4 PSV Eindhoven sponsor FREO

FREO is part of the De Lage Landen and has been a sponsor of PSV Eindhoven since the 2011-2012 sponsor. De Lage Landen also has their own sponsoring contract, which runs until and including 2018. De Lage Landen is an organization from Eindhoven and wants to be involved with the city and play a socially important role. FREO's contract runs until May 2015 – their motivation was introducing the brand and thus creating brand awareness. Weekly, monthly and yearly meetings take place to evaluate the expectations regarding the sponsorship. And if the sponsors are satisfied about the current sponsoring deal. Their motivation was putting the new brand out there and show their involvement with the Eindhoven region – the latter was the deciding factor when making the deal. At every match, the company receives 20 free tickets, LED boarding, a Meet&Greet with the team, a fan day, an editorial and a skybox. According to FREO, PSV Eindhoven should take more initiative in the future to function as a networking partner, to link sponsors within the PSV network. Naturally, the employee was therefore positive about my model of more involvement between club and sponsor.

4.2.5 SC Heerenveen sponsor Van Wijnen Noord B.V.

Van Wijnen Noord B.V. built the Abe Lenstra stadium in 1993-1994 and has been SC Heerenveen's sponsor ever since. As club sponsor they also possess a skybox, where they can receive guests at every match in a beautiful setting and do business in a pleasant and informal matter. Of course, it is vital for brand awareness that the logos and names are seen in the form of

advertising boards, etc. Increasing brand awareness was the main reason for sponsoring SC Heerenveen. SC Heerenveen is viewed positively on a national level, which was the deciding factor for Van Wijnen Noord B.V. to sponsor SC Heerenveen. The company receives advertising throughout the stadium as compensation. As mentioned, there is also a skybox which can be used for corporate presentations and other functions. Players from the main team can be used during special occasions.

There are regular evaluations. The company is satisfied with the current sponsoring agreements and the degree of involvement in the club. This satisfaction also stems from the stable board of directors and the collective feeling of Heerenveen, once more reflecting positively. There has been some unrest at the club in the last few years, due to shifts in management. These are points for improvement that are being handled. Thus, there is now quiet on the management level. Sponsoring-wise, Van Wijnen Noord B.V. has little reason for complaints, everything functions properly and there are clear agreements and personal contact. The sponsor indicates the model for involvement has already been largely implemented at SC Heerenveen, and they are very satisfied about the cooperation with SC Heerenveen thus far.

4.3 Potential sponsors

This paragraph shows the results gained through sponsors considering a future sponsorship of an AFC. Employees of the commercial departments of these companies were contacted by telephone to determine how a possible sponsorship was viewed. They were short conversations in which I asked to what degree they were prepared to enter into a sponsorship. They were also asked as to their opinion on more involvement of sponsors in the sponsoring policy of clubs, to better balance question (sponsors) and demand (sponsor packages).

4.3.1 Potential sponsor A

Sponsor A is a quite young construction company wanting to increase their brand awareness. The employee in question indicated that it is currently difficult to become the sponsor of an association football club, as there is quite a lot of money involved. There was a positive reaction to more sponsor involvement in sponsoring policy of clubs. This will increase the feeling of being part of the club. Clubs will furthermore, according to him, be better able to ascertain what is important to companies and, together, ensure a good sponsoring package where both parties could profit from. The employee indicated this would be an important factor for a go or no decision.

4.3.2 Potential sponsor B

Sponsor B is an average-sized company from the insurance sector. This company is about to enter into a sponsorship with an AFC that was very flexible in its offer, according to them. The company had a good feeling about this, basically offering customization based on the (financial) possibilities of the company. The employee thought this club offered sufficient involvement and strived to engage in dialogue as much as possible with an association of sponsors, ensuring sponsor input regarding the sponsoring policy, as much as possible. The employee next indicated it was understandable that the club makes the final decision regarding the policy, but that input from their side would be appreciated.

4.3.3 Potential sponsor C

This large company is active in the banking sector and is considering a new sponsorship in the future with an AFC. A number of years ago, this company was a club sponsor, but was forced to not extend said sponsorship due to bad financial results. This company indicated that trust and the feeling of participation were important aspects in the cooperation with a club. When asked about increased involvement of sponsors in the clubs' sponsoring policies, I received the following answer: *"The idea is very interesting in theory, but I think you'll find that in reality companies mark out their own policy anyways."*

5. Comparison of the collected data

This chapter will see the comparison of the data of the different case. The comparison of club data will include the manner in which clubs handle recruiting and keeping sponsors, their offer and the level of involvement.

The comparison of the data of (potential) sponsors will mostly be based on their motives and satisfaction in combination with the level of involvement.

This data has been summarized in the tables below:

Club Subjects	PSV	FC Twente	AZ Alkmaar	SC Heerenveen	Heracles
Approach to recruiting new sponsors	new business "warm" & "cold" approach	"warm" & "cold" approach	"warm" approach & regional promotion campaigns	"warm" & "cold" approach	"warm" & "cold" approach
Approach to keeping current sponsors	Relation management with regards to contact moments	From daily contact to satisfaction surveys (depending on level of sponsorship)	At least one yearly meeting + occasional contact per e- mail/telephone	From twice a year to once every 6 weeks (depending on the classification pyramid)	Contact at least once a year + occasionally per e- mail/teleph one
Offer	Business rooms Network Activities Customisation	High level of facilities Network Activities	Diverse lounges Network Activities	Themed boxes Lounges Reputation	Business club Network Activities
Level of involvement	Low	High	Low	High	High

Table 2: Schematic data overview of participating Association Football Clubs

Sponsor Subjects	XXIMO	Menzis	AFAS	FREO	Van Wijnen Noord B.V.
Motive	Brand awareness	Brand awareness, regional ties, relation management & social motive	Brand awareness	Brand awareness	Brand awareness & relation management
Satisfaction	Very satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Opinion on more involvement	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Current level of involvement	High	High	Low	Low	High

Table 3: Schematic overview of participating sponsors

5.1 Comparison of sponsor policies of Professional football clubs

The participating clubs all indicated that sponsoring revenue is very important to make the yearly budget. The clubs' organisational structure is mostly identical in terms of sponsoring. Task that need performing with regard to sponsoring are allocated to the commercial department. They utilise internal and external service employees and someone ultimately responsible for the department. FC Twente differentiates itself here in that they use former players as relation managers, in addition to the internal and external service employees. This has turned out to be a success for the recruiting and keeping sponsors. All clubs use both the "warm" and "cold" approach when recruiting sponsors.

The "warm" approach is an approach where the club's own internal network is used to find potential customers.

This “warmth” does not yet exist in the “cold” approach. With this approach, clubs contact random companies on their own.

The participating clubs indicated that the warm approach is used more often, due to its more effective results. FC Twente and SC Heerenveen use a special form of the “cold” approach, when compared to the other clubs. FC Twente does this by using the previously-mentioned club icons, while SC Heerenveen places itself apart by using young part timers that approach companies to create the “warmth”.

The account management (relation management) of the clubs is based on contact moments with relations. These vary from daily contact with large sponsors to satisfaction questionnaires once a month. These contact moments are also dependent on the level of the sponsor and the level of contact they wish. Interviews show that these contact moments are seen as selling moments, requiring expertise to keep these relations and see the growth potential, proposing it in a correct manner.

Clubs have found that customers increasingly prefer a business-like environment during matches to conduct business with other entrepreneurs or to take existing customers to as guests. All participating clubs have met these needs by offering business rooms in their stadiums, such as skyboxes, lounges, business clubs, etc. The club’s own network, where sponsors can profit from, is seen as an important part. PSV places emphasis on delivering customization for every sponsor and FC Twente strives to especially maintain their high level of facilities, which has turned out to be successful.

The degree of involvement within the sponsoring policy of the participating clubs is classified from high to low. PSV and AZ score low on this subject. These clubs indicate they want to listen to sponsors, but also that they have no real influence on the policy. FC Twente, SC Heerenveen and Heracles have high scores here. FC Twente works together very closely with the big sponsors and even calls them *cooperative* partners. They are in daily contact with these sponsors as to what can be improved in terms of sponsoring. They also have 3 full time employees who handle cooperation with these sponsors. Head of Sales Jakko Slot even indicates that this form of cooperation was one of the causes of the club’s enormous growth of the past few years. FC Twente also indicates that “involvement is creating bonds” and there is a board for each sponsor level, representing the interest of the sponsors with which the club regularly meets.

5.2 Comparison of data results of current sponsors

When the collected data of the current sponsors is analyzed, it quickly becomes clear that sponsors have mostly had the same motives to enter into a sponsorship with an Association Football Club. All participating sponsors have indicated they primarily entered into the sponsorship for brand awareness. Relation management was an additional aspect for Menzis and Van Wijnen Noord B.V. They also find it very important to be able to invite existing customers to a pleasant evening of football. This serves to strengthen the relationship. Sponsors have been explained how involvement is used in other sectors, which has been mentioned before in the theory. All participating sponsors were positive about the idea of implementing this involvement in the football sector with regard to sponsoring. One notable fact is that the sponsors who indicate having a lot of involvement in the sponsoring policy (XXIMO, Menzis and Van Wijnen Noord B.V.) are also very satisfied about the cooperation with the AFC. AFAS and FREO are satisfied about the current cooperation, but indicate there is also little involvement.

5.3 Comparison of data results of potential sponsors

Of the three participating potential sponsors, two indicated to have little faith in the idea of increased involvement for sponsors. Potential sponsor B also indicated that it is understandable that the club makes its own decision in the end. Potential sponsor C, like A and B, likes the idea of increased involvement, but assumes that in practice clubs will go their own way in any case.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

The first section of this chapter will feature the conclusions made as regards the main question and subquestions. Firstly, the motives of companies entering into a sponsorship will be described. This will include an examination of these motives when viewed from a literary viewpoint as compared to the results of the interviews and questionnaires. Subsequently, the general approach of the participating clubs for the recruitment and keeping of sponsors will be described. This is then followed by a description of how association football clubs, current and potential sponsors view the idea of involvement in sponsoring policy. The second part of this chapter will be a discussion and the final portion concerns limitations.

6.1 Conclusion

This paragraph will answer the main questions of this research, as far as possible. Information obtained from literature and the amassed data will be used herein.

Based on the literature, it has become clear that there are multiple goals for companies to enter into a sponsorship with an association football club. Increasing sponsor awareness, improving brand image, improving goodwill, revenue growth, brand awareness, management interest and relationship marketing are all mentioned as motives for sponsorships. According to Cornwell & Maingnan (1998), brand awareness and image are the primary motives of sponsors. This matches the accrued data from the interviews with clubs and sponsors. Based on the data analysis of the interview and questionnaires, the larger part of the participating sponsors did indeed have brand awareness as their primary motive. This is also the case in companies who already have much brand awareness. For them, the continuation of brand awareness is also a big motive for a sponsorship of a football club in the Dutch League.

Association football clubs want to meet the needs of their customers as much as they can. Despite the fact that the larger part of the participating clubs in this research use both the so-called “warm” and the “cold” approach for recruiting new sponsors, all clubs have experienced the most success with the “warm” approach. This uses the club’s own network to approach sponsors via these relations.

For keeping sponsors, clubs plan contact moments to determine how sponsors find the cooperation and what could possibly be improved. The number of such moments per year depends on the level of the sponsor and their wishes. The last few years, clubs have had to deal with sponsors that are no longer financially capable to extend their contract. Clubs have therefore become much more flexible with regard to the packages they offer sponsors. This is

done to convince those sponsors who do not want to extend/enter into a sponsorship for financial reasons or lack of time.

Clubs try to convince organization to enter into a sponsorship with them based on their offer. Aside from commercials on boarding to increase brand awareness, they offer different types of business rooms where sponsors can take important relations or new clients to, to strengthen ties or for networking purposes. Clubs have their own network that sponsors can profit from, but, for example, also organize activities for sponsors. This allows organization to get into contact with one another.

The literature offers much information regarding the interactive approaches, where stakeholders are involved in the definition and implementation of policy. Authors believe that early interaction can discover potential problems and explore possible solutions to come to the appropriate policy. The total quality management theory also discusses the involvement of concerned parties a lot. Especially the involvement of customers is discussed. Customer involvement can help fine-tune policy to the needs and demands of the customer (Pivik et al, 2004).

This research has also looked at the degree in which participating clubs involve their sponsors in the sponsoring policy. FC Twente, SC Heerenveen and Heracles scored good marks in this area. A noticeable outcome from the data was that sponsors who are more involved indicated they were very satisfied about the current sponsoring cooperation. The sponsors who indicated they were satisfied, are little involved in the sponsoring policy.

Both current and potential sponsors are positive about the idea of more involvement by them in sponsoring policy. This might strengthen the ties with the club and also increase the feeling of being heard. Theoretically, this could lead to better synchronicity with the customer's needs.

6.2 Discussion

The literature offered little concrete information regarding the subject of sponsoring in the football sector. However, it became quickly clear that sponsoring is seen as one of the primary revenue sources for association football clubs. Authors describe that brand awareness is the primary motive of companies to fund association football clubs. The results from the interviews and questionnaires with association football clubs confirmed the findings in the literature regarding the primary motives of organizations to sponsor football clubs. Most association football clubs and sponsors find brand awareness to be a recurrent motive to sponsor a club.

A remarkable conclusion from the results, is that sponsor place importance on the degree of involvement in the sponsoring policy of association football clubs. The interviews demonstrated that sponsors who are closely involved, are more satisfied about their current cooperation. This was less the case for sponsors who are less involved. The existing theory speaks of stakeholder involvement and customer/consumer involvement being used within different industries. For example, stakeholder involvement in ecosystem-based management can have successful results (Pomeroy & Douvere, 2008). Stakeholders feel involved, thus creating trust. Policies using stakeholder involvement, also called interactive policy making, attempt to increase acceptance through participation by which policy becomes more effective (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005). According to Pivik et al, (2004) customer involvement can lead to organizations' policies being better synchronized with the needs and wishes of customers.

This involvement from the existing literature is not used in the football sector. All participating sponsors and potential sponsors indicated they were positive about the idea of more involvement of sponsors in the sponsoring policy of association football clubs. Involvement can strengthen ties and give sponsors an increased sense of being heard. Eventually, this could lead to closer ties and longer sponsorships.

A recommendation for further research is to specify this involvement, making it easier to test whether this involvement could be implemented in association football clubs.

6.3 Limitations and future research

This paragraph will discuss the limitation of this research. These limitations will form the basis of the recommendations for future research.

The results of the research would have had a higher degree of generalizability, had more clubs participated in the research. Now, only 5 of the 18 clubs in the highest division of the Netherlands were used. This choice was made due to have a selection of clubs from different categories (top, sub top, middle level, degradation candidates). At first glance, this made is redundant to include more clubs in the research.

The participation of more (potential) sponsors could have increased the generalizability. Finding sponsors willing to participate in the research turned out to not be easy. Even harder was finding potential sponsors, especially in the light that they were reticent in providing information. This is also the reason why the three participating potential sponsors were kept anonymous in this research.

Another limitation in the research is that the interviews or questionnaires were not all done by employees with the same job. This could have the effect that some of the accrued data is more in-depth and more relevant when compared to other data. This might threaten the validity.

A recommendation for future research is increase the number of research subjects, both in terms of professional football clubs and sponsors. It would increase the generalizability. There could furthermore be research into international clubs or leagues that have high scores when it comes sponsoring. Participation of these clubs or leagues could function as a sort of benchmark for association football clubs in the Netherlands.

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