

Which motivations lead football fans to engage with the team on Instagram?

A quantitative research

Student Name: Grigorios Marinakis

Student Number: 546742

Supervisor: Dr. Pawan Bhansing

Master Media Studies - Media & Business

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master's Thesis

June 2020

Abstract

Football is arguably the most popular sport worldwide. The reason is that football fans are developing unique, long-term relationships with their favourite team. As a result, the football industry is generating massive revenues annually. Football teams have transformed into quasi-brands exploiting their brand name. However, up to this point, research is scarce regarding football fans engagement on Instagram. Instagram is a dynamic social media platform that in recent years has transformed into a particularly promising marketing tool. There is a lack of research on how football fans engage in their favourite football team's Instagram and the underlying motivations leading to engagement.

This study attempted to contribute to the limited literature, regarding engagement on social media in the sport context from the fans' perspective, by revealing the ways football fans engagement is realized in Instagram and the motivations leading to it, paving the way for future research. The research question developed was: "*Which motivations lead football fans to engage with the team on Instagram?*" The motivations leading football fans to engage with their favourite football team were based on Uses and Gratifications theory and the three types of engagement were based on the Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities framework. The research method that was chosen to investigate the research question is quantitative, in the form of a survey that was distributed online through Qualtrics. The data from the questionnaire was later analyzed with SPSS to test the model attempting to explain which motivations lead to each level of engagement.

The main finding of the study is that engagement in Instagram was found to happen in its own particular way. Thus, three new levels of engagement were developed, namely Light, Considerable and Deep, to measure accurately Instagram engagement. The motivations, that results have shown to influence Instagram engagement, are Empowerment, Brand Love, Integration and Social Interaction and Remuneration. Specifically, Brand Love and Integration and Social Interaction were responsible for Light engagement, Empowerment and Remuneration were responsible for Considerable engagement and Empowerment and Brand Love were responsible for Deep engagement. The conclusion is that engagement is realized in different ways on each social media platform. Research needs to further investigate football fans engagement in social media to better understand football fans' behaviour. Sports marketers must attempt to stimulate the motivations that seem to work in each social media platform to drive engagement and create firm long-term relationships between football fans and football teams.

Keywords: social media, social media engagement, Instagram engagement, relationship marketing

Table of Contents

Abstract and keywords

Preface

Preface	5
1. Introduction	6
1.1. Scientific Relevance	7
1.2. Societal Relevance.....	9
1.3. Research Question	11
2. Theory and previous research	13
2.1 Relationship Marketing	13
2.2 Social Media.....	17
2.3 Team Identification	21
2.4 Hypotheses- Conceptual model.....	25
3. Methodology	30
3.1 Research design.....	30
3.2 Sample- Data collection	31
3.3 Operationalization- Measurements.....	32
3.3.1 Filter questions	33
3.3.2 Demographics.....	34
3.3.3 Independent variables- Football Fans Media Consumption Motivations and Team Identification	34
3.3.4 Dependent variable- Football fans social media engagement	37
3.4 Data analysis.....	41
3.5 Validity and Reliability	41
4 Results	43
4.1 Descriptive Statistics	43
4.2 Hypotheses-Testing	47
4.3 Control Variables.....	49
5. Discussion and Conclusion	50
5.1 Summary and findings.....	50
5.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications	53
5.3 Limitations and Further Research	56
References	58
Appendix	65
Appendix A – Questionnaire	65

Appendix B- Assumptions testing..... 82
Appendix B1-Assumptions testing for Light engagement 82
Appendix B2- Assumptions testing for Considerable Engagement 84
Appendix B3- Assumptions testing for Deep Engagement..... 85

Preface

Initially, I want to thank my supervisor for significantly helping me in shaping the idea I had on my mind when I first embarked on this demanding yet fulfilling journey. After many months and notable effort, I reached my goal and I could not be more delighted.

I also want to praise my parents for always supporting me in every way possible, despite this meaning many sacrifices done from their part, to whatever decision I have taken in my life. I just hope that I make them proud and one day, as a parent myself, I can become as influential for the lives of my children as they have been for me. Words are not enough to express my gratitude. I, also want to thank the rest of my family, my brothers and grandparents, for never failing to show me their love and support.

I want to thank Eliana, my girlfriend, for constantly expressing her admiration for me as a person and making me feel unique and always keen to keep pushing myself for improvement. She is a special person and together we make an explosive combination, which is never boring. I also want to thank my friends for being there when I need them and making me feel that together we are stronger.

1. Introduction

The sports industry and particularly the football industry has transformed into one of the most profitable markets around the world. Especially in Europe, the football industry is the most important spectator market. The “Big Five” European leagues generated a revenue of 9.3 billion in the 2011/12 season (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2014), in comparison to the current season of 2019-20, which the projected revenue of just the English Premier League (EPL) teams is estimated at 5.9 billion euros and of the top five leagues in 35.3 billion (Gough, 2019). As Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick (2015) mentioned, football is the most popular topic in social media, with 41 per cent of all tweets referring to sports in general and football brands being one of the most followed. In comparison to the English league that leads the race, the Spanish and German leagues, who are the second and third respectively in revenues, are expected to generate 2 billion euros less (Gough, 2019). This huge difference in revenues becomes even more bizarre when one discovers that the average per game attendance in Germany is the highest worldwide and that the top two clubs in revenues worldwide are Spanish (Gough, 2019). However, once someone examines the broadcasting rights revenues of EPL, it becomes clear. The broadcasting rights for the EPL for the seasons 2016-2019 were sold for 5.13 billion pounds (Statista Research Department, 2015).

Teams’ logos have transformed into brands and their global recognition can be transformed into brand equity (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2014), generating value for the organization. To talk with numbers, Real Madrid Football Club has been ranked football’s number one brand with a total value of 1.846 billion U.S. dollars in 2019 (Gough, 2020). Sports teams (like New York Yankees and Manchester United) have transformed into quasi-brands, profiting from retail sales of products carrying their names and logos (Runyan, Carlson, Donovan & Cumiskey, 2009).

The decision of the Italian footballing giant, Juventus FC, to redesign the team’s logo in 2017 follows the notion that football clubs act like brands. This decision, however, raised numerous questions, that were addressed by the club’s website and the club’s president Andrea Agnelli. In the club’s website, regarding the crest change, it is stated that “the club’s new visual identity is the symbol of an ambition to go beyond the field of play and export the Juventus style to a variety of sectors, from

sport to food, from design to art, from music to fashion” (New logo, new identity: A new era begins, 2017). Moreover, in the club’s website they mention that since football is such a huge industry appealing to a colossal target group, the clubs need to be proactive regarding the sporting, social and economic change to ensure they remain the industry’s leaders and to maintain steady development in all fronts (FourFourTwo Staff, 2017). Club’s president further highlighted the importance and the intention to extend the brand outside the football premises, stating that the logo was designed, after discovering what the new markets, that the club is targeting, are demanding. Agnelli added that to grow as a football club, instead of the on-field success, the off-field strategy must progress (FourFourTwo Staff, 2017). Juventus logo redesign is one more proof of the increasing commercial power of football brands. Because of the rising popularity of sports teams and their ability to drive retail product sales, firms partner their brands to popular teams. By associating a brand to a successful sports team, corporations anticipate consumers to transfer the positive attributes for the team onto the brand (Runyan et al., 2009). As the same authors mention, the perceived strong ties of those sports brands to the consumers are the main reason for those partnerships to be realized.

1.1. Scientific Relevance

Football is playing a huge part in people’s life. Football organizations are growing financially outside the football field.

Football teams rely on relationship marketing to create and sustain long-term relationships with fans. The massive fan-base translates into sponsorships, team-related merchandise sales, subscriptions etc. However, as Bee & Kahle (2006) highlighted, there is a tremendous need for research and theory regarding relationship marketing, especially in the sport context as it is lacking (Bee & Kahle, 2006). The previous notion is supported by Witkemper, Lim and Waldburger, (2012), as they mentioned that researches focused on social media in general and sports industry specifically are scarce.

The most important knowledge gap, though, lies in the psychological processes leading to the formation of consumption behaviours regarding relationship marketing efforts (Pfahl et al., 2012).

This study aims to address this issue and contribute to the understanding of the motivations for football fans' engagement and identification process with their football team via Instagram and also how the engagement is realized.

Technology has shifted the balance and has created a new way of communication between the sports clubs and fans (Pfahl, Kreutzer, Maleski, Lillibridge & Ryznar, 2012). Research has shown that the rise of social media has brought a new dynamic in the marketing industry (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Social media have turn consumers into "prosumers". The term is describing the power given to consumers to generate content (Williams & Chinn, 2010). Social media, due to their interactive two-way nature (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015), they have facilitated engagement with the brand.

Engagement up to this point has not been investigated thoroughly, especially on Instagram, which is continuously evolving and has become a dominant marketing tool. Engagement is an integral characteristic of online communities of social media platforms (Vale and Fernandes, 2018). Hopkins (2013) argued, that each social media platform has its unique characteristics for building relationships and approaching consumers. Since every social media platform has its unique characteristics, users could have different types of engagement and reasons to engage between one social media platform to another. For example, Instagram has different characteristics to Facebook. Instagram is mostly relying on pictures on the feed, rather than text or hyperlinks compared to Facebook. This study attempts to contribute to the scientific world by paving the way on how engagement is applied on Instagram. This is especially interesting within the context of sports because there is an emotional attachment between sports fans and sports teams (Richelieu, 2004; Vallerand et al., 2008). Football fans bear a special bond to the club they loved while growing up (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015).

Moreover, the vast majority of social media researches derive from North America (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015). Also, as Stavros et al. (2014) and Vale and Fernandes (2018) mention, only limited number of research focused on fan engagement on social media and sport management from the fans' perspective.

It is therefore important researching in which ways football fans tend to engage with the football team on Instagram and also which motivations are the most characteristic for Instagram in achieving each level of engagement.

1.2. Societal Relevance

The knowledge gaps mentioned above regarding the psychological processes of football fans, when they engage with a football team on Instagram are also impacting the sports marketers. The findings of this research could have a significant impact on the ways football organisations choose to interact with their fan base in order to maintain long-term relationships with them.

Bee and Kahle (2006) highlighted the competitive advantage that fans provide for the sports organizations and that can be achieved through relationship marketing. Mullin, Hardy and Sutton (2007) mention that a growing number of sport consumers are prejudiced towards marketing methods of sports organizations, which they claim that are misleading and manipulative. Sports organizations cannot ignore the damaged relationship with the fans, because it will have a severe domino effect in their revenues. Fans' disconnection will cause a drop in attendance and viewing numbers that will have as an immediate consequence a cutback in revenues from sponsorship deals, licensed product sales, broadcasting rights sales and naming right deals (Kim & Trail, 2011). The remedy to the growing mistrust of sports fans towards sports organizations is relationship marketing (Kim & Trail, 2011). This study attempts to provide answers to sports marketers into what drives football fans to engage on Instagram with the club and facilitate the creation and retention of long-term durable relationships with them.

There is a knowledge gap also in how the effectiveness of relationship marketing (Kim & Trail, 2011) and social media marketing can be assessed. Pfahl et al. (2012) share the opinion that value is hard to capture and to be evaluated in the social media domain. Witkemper, Lim and Waldburger, (2012) highlight that researches focused on social media in general and sports industry specifically are scarce. Also, the vast majority of social media researches derive from North America (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015). Stavros et al. (2014) and Vale and Fernandes (2018) also mention the limited number of research focused on fan engagement on social media and sport management from the fans' perspective. Stavros et al. (2014), due to the previous reasons mentioned, call for research to gain insights into the motivations that lead sports fans to consume social media.

Taking into consideration the critical role fans play in a team's commercial success and the competitive advantage a strong fan-base provides to a team (Bauer et

al, 2008), extensively described previously, social media consist the perfect opportunity for sports clubs to engage and interact with fans, facilitate the process of fans' identification with the club and building long-term relationships (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015). As Vale and Fernandes (2018) argue, sports organizations need advice on the ways to engage with fans online and knowledge of their motivations for social media consumption. Football clubs in order to optimize the use of relationship marketing they need to understand the motivations for football fans engagement in social media and how this engagement is realized. Only then, relationship marketing will be employed to its full potential. As it was mentioned also in the scientific relevance section, each social media platform has its unique characteristics for building relationships and approaching consumers (Hopkins, 2013). This is where this study steps in, to provide the platform to football marketers in order to realize how engagement is applied in Instagram specifically and which motivations stimulate each level of engagement. Hence, sports markets will be able to improve relationship marketing effectiveness and understand, capture and exploit the value created in that process.

Lastly, a practical value this study attempts to offer is related to the impact technology plays in relationship marketing. Kim and Trail (2011) mention that disruptive technological developments challenge the ways sports organizations operate and demand an immediate response from their side. Technology has shifted the power and has opened a new world for communication between the sports firms and fans (Pfahl, Kreutzer, Maleski, Lillibridge & Ryznar, 2012). The rise of social media has brought a new dynamic in the marketing industry (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). O'Shea and Alonso (2012) call sports organizations to adopt a technological-friendly culture to be able to understand the consequences technological developments have in the sports business. Already, firms from all across the business spectrum have integrated social media on their branding strategy (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015). However, as the same authors say, only recently researchers attempted to explain the impact of social media on brand image. This study will shed further light in the implications of technological advancements in engagement online, meaning how engagement works in one of the most prominent social media platforms, Instagram, which also has growing value, as a marketing tool.

Instagram was chosen instead of other social media platforms because of the relatively limited research regarding fans' social media engagement with the sports

clubs was conducted on Twitter and Facebook. Moreover, Instagram has risen dramatically and currently is the second most popular social media app in the United States, as it was measured in September 2019 (Clement, 2020c). It has also counted over 1 billion active users per month globally, which is double the number of active users the popular platform had in 2016 (Clement, 2019). Instagram is also extremely popular in younger ages, especially among teenagers. American teenagers ranked Instagram second in importance with 35% in the spring of 2019, rising from 12% of the fall of 2012 (Clement, 2020b). In the same period, Facebook popularity among teenagers has fallen from 45% to 6% and Twitter's from 27% to 6% as well. Except for the massive popularity of Instagram and its rising prominence as a social media platform, it has also a significant and continuously ascending marketing dynamic. As Clement (2019, 2020a) mentions, Instagram has two characteristics, that form the ideal environment so that the platform flourishes as a marketing tool. Firstly, due to the visual nature of the platform, it provides brands and retailers with the springboard to promote their products in the most complimentary way. Brands have uploaded an average of 0.7 posts daily on Instagram, with sports teams being the most active (Clement, 2019). For the same characteristic, it is also being preferred by celebrities and influencers, who can generate income for their posting ads, which are sponsored by brands. There were 3.7 million sponsored influencer posts on Instagram in 2018, consisting in their vast majority by photos (Clement, 2020a). The second important characteristic is the high user engagement rate daily that Instagram has (Clement, 2019).

1.3. Research Question

Deriving logically from the above, the purpose of this study is to reveal the motivations for football fans engagement with the team on social media, and specifically on Instagram. The following research question was developed: *Which motivations lead football fans to engage with the team on Instagram?*. However, to answer to that question, they will be explained certain concepts that are vital in understanding how the relationship of fans with the football team works. Below it will be elaborated the role the concept of relationship marketing plays in the engagement of sports fans with the football team. Later, it will be explained the role of social

media and how they are contributing in relationship marketing, as nowadays we are experiencing the digital era and social media are the dominant channel used in sports marketing. As Kim & Trail (2011) highlight, it is of major importance for the financial success of a sports organization to grow media related consumption. However, to manage relationships with customers effectively on social media, a brand must primarily understand their behaviours. According to Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann (2014), consumers in their journey of achieving their self-definitional needs, along with the principal role that companies and brands possess in their personal lives, they progressively identify firms and (team) brands as potential identification targets. Hence, to master relationship marketing through social media, a football team must understand the underlying factors for fans team identification. For that reason, the concept of team identification will be defined and elaborated as well.

2. Theory and previous research

2.1 Relationship Marketing

The popularity of a team, as a football club and as a brand, is based upon the creation of a strong and active fan base, meaning building firm relationships with the fans. The firmly-attached fan base of a football club and their ability to reach to substantial groups of people of different demographics creates the market value of a football team. Hence, it is critical for any football club to create, develop and retain positive relationships with fans and that is the most crucial point of sports marketing (Kim & Trail, 2011). This process is named as relationship marketing.

Relationship marketing involves a variety of disciplines including services, consumer behaviour, communication, and strategy (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). In the business and the sports environment specifically, there have been numerous attempts to describe the notion of relationship marketing to achieve a deeper understanding of it and benefit from its effective application. As Grönroos (2004) defined it, relationship marketing consists of the brand's attempts to identify, create and maintain relationships with consumers and other stakeholders through mutual exchange and interactivity. Moreover, he goes on to explain that relationship marketing is also about strengthening the already existing relationships and in some cases even terminating them, to the point that organizations and stakeholders interests are achieved. Williams and Chinn (2010) agree with the definition of Grönroos, stating that the purpose of relationship marketing is to create long-term relationships with the organization's key customers, growing organization's business and consequently generating more profit. Similar to the previous two is the definition Kim and Trail (2011) concluded on with the focus on the sports industry, claiming that relationship marketing is about identifying, building and maintaining relationships with the sports consumers establishing that interests of all parties are met. The importance of ensuring all parties are satisfied with the relationship was also highlighted by Stavros et al. (2014). Bee and Kahle (2006), Copulsky and Wolf (1990) and Sheth and Parvatiyar (2000) focus as well their definition of relationship marketing in the process of alluring, developing and maintaining the customers. All the previous definitions focus on certain concrete principles regarding relationship marketing which is a three-step process, identifying,

building and retaining a customer/fan. It is a dynamic process that needs continuous action from the organizations' part (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2000).

The process of developing relationships is dyadic, interactive and meaningful (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013). It is resulting in repeating purchasing behaviours, a certain level of psychological attachment and relational attitude positions (Bee & Kahle, 2006). According to Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001), nowadays there are various approaches to relationship marketing. They separate them into the ones that apply a narrow perspective, focusing on short-term behavioural components and transactional exchanges and the ones applying a broader perspective, attempting to create a long-term relationship. The approaches with broader perspective focus on the formation of strong, two-way interactive relationships with the consumers. (Bee & Kahle, 2006; Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013). However, Bee and Kahle (2006) highlight that the first phase of long-term relationships is the superficial transactional exchanges.

However, globalization and the digital revolution in the media have transformed sports clubs into complex entities that must develop and retain firm relationships with their target sport consumers, but in the same time with various others stakeholders, such as governments, shareholders and sponsors (García, 2011). Hence, relationship marketing as Grönroos (2004) defined it, it is absolutely essential for handling these tensions between target customers, in this case, fans, and various other stakeholders.

Due to the crucial role of relationship marketing theory in ensuring long-term business sustainability, it has received attention in various business fields (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012). The tremendous importance of relationship marketing for the sports organizations, in particular, in building strong relationships is supported by various authors (Kim, 2008; Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015; Stavros, Meng, Westberg & Farrelly, 2014). The relevance of relationship marketing theory on building strong relationships with stakeholders is further highlighted by the great number of researches on sport and social media adopting the aforementioned theory (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015). Successful relationship marketing reinforces brand awareness, understanding of consumer needs, enhanced loyalty and added value for consumers

In the quest for the retention and enhancement of long-term relationships with fans, sports organizations incorporate numerous database-management techniques (Bee & Kahle, 2006). However, football fans are not typical customers. According to

Shani (1997), the development of firm relationships with sport consumers is less challenging, due to the very nature of sports fans. As Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick (2015) highlight, sports fans display unique characteristics, bearing a special bond to the club they loved while growing up. Richelieu (2004) and Vallerand et al. (2008) reinforce the previous statement claiming that there is an emotional attachment between sports fans and sports teams. However, nowadays the show/football match itself is not adequate to retain the majority of the fans committed to the club (García, 2011). As García (2011) argues, today clubs need a continuous and sustainable relationship that is relying less on the team's performance results and more on encouraging permanent engagement with the fans. Bee and Kahle (2006) encourage sports organizations to examine the functionality of these unique relationships, as it will result in more effective relationship marketing. According to the same authors, sports organizations, due to fans' lifetime attachment to the club, endeavour to comprehend consumer's desires and values (Bee & Kahle, 2006).

Commercially successful teams with strong fan base are appealing to consumers and are in a position to demand hefty fees to sell their broadcast rights (Kim & Trail, 2011). The relationship is a vital facet of sports marketing and sports organizations should be constantly on the radar of sport consumers, striving to be appealing and to build deeper relationships with them (Bee & Kahle, 2006). However, retaining fans should be the primary focus of sports organisations marketing efforts rather than attempting to attract new ones, as the sports market is extremely competitive and saturated (Kim & Trail, 2011).

Grönroos (2004) suggests that relationship marketing consists of an integrative process relying on the aspects of communication, interaction and value. Interactions are considered central to the relationship marketing process (Grönroos, 2004; Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015). They happen through direct and indirect channels, which create a consumer's experience with the brand (Williams & Chinn, 2010). During the interaction process, while consumers are seeking to accomplish self needs continuously, as Grönroos (2004) argued, value is created and transferred. However, the initial superficial interaction, that is taking place through transactional exchanges, must transform to relational interaction relying on mutual exchange and shared values (Bee & Kahle, 2006). Once sport consumers associate with the sports organization, they commit to a long-term relationship, supporting in every way the club, ignoring other market options available to them (Bee & Kahle,

2006). Hence, relationship marketers attempt to understand sport consumers' attitudes and the elements that influence the relationships they develop with sports organizations, to achieve control over these attitudes (Bee & Kahle, 2006).

Kim (2008) in his quest to understand and predict consumers' behaviours suggested that relationship quality is a significant predictor of consumers' behavioural outcomes. He argues that better relationship quality leads to higher sports' consumption. Bee and Kahle (2006) regarding relationship quality and long-term relationships claim that, when there is a congruence of values between the sports organization and those associated with him and the sport consumer, the relationship is destined to develop into a long-term one. Kahle (1996) reinforced the previous argument stating that when consumer's values are taken care of, relationships and marketing efforts are augmented. Also, Kahle (1996) using Kelman's framework claims that, when sports fans identify highly with a team, they support them regardless of their on-field performance.

The opportunity offered at sports organisations through relationship marketing to control sport consumers' attitudes explains their decision to integrate it at their marketing strategies. Moreover, the ability of social media platforms, which are relationship marketing tools, to reach consumers worldwide justifies their decision to use them as the principal tool in their quest of developing strong relationships (Filo, K., Lock, D., & Karg, A. (2015).

Brodie, Ilic, Juric and Hollebeek (2013) state that sports organizations must involve sports fans in the co-creation process to further reinforce their psychological engagement with the brand and in this process social media play a crucial role. The importance of psychological engagement of consumers in relationship marketing theory was stated also by Vivek, Beatty and Morgan (2012). Williams and Chinn (2010) further highlight the importance and relevance of social media in relationship marketing, claiming that they offer by their very nature the ability to fans to co-create content and develop communities, increasing engagement and interaction with the club.

2.2 Social Media

Nowadays, the main tool employed by organizations to build these relationships is social media. Social media is often referred to as new media. They have been defined as ‘the tools, platforms, and applications that enable consumers to connect, communicate and collaborate with others’ (Williams & Chinn, 2010, p. 422). High-speed Internet access has significantly affected their creation and their development (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012). As Stavros et al. (2014) pointed out, relationships are series of interactions and especially in the social media world, interactions, that are various and continuous, are the principal way of expressing motives and establishing value. The same authors argue that once organisations comprehend the underlying motives behind interactions, they will be able to manage the value created by these interactions. These interactions taking place in the online world by engaged sports fans can be transformed into monetary value. As Kim and Trail (2011) stated, media consumption impacts sponsorship deals and licenced product sales. Sports clubs with an active online fan base, attract sponsors. Thus, once sports clubs understand what is valuable to the fans in this interactive process, they will be in a position to attract and develop more engaged fans online and use that engagement for monetary reasons. This means using the highly engaged fan base as a negotiating factor to demand higher sponsorship deals.

Concerning the unique characteristics of social media, Parganas, Anagnostopoulos and Chadwick (2015) mention that, social media aid two-way communication and facilitate interaction and sharing of information between consumers and organizations. They are a direct and interactive tool allowing users to communicate without time disruptions (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015). The most unique characteristic of social media, however, is the ability they provide users to generate their content interacting along the process with the brand, meaning they use the firm to generate content congruent with their values and identity (Tuškej, Golob & Podnar, 2013). Thus, the newly created content will reflect their values and will also connect them with the brand. Moreover, another reason, why social media are a great marketing tool, is because they are free to use for all parties, encouraging interactivity, co-creation and customization and they offer channels for feedback (Shilbury, Westerbeek, Quick, Funk & Karg, 2014).

Abeza, O'Reilly and Reid (2013) have distinguished certain opportunities and threats deriving from social media. In the opportunities, they highlighted the ability to obtain insights into consumers' behaviour, to interact constantly and engage with consumers more effectively and lastly to allocate resources optimally. In the threats, they mentioned the low level of control over the communication process, the lack of knowledge regarding their credibility and effectiveness and finally, the struggle of identifying real customers. Regarding social media use, Filo, Lock & Karg (2015) stated that interaction can happen during multiple stages of the social media consumption process, "including information search, decision-making, word of mouth, and the acquisition, use, and disposal of products and services" (p. 166). This opportunity offered by social media platforms to consumers to interact during multiple stages of media consumption process enhances consumer's experience (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012). Vale and Fernandes (2018) have also highlighted the dynamic, real-time nature of social media and the large-scale interaction between organizations and consumers. Social media ability to facilitate word-of-mouth is one more reason that they are employed by brands (Tuškej, Golob & Podnar, 2013). However, as Hopkins (2013) argued, each social media platform has its unique characteristics for building relationships and approaching consumers.

Another reason for the overwhelming embrace of consumers towards social media is the ability offered by social media to them to co-create content, empowering them (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Moreover, due to the digital revolution and smartphones becoming available to a large group of the population, consumers gained access to social media applications and subsequently engaged in online communities (Stavros et al., 2014).

There is a consensus that social media affect brands in various aspects. Social media dominance has not affected only the way companies' approach social media but also has altered enormously the way people communicate, share information and make decisions (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015). One could say, though, that social media's rising significance in consumers' lives has caused the gradual integration of social media in the branding strategy of companies. This argument is supported by Filo, Lock and Karg (2015), who claim that their proliferation in today's world justifies the time and money investment of sports

brands in social media. Witkemper, Lim and Waldburger (2012) highlight that social media is an essential tool used by sports clubs and athletes to reach fans.

Social media, due to their digital nature, they do not face the geographical barriers traditional media do, offering brands the opportunity to engage with fans worldwide (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015) and even segment regionally the fans regarding their relational activities (Stavros, et al., 2014). According to Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick (2015), social media can also aid sports brands' quest for creating a more durable brand image, as social media can be employed to influence perceptions and attitudes. One reason for that is that social media provide the space for a direct, personal and engaging communication with fans, aiding in the building of a community and the creation of a unique brand identity (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015). Hence they are ideal for sports organizations, which rely heavily on fandom, as they offer sports fans means to engage with their favourite teams and clubs, express their affiliation to them and strengthen their relationship to the team (McCarthy et al., 2014; Stavros et al., 2014). Social media place consumers in a central role in the creation of content and offer a dynamic and interactive environment (Krishnamurthy & Dou, 2008).

Sports industry possesses some significant competitive advantages, due to social media unique characteristics, over other business sectors. Sports fans are emotionally-tied to the teams and sports clubs are known for their mass popularity (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015). One can realise why the sports industry is the ideal business environment for the employment of social media strategies to engage fans and build long-term relationships. A notion that also Stavros et al. (2014) share, stating that social media provide a unique context to enhance fans sports experiences and identities. Sports fans also, due to the dominance of social media nowadays, anticipate sports brands to reach and interact with them through social media channels. (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015). Football clubs, known for their extreme commercial attractiveness, such as Manchester United and Real Madrid, have shown the way to the rest. They have employed social media practices to further promote their brands. They constantly attempt to utilise social media platforms to their full effectiveness (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015), comprehending the opportunities they offer for communication, interaction and engagement.

The accessibility of users to smartphones and their access into social media platforms provided sports marketers with the ideal foundation to create effective

marketing strategies, as numerous demographic groups have become technologically savvy (Meadows-Klue, 2008). The power of consumers to generate content created the term “prosumers” (Williams & Chinn, 2010). Prosumers can share their opinions, radical ideas and reviews in the social media world (Williams & Chinn, 2010). The feeling of empowerment and their eagerness to express their affiliation to the club and engage with it has increased fans’ value of the relationship with the sports clubs (Bee & Kahle, 2006; Williams & Chinn, 2010). Hence, Pfahl et al. (2012) and Williams and Chinn (2010) have called sports organizations to benefit from the new opportunities offered to them by social media, to achieve relationship marketing goals, such as creating long-term relationships. Opportunities like measuring online communities, fans increased engagement and interaction with the club.

Research has shown that consumers are motivated by the feeling of enjoyment of using social media and react positively to sport organisations efforts to employ social media platforms to reach them (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015). This is adding to the statement of Kim and Trail (2011) claiming that the very nature of the sport product provides the ideal foundation for relationship marketing to flourish. A reason being, the unparalleled passion (Vallerand et al, 2008) and loyalty (Richelieu, 2004) of sports fans, consisting two of the main motivations for engaging with the team. McCarthy et al. (2014) and Williams and Chinn (2010) recognize, as well, the unique opportunity, due to the inherent characteristics of sports clubs, to take advantage of the engagement dynamic of social media. Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann (2014) also encourage teams to engage with fans online, as it can raise the levels of fans’ associating with a community (social embeddedness). Stavros et al. (2014) focus on the opportunity created by social media consumption to create fans identification with the team and to provide an environment for effective interaction outside the stadium’s premises. According to Yan (2011) social media applications, due to their nature to offer a direct link to customers, they facilitate the process of building positive brand associations. Parganas, Anagnostopoulos and Chadwick (2015) also highlighted social media’s ability to build strong-tied relationships between fans and teams, stating that strategic communication of team’s unique characteristic raises fans engagement with the team. Also, the same authors argue that according to industry reports, social media influence fans attachment with the team and by extension club’s revenues. A reason being the ground-breaking ways offered to the clubs by social media to enhance fans

experiences, to effectively interact with them reinforcing their ties to the club and to penetrate new markets (Stavros et al., 2014).

2.3 Team Identification

In the previous two sections it was explained, firstly the importance of the concept of relationship marketing in engaging, interacting and building long-term relationships with fans/consumers and secondly the crucial role social media play in relationship marketing. In this section, it will be elaborated the concept of team identification and its relation to social media and relationship marketing.

Runyan et al. (2009) attempted to find the reasons that drive identification with a specific team. According to the same authors, social identity theory provides the theoretical foundation to answer the previous question. Also Tuškej, Golob and Podnar (2013) mention that the majority of definitions, regarding consumers' identification, use social identity theory as the theoretical framework, who has its foundation in social psychology. Identification is defined as the oneness or belongingness with an entity (Runyan et al., 2009). It is an overlap between consumers' self-schema and the organization's schema (Runyan et al., 2009). As Aaker (1997) highlights, the brand provides the foundation for the customer to express oneself through the brand.

Concerning identification and relevant to the theories mentioned above are two theories attempting to also explain the reasons for the identification process. Identity takes on two elements (Shamir, 1992). The first, named as self-identity, represents the degree to which the participant has incorporated the activity into his or her self-concept (Green, 2001). The second named as social identity represents the degree to which the participant perceives that others identify him or her with the activity (Green, 2001). The level of consumer-brand identification will match the level that a brand expresses and enhances consumers' identity (Kim et al., 2001, p. 196). Tuškej, Golob & Podnar (2013), though, warn brand managers to be constantly alerted as to whether perceived brand values are congruent with consumers' values, as brand identification and its antecedents could alter in an irregular manner (Lam et al., 2013).

As Bhattacharya et al. (1995) and Tajfel and Turner (1985) mention, social categories of customers, such as demographic characteristics, work relationships and team association, influence consumers' social identity. People in their journey to achieve self-definitional needs in combination with the massive impact of organizations and brands play in consumers' lives, as Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) and Mittal (2006) point out, they are increasingly identifying with teams and brands. This inclination of fans to identify with sports brands and the increasing sports teams' retail sales of products carrying their logo, has driven firms to attempt to associate themselves and create partnerships with sports teams (Runyan et al., 2009). The reason is that they anticipate fans positive feelings towards sports brands to be transmitted onto their brands.

Fan identification concept is not new for the sports marketing industry (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2014). As Bhattacharya et al. (1995) and Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann (2014) argue, fans' identification with a club is resulting into higher match attendance, purchase of product merchandise, team support and increasing spending (Lichtenstein et al., 2004). Scholars have also recognized that consumer's identification influences a wide range of elements, such as purchasing behaviour, brand preference, consumer loyalty, the feeling of belongingness to a community, positive word of mouth and consumers' willingness to pay a price premium (Tuškej, Golob & Podnar, 2013). Hence, identification is considered from sports markets as one of the most crucial factors for fan retention (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2014). Teams are focusing their marketing practices into fans that strongly identify with the club (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2014). Those fans are called "brand champions" and the reason is that they are extremely loyal, but most importantly they express their love to others (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2014). Thus, the evaluation of fans relationship quality and identification with the club is massively important (Kim & Trail, 2011). Teams that develop the ability to comprehend what drives identification with the brand, will gain a significant competitive advantage, as they will raise the levels of fans' identification with the club and whatever that implies, as it was mentioned above (Runyan, Carlson, Donovan & Cumiskey, 2009).

Research has also revealed, that individuals' personality characteristics are impacting fans' identification with the club (Donovan, Carlson & Zimmerman, 2005). As Belk (1988) argues, consumers associate with brands that can aid them in their

quest to achieve their values and ideal selves. According to Bee & Kahle (2006) and Carlson et al. (2009), previous research has revealed that consumers have an ideal self-image and they associate with brands that will increase their self-esteem. For this reason, Bee and Kahle (2006) suggest that sports brands should always attempt to level the consumers' targeted values to their values. Fans self-connection with a brand provides the foundation for the creation of durable team-fan relationships (Karjaluoto, Munnukka & Salmi, 2016). In accordance to the previous authors, Stevens and Rosenberger (2012) mention that previous research has discovered that the fans who perceive that their self-identity and the team's identity are congruent are more loyal to their team.

Every sport, like every other subculture, has its unique values and beliefs and as a fan adopts them, his identity becomes more tied to that subculture Green (2001). Bee and Kahle (2006) reinforce the previous statement mentioning that the more congruent sports organization's values are to the ones of fans the more possible is to create a long-term relationship with them. Kahle (1996) has also proved that relationship and marketing activities are more successful when consumers' values are taken care of. Tuškej, Golob & Podnar (2013) argue that the intangible organization's characteristics, such as brand values, are the most crucial motivations for consumer-brand identification. Each organization must ensure that it integrates into the marketing strategy all the values their target groups consider as essential (Bee & Kahle, 2006).

Another reason why consumers associate with brands is that they consider them to have various personalities (Aaker, 1997), just like humans. As Aaker (1997, p. 347) further explains, brand personality is "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand". Sports teams are known for their brand personality (Runyan et al., 2009). Brand personality, as Aaker (1997) and Runyan et al. (2009) state, has an immediate impact in the teams' prestige, distinctiveness and attraction, hence it impacts also fans' identification with the team, game attendance and spectatorship and retail spending (Kwon and Armstrong, 2002). Prestige and distinctiveness were also recognized by Bhattacharya et al. (1995, 2003) and Holt (1995) as two characteristics that predict fan's identification. As Runyan et al. (2009) mention, consumers strive to create a distinct and unique identity by associating to a group, a subculture. Hence, as the same authors claim, teams should demonstrate through communication practices

their prestige and distinctiveness, as this leads to fans stronger identification with the team and consequently higher retail spending in team's products and increasing game attendance.

An attractive team personality leads to fans identifying and devoting more time on the team, increasing engagement. According to Jafarnejad et al. (2012), brand personality is the foundation for the development of the consumer-organization relationship. Fetchko et al. (2013, p. 42) argue that for a strongly identified person, being a fan is closely linked to self-identity. A distinct brand personality is vital for a sports brand to achieve its financial goals (Kuenzel and Halliday, 2010), as fans strive to associate with a group with a unique and distinct personality. One reason is that consumers are transmitting the positive characteristics of teams, such as prestige and distinctiveness, back to them (Runyan et al., 2009). Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sen (2012) argue that the level of identification with a brand is related to brand-self-similarity, distinctiveness, and prestige.

Fans who are ingrained in a network, such as a football club, will have a deeper identification with the team/brand (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2014). The previous claim is supported by Albert & Merunka (2013) as well, which state that consumer's brand love relies on both brand identification and identification with other customers. Fans desire to interact inside online communities, sharing a spirit of camaraderie that further strengthen their identification with the team (Stavros et al., 2014). Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann (2014) encourage organizations to take advantage of brand communities, as they can strengthen social relationships between consumers' community and the customer and the brand, hence reinforcing the social embeddedness of customers. Sports fans relationships, tend to be long-term because they are based on deeply held beliefs also adopted by the sports team or individual players (Bee & Kahle, 2006). Ashforth and Mael (1989) highlight, as well, the unique relationship of sports fans with the team, stating that sports team's personality is fundamental to how they define themselves. Sports teams' brand personalities are much stronger than others (Smith et al., 2006) and the reason is that there are the fans emotional attachments that were also previously mentioned. Also, people identifying with a brand are psychologically attached to them and they are actively collaborating to the achievement of the organization's goals (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Tuškej, Golob & Podnar, 2013).

Fans desire to be regarded as fans and as Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick (2015) explain, fans want to identify with teams that are successful or desirable. Fans could participate in a subculture, either directly, indirectly or with a combination of both (Green, 2001). Direct participation consists either of physical participation in the activity or competition or could be on a virtual level, such as fantasy football leagues (Green, 2001). Indirect participation consists either of spectatorship, reading, engaging in a discussion or purchasing products (Green, 2001). Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1993) argued that consumers use products to represent one or more of their social identities.

Scholars mention that there is a lack of knowledge concerning the role of consumers' identification with a brand and the possible associations to consumer behaviour and branding (Tuškej, Golob & Podnar, 2013). According to Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann (2014), there have been numerous attempts to discover ways to measure fans' identification. Discovering the antecedents of fans' cognitive identification with clubs could shed light on this relationship (Karjaluoto, Munnukka & Salmi, 2016; Runyan, Carlson, Donovan & Cumiskey, 2009). Karjaluoto, Munnukka & Salmi (2016) also stress the special nature of sports brands and the possible differences in the antecedents that lead to consumers' identification.

2.4 Hypotheses- Conceptual model

The lack of knowledge and research, as stated in the introduction, regarding the motivations leading fans to engage with sports clubs on social media and consume sports-related content, specifically in football and on Instagram, has led to the creation of the following research question: *Which motivations lead football fans to engage with the team on Instagram?*. This research question aims to further develop our knowledge of the occurring psychological processes motivating football fans to interact with the sports club and to strive to consume sports-related media content.

As the theory explained, interactions are considered central to the relationship marketing process (Grönroos, 2004; Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015). During the interaction process, consumers are seeking to accomplish self needs continuously (Grönroos, 2004). Thus, interactions, which are various and continuous

in the social media world, are the principal way for sports fans to express their motives (Stavros et al., 2014). The motivations behind these interactions in football and on Instagram need further investigation. Pfahl et al. (2012) pointed out the knowledge gap on the psychological processes leading to the formation of consumption behaviours regarding relationship marketing efforts, such as the motivations for sports fans engagement and identification process with the sports club.

As it was suggested in the theoretical section, football fans are led by certain motivations to engage in the social media of sports clubs. Motivations, according to Rubin (1983), are the incentives that direct the public's decisions over media. Filo, Lock and Karg (2015) and Vale and Fernandes (2018) mention that, most researchers approach regarding the motivations for social media consumption is grounded on the Uses and Gratifications theory. As Whiting and Williams (2013) mentioned, Uses and Gratifications theory, which is widely used in the communications field, could significantly aid in the creation of accurate scales and measurement instruments for social media. They highlight the relevance of using U&G theory when investigating individuals' motivations for social media consumption. The idea behind the U&G theory is that people consume media that can facilitate them in their quest to accomplish their needs and achieve gratification (Lariscy, Tinkham & Sweetser, 2011).

Specifically, Vale and Fernandes (2018) combined McQuail's motivations for social media consumption, which were based on U&G theory, together with some other motivations found on literature to co-appear regularly with the ones mentioned by McQuail. The final motivations for social media consumption in sports are Information, Entertainment, Personal Identity, Integration and Social Interaction, Empowerment, Remuneration and Brand Love. Those motivations and the scales to measure them were adopted by the study of Vale and Fernandes (2018).

As Vale and Fernandes (2018) refer to these motivations, information is the need to access information from the brand and keeping up with the brand. Entertainment is referred to as the need for relaxation and escape from the daily routine through engaging with the brand. Personal Identity is referred to as the need of a consumer to construct his identity through self-expression and self-presentation by

demonstrating his personality and being recognised by people. Integration and Social Interaction is referred to as the need to belong to a community, to meet people sharing the same love and perception and to build relationships with them. Empowerment is referred to as the need to influence other members of the community and act as an influencer shaping views. Remuneration is the notion that consumers may engage with a brand to seize some gains, such as monetary compensation, prizes or giveaways. Lastly, Brand Love is the emotional attachment of a consumer to a brand.

Moreover, Vales and Fernandes (2018) distinguished social media consumption into three levels of engagement. Customer engagement behaviour (CEB) is defined by Van Doorn et al. (2010, p.254) as “customers’ behavioural manifestations toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational motivations”. The two authors used the Consumer’s Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRA) framework of Muntinga, Moorman and Smit and concluded on three categories to measure engagement, Consumption, Contribution and Creation. The items measuring the three levels of social media engagement were adopted as well in this study. The scales measuring the three types of engagement developed by Vales and Fernandes (2018) were adjusted to match the functionality of Instagram, which has certain differences to Facebook. Despite engagement being a common characteristic of every community of social media (Vale and Fernandes, 2018), each social media platform has its unique characteristics for building relationships and approaching consumers (Hopkins, 2013). Hence, after adjusting the scales and after conducting data analysis, the results have indicated that engagement in Instagram is realized in different ways to Facebook. Thus, following the interpretation of results, which will be explained in detail in the methodology section, and since this research is partly exploratory in nature, engagement was measured in three new levels, namely Light, Considerable and Deep, in comparison to Consuming, Contributing and Creation.

Every football fan has different motivations for engaging with the football team and consuming sports-related content on Instagram and also different levels of engagement. This study will investigate which motivations influence each of the three levels of engagement to conclude on which are the most important motivations for each level and subsequently attempting to predict and control football fans engagement. The hypotheses to test the above are:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The need for (a) Information, (b) Entertainment, (c) Personal Identity, (d) Integration and Social Interaction, (e) Empowerment, (f) Remuneration and (g) Brand Love influences Light engagement with a football club on Instagram.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The need for (a) Information, (b) Entertainment, (c) Personal Identity, (d) Integration and Social Interaction, (e) Empowerment, (f) Remuneration and (g) Brand Love influences Considerable engagement with a football club on Instagram.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The need for (a) Information, (b) Entertainment, (c) Personal Identity, (d) Integration and Social Interaction, (e) Empowerment, (f) Remuneration and (g) Brand Love influences Deep engagement with a football club on Instagram.

The theory also suggested that team identification with a sports club impact fans engagement with the team. Additionally, identification is considered from sports marketers as one of the most crucial factors for fan retention (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2014). Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sen (2012) argue also that the level of identification with a brand is related to the brand–self-similarity. Fans self-connection with a brand provides the foundation for the creation of durable team-fan relationships (Karjaluoto, Munnukka & Salmi, 2016). Bee and Kahle (2006) reinforce the previous statement mentioning that the more congruent sports organization’s values are to the ones of fans the more possible is to create a long-term relationship with them. Fans who are ingrained in a network, such as a football club, will have a deeper identification with the team/brand (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2014).

Due to the aforementioned reasons and the literature review regarding fans’ team identification, it was thought that team identification could be a predictor of engagement with a team and subsequently a motivation for sports media consumption of content related to that team. Identification is defined as the oneness or belongingness with an entity, an overlap between consumers’ self-schema and the organization’s schema (Runyan et al., 2009). To measure fans’ team identification, it was adopted the scale of Runyan et al. (2009).

Thus the following hypotheses were formed, regarding team identification to explore the research question developed:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Team identification influences Light engagement with a football club on Instagram.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Team identification influences Considerable engagement with a football club on Instagram.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Team identification influences Deep engagement with a football club on Instagram.

The conceptual model below visualizes the hypotheses, based on the literature review and the research question developed.

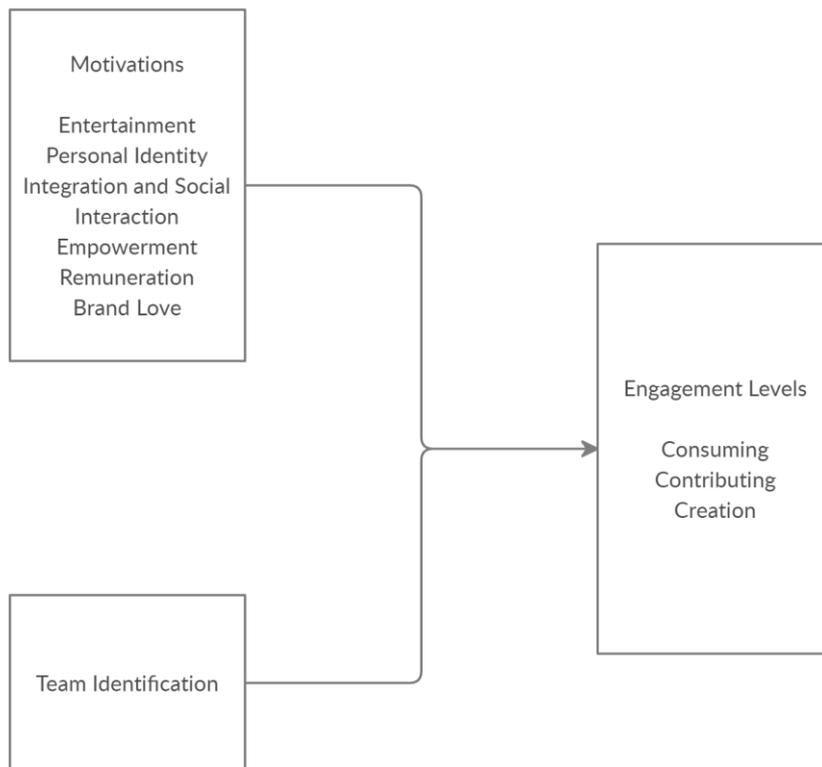


Figure 1. Conceptual model for sports media consumption' motivations, level of engagement and identification of football fans with a football team.

3. Methodology

In this section, the research design will be explained and the decision of the research method will be justified. Furthermore, the operationalization process and sampling will be discussed. Lastly, it will be described how validity and reliability were ensured in this research.

3.1 Research design

The research method that it was considered as the best way to conduct this research was quantitative research and survey research in particular. One reason is that as Punch (2003) has mentioned, at the centre of quantitative research is the concept of the relationship between variables. The researcher may establish relationships between the variables, which could not be found otherwise (Punch, 2003). As in this case, it is investigated the possible relation of the antecedents of sports fans' and the type of engagement they have with the sports club. Also, how sports fans' identification may relate to the antecedents and the level of engagement. Quantitative research attempts to shed light on how the world works (Punch, 2003) and it is theory-driven. As Ragin and Amoroso (1994) state, quantitative research is about compressing the data to see the "big picture". In quantitative research, the researcher understands the world as variables, which interconnect, and he attempts to understand these complex relationships (Punch, 2003). Thus, qualitative research would not be appropriate for the research question developed. Qualitative research is more fluid, less structured and it is interested in subjective understanding of the world (Lawrence, 2014). Qualitative research aims mostly on creating new concepts and theoretical interpretations rather than testing the theory, as in this study.

Another reason for choosing quantitative research is because, with quantitative research and survey, in particular, huge amounts of data can be gathered and thus predictions can be made. Moreover, due to the theory-driven nature of this method, researchers are in a position to confirm if the theory applies to each case (Babbie, 2016). Once again, qualitative research would not be appropriate, as normally in this

kind of research the scope is the individual and researchers cannot generalize their results for the population.

Another benefit of the survey, especially regarding the research question developed, is its appropriateness when beliefs and behaviours of people are to be studied (Lawrence, 2014). Also, as Sapsford (2007) highlights, surveys are not solely about describing populations, but also about drawing conclusions and making comparisons between groups of people. In surveys, many questions can be asked, thus many variables and numerous hypotheses can be tested simultaneously in one questionnaire (Lawrence, 2014). Hence, conclusions on fans' motivations and their level of engagement with the sports club, as well as the role of fans' identification with the sports club in this relationship can surface.

In this research specifically, an online survey was decided to be the research method used, as the most appropriate for the current circumstances. Online survey provides the researcher with the ability to reach a huge population quickly, without any significant cost per respondent and with a high response cycle rate (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Andrews, Nonnecke & Preece, 2007). The goal, in this case, was to reach football fans worldwide of different demographic backgrounds, in a relatively short time, that are also Instagram users. Thus, an online survey seemed the ideal research method to approach people using social media apps. Lastly, convenience was another reason for choosing this technique (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Respondents have as much time as they need to respond. Anonymity is guaranteed and they do not have any psychological pressure as the researcher is absent. They are able to fill the questionnaire or return to it, when it is more convenient for them, ensuring they fill the questions accurately, raising the validity of the research (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

3.2 Sample- Data collection

This research investigated a specific target population, thus the respondents would have to meet certain criteria set. The unit of analysis of this research was football fans, owning an Instagram account and following their favourite team on that social media app. These three factors were necessary conditions for anyone willing to

participate in this survey. There were not any other conditions of demographic, social or any other nature.

Due to the nature of this research and the specific target population needed, it was thought that the optimal way to reach the desired target group would be with a combination of probability and nonprobability convenience sampling. Probability sampling was justified since there was an equal chance for everyone to respond to the questionnaire (Taherdoost, 2016), as it was spread through social media, specifically Facebook and Instagram. Convenience sampling was chosen, as there were limited time and resources at the possession of the researcher (Lawrence, 2014). Distributing the questionnaire online through social media was the most convenient mean (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Thus, it was decided that the best way to reach the target population described above would be by spreading the questionnaire on Facebook and Instagram. Specifically, the questionnaire with a short description of what the research was about and the criteria needed to participate was distributed as a comment under posts of Facebook and Instagram of football groups, major football teams' official pages, national leagues' official pages and social media pages of huge sports media, like Sky sports. This way proved to be fruitful and the researcher was able to increase diversity, as football fans of all kinds of demographic groups could be reached.

The questionnaire was active for 22 days, from the 1st of May to the 22nd of May. During that period 377 people responded to the questionnaire. However, many of them did not complete all the questions of the questionnaire and some of them did not pass the filter questions. Data from 161 respondents (N= 161) was analysed in SPSS regarding the hypotheses developed. More information on the descriptive statistics will follow on the results chapter.

3.3 Operationalization- Measurements

The conceptualization process was in accordance to the advice of Punch (2003) regarding the quantitative survey research, focusing on the objectives and the research question, which according to the author are the most important aspects. These two assisted in distinguishing which variables were vital in that particular

research. At this point, the variables defined previously were connected to a set of measurement techniques (Lawrence, 2014).

In the current survey, it was decided to adopt existing measurement techniques. Punch (2003) has encouraged researchers conducting quantitative survey research to use already established measuring instruments either totally or partially. This is based on the notion that established major variables can measure accurately, what the research aims to measure initially. Especially in cases, such as this one, where the researcher is not experienced enough to develop his measuring instruments. Furthermore, standardization is at the centre of survey research (Sapsford, 2007). Standardization ensures consistency in the data that is gathered and accuracy in what it is intended to be measured, thus employing established measurements achieves standardization. Hence, the survey used established instruments to achieve higher validity.

The survey was created in Qualtrics. It is an online tool to design surveys. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. It is in accordance with the reasons for developing an online survey, as Qualtrics provides with many different ways to distribute the survey online. In this case, the anonymous link was used to spread the survey. More on the distribution are explained in the section of sampling. Lastly, the use of Qualtrics made the gathering and extraction of data to SPSS extremely convenient, the tool that was selected for the Data Analysis. More on SPSS is explained in the Data Analysis section.

3.3.1 Filter questions

Firstly, the survey involved some filter questions, regarding whether the respondents met the criteria planned to be involved in the survey. The criteria were three. Firstly, to be a football fan, secondly to own an Instagram account and lastly, to follow their favourite football team on Instagram.

3.3.2 Demographics

Demographics, as it was mentioned in the theory section, could play a role in consumers' social identity and could influence their motivations and the level of engagement with the football team, as well as possibly their identification to that team. Hence, demographic variables, such as gender, age, education level and location, were included in the questionnaire. These four demographic variables were also included in the regression analysis as control variables to check whether demographics factors could account for possible relations between football fans engagement motivations and engagement levels. Gender variable was measured using three singular answer choices, Male, Female and Prefer not to answer. Age variable was measured using eight choices, Under 18, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-65, 65-74, 75-84 and 85 or older. Education variable was measured using five choices, Less than high school, High School graduate, Bachelor degree, Master's degree and Doctorate. Lastly, Location variable was measured using 10 singular answer choices, North America/ Central America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, Caribbean Islands, Pacific Islands, Other and Prefer not to say. However, Age and Location variables were recoded into two categories, "non-female" and "female" and "non-European" and "European" respectively, in order to keep the regression analysis easy to interpret. For example, if gender is significant and positive, it would mean that females are more engaged than men, as non-female are coded as 1 and female as 2. The same applies for Location variable, if it is significant and positive, it would mean that Europeans are more engaged than non-Europeans, as non-Europeans are coded as 1 and Europeans as 2.

3.3.3 Independent variables- Football Fans Media Consumption Motivations and Team Identification

The main independent variable is the motivations for social media use, in this case of football clubs' Instagram. As it was mentioned in the hypotheses section, it was adopted the scale developed by Vale and Fernandes (2018) to measure this

variable, based on the advice of Punch (2003) to utilize established measuring instruments in quantitative survey research. They formed a scale that consists of eight motivations leading to social media consumption. They combined the categorisation of U&G motivations developed by McQuail together with some other motivations that they found in the literature to co-appear regularly with the ones mentioned by McQuail. The final scale of motivations for social media consumption in sports is Information, Entertainment, Personal Identity, Integration and Social Interaction, Empowerment, Remuneration and Brand Love.

The motivations for sports media consumption were all measured on a 7-point scale as in the study of Vale and Fernandes (2018). Similarly, the items measuring each of the motivations were not altered from the scale adopted from Vale and Fernandes (2018). The scale for the motivations for sports media consumption ranged from “strongly disagree”, being the lowest level of agreement, to “strongly agree”, being the highest level of agreement to the statements. Since the scales measuring motivations were not altered from the ones of Vale and Fernandes (2018), factor analysis was not conducted on the scales. Reliability analysis was conducted on each of the motivations to ensure the reliability of the results.

Information was measured with 4 items. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Information is moderately reliable with a Cronbach’ alpha of .60. It was measured by using items, such as: “The sport-related information is useful”. Entertainment was measured with 4 items. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Entertainment is reliable with a Cronbach’ alpha of .80. It was measured by using items, such as: “It arouses my emotions and feelings”. Personal Identity was measured with 3 items. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Personal Identity is reliable with a Cronbach’ alpha of .85. It was measured by using items, such as: “I want to express what kind of person I am”. Integration and Social Interaction was measured with 4 items. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Integration and Social Interaction is reliable with a Cronbach’ alpha of .73. It was measured by using items, such as: “It makes me feel less lonely”. Empowerment was measured with 4 items. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Empowerment is reliable with a Cronbach’ alpha of .88. It was measured by using items, such as: “I want to influence other people”. Remuneration was measured with 4 items. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Remuneration is not reliable

with a Cronbach' alpha of .55. It was measured by using items, such as: "I want to get a better service". However, reliability analysis indicated that Cronbach's alpha could increase to .62, by deleting the item "I am able to obtain information I want without any delay". Thus that item was deleted, increasing Cronbach's alpha for Remuneration to .62 making the scale moderately reliable. Brand Love was measured with 4 items. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Brand Love is reliable with a Cronbach' alpha of .79. It was measured by using items, such as: "I'm motivated to participate in the community because I'm passionate about the sports club". The reliability analyses results for motivations for sports media consumption mentioned above are presented in Table 3.3.3.

Each motivation was measured individually and in relation to the three levels of engagement, Light, Considerable and Deep, that replaced Consuming, Contributing and, Creation, the results of which will be further elaborated on the results section. The score in the linkage of each motivation with the engagement levels will reveal which motivations are the most important in driving fans engagement with the football teams on Instagram.

Another independent variable mentioned in theory as possibly having a relation with the motivations leading sports fans to engage on Instagram with the sports clubs is team identification. To measure sports fans' identification with the sports club, it was used the scale of Runyan et al. (2009). A two-item unidimensional scale capturing identification. The scale for the team identification ranged from "far apart", being the lowest level of identification with the team, to "complete overlap", being the highest level of identification with the team. Reliability analysis was conducted on the two items of the scale to ensure the reliability of the results. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Team Identification is reliable with a Cronbach' alpha of .88. It was measured by using items, such as: "Please indicate which case (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, or H) best describes the level of overlap between your own and your team's identities". The score in the linkage of team identification and each engagement level will reveal if team identification is positively influencing engagement. The reliability analyses results for Team Identification mentioned above are presented in Table 3.3.3.

Table 3.3.3. Reliability analyses for Motivations (N=161) for sports media consumption and Team Identification (N=161).

Motivations	Cronbach' s α
Information	.60
Entertainment	.80
Personal Identity	.85
Integration & Social Interaction	.73
Empowerment	.88
Remuneration	.62
Brand Love	.79
Team Identification	.88

3.3.4 Dependent variable- Football fans social media engagement

The dependable variable measured in this study is Instagram engagement. After attempting to find why sports fans engage with the sports club, it is attempted to discover which levels of engagement relate to each motivation and to what extent. Vale and Fernandes (2018), based on the Consumer's Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRA) framework of Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, they conclude on three instruments to measure the type and the level of engagement of sports fans with the sports organization, Consumption, Contribution and Creation.

Consumption is the lowest level of engagement, limited to the passive viewing of brand-related posts, consuming content and reading others reviews. Contribution is the middle level of engagement, consisting of the interacting with the brand or other users, liking, commenting or sharing, but the individual is not involved in the creation of that content. Creation is regarded as the maximum level of engagement, where the individual is creating content, sharing it online and co-developing brand-related content, such as uploading pictures or videos relating to the brand or using hashtags.

However, the items for the scales adopted from Vale and Fernandes (2018), to measure the type and levels of sports media engagement on Instagram were slightly adjusted to meet the needs of the current research. The reason was that the study of the two authors measured those three variables on Facebook, which despite being a social media platform, has certain differences in functionality to Instagram.

Concerning the type of sports media engagement, each type was measured on a 7-point scale as Vale and Fernandes (2018). The items measuring each type of engagement were adjusted, as the initial items were not sufficient concerning Instagram functionality. Consuming ended with eight items comparing to the four items of the scale adopted from the previously mentioned authors. Contribution ended with five items comparing to the initial four items. Creating ended with six items comparing to the initial four items of the scale adopted. The scale to measure engagement was ranging from “never”, being the lowest level of frequency, to “always”, being the highest level of frequency.

Factor analysis was conducted to investigate the usefulness of the scales in measuring engagement. 19 items which measured engagement were entered into the factor analysis using Principal Components extraction with Varimax rotation based on Eigenvalues (> 1.00), $KMO = .91$, $\chi^2 (N = 161, 171) = 1803.62$, $p < .001$. The resultant model explained 63.0% of the variance in engagement. However, even though factor analysis distinguished the items into three components, as it was already expected, there were many items that factor analysis showed that they belong to other components than they were originally thought to belong. This has led to the belief that engagement in Instagram is not realized in the same way as on Facebook. Thus, after interpreting the results, deleting the items with a factor loading lower than .60 and reassigning the items to the components factor analysis has shown they belong, it surfaced a pattern between the items. Reliability analysis was conducted to the newly formed levels of engagement, namely Light, Considerable and Deep.

The Light engagement was measured with 6 items. Light engagement is the first stage of engagement in Instagram, mostly passive and with low-level user participation. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Light engagement is reliable with a Cronbach' alpha of .87. It was measured by using items, such as: “I view photos posted by the sports club on Instagram”. The Considerable engagement

was measured with 4 items. Considerable engagement is the second stage of engagement in Instagram, more active and with higher user participation. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Considerable engagement is reliable with a Cronbach' alpha of .82. It was measured by using items, such as: "I comment on pictures or videos posted by the sports club on Instagram". Lastly, Deep engagement was measured with 6 items. Deep engagement is the third and last stage of engagement in Instagram, extremely active with high user partition and contribution. The reliability analysis showed that the scale for Deep engagement is reliable with a Cronbach' alpha of .91. It was measured by using items, such as: "I upload personal pictures or videos related to the sports club on the feed or on my stories on Instagram". The three levels of engagement cannot overlap and could be described as stepwise. This statement relies on the means of each scale and the content of the items for each scale. The mean of Light engagement is 5.61, 3.10 of Considerable engagement and 2.76 of Deep Engagement with the highest agreement to each item of the engagement scales being 7 on the Likert scale. This shows, as it was expected, that fewer people would be deeply engaged compared to the ones lightly engaging with the team on Instagram. Moreover, someone that highly agrees with statements such as "I upload pictures or videos related to the sports club on my stories on Instagram", an item of Deep engagement scale, obviously has crossed Light engagement level, which could be described by items such as "I view photos posted by the sports club. The final Factor loadings of individual items into each component and the reliability analyses results are presented in the Table 3.3.4 below.

Table 3.3.4. Factor loading and reliability analyses for the three levels of engagement, namely Low, Medium, High (N=161)

Items	Light	Considerable	Deep
I view photos posted by the sport club on Instagram.	.840		
I watch videos posted by the sport club on Instagram.	.806		
I read the description accompanying the content posted by the sport club on Instagram.	.745		

I view the stories posted by the sport club on Instagram.	.768		
I 'like' content posted by the sport club on Instagram.	.732		
I respond to polls, questions, quizzes, slide bars or live stories set by the sport club on Instagram.	.664		
I receive and view notifications when the sport club posts pictures or videos, uploads stories, uploads IGTV videos or live videos.	.769		
I follow hashtags used from the sport club on posts' description or on stories on Instagram.	.666		
I comment on pictures or videos posted by the sport club on Instagram.	.657		
I comment my personal opinion on others' posts or stories related to the sport club on Instagram.	.611		
I share content posted by the sport club on Instagram Direct.	.655		
I share content posted by the sport club on my Instagram stories.	.739		
I upload posts related to the sport club on Instagram.	.772		
I upload pictures or videos related to the sport club on my Instagram stories.	.851		
I upload personal pictures or videos related to the sport club on the feed or on my stories on Instagram.	.813		
I add labels or hashtags on my posts' description or on my stories related to the sport club on Instagram.	.729		
Cronbach' s α	.87	.82	.91
Eigenvalue	2.56	1.13	8.27

3.4 Data analysis

After the data was collected, it was exported from Qualtrics and it was loaded into SPSS software to perform statistical analysis. The data was cleaned, by removing the incomplete questionnaires resulting in 161 respondents (N=161).

Reliability Analysis was conducted for each scale measuring motivation for sports media consumption and team identification. After the results of Reliability Analyses were accepted, the scales measuring motivations and team identification were computed. Concerning the dependent variable of engagement, Factor Analysis was conducted. As it was explained earlier, after interpreting the results, items with a Factor loading of less than .60 were deleted and the items were reassigned into the newly formed levels of engagement. Then, reliability analysis followed to ensure the reliability of the newly formed scales and after the results were accepted, the three scales measuring engagement were computed. A multiple regression analysis was run, with motivations for sports media consumption, team identification and the four demographic questions (gender, age, education level and location) as independent variables and engagement levels as the dependent variable, to test the hypotheses mentioned in the theoretical section. The demographics were included in the regression analysis, as it was mentioned earlier, as control variables. However, Gender variable and Location variable were transformed into two categories, “non-female” and “female” and “non-European” and “European” respectively to maintain the regression analysis easy to interpret, as it was mentioned in the 3.3.2 section. Lastly, descriptive statistics were conducted to offer some insight into the distribution of age, gender, education level and location of the sample.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

According to Lawrence (2014), Matthews and Ross (2010) and Sapsford (2007), validity in a quantitative survey is achieved when the researcher can accurately measure with a question what was originally designed to measure. In this case, by validity, it is meant the measurement validity. Since in a quantitative study the

researcher tests theory in real life, validity works as the indicator that the conceptualization and the operationalization of an idea are a close fit for the specific purpose and definition (Lawrence, 2014). Furthermore, as Punch (2003) has highlighted, researchers are advised, when conducting a quantitative survey, to use established measuring instruments either totally or partially. Especially when a researcher lacks the experience to develop his measuring instruments. The reason is that these steps ensure that the research will have a higher degree of validity. When researching formerly investigated variables, established scales, which are tested and proven, will ensure that the researcher will measure accurately what was initially intended to research. Standardization is at the centre of survey research (Sapsford, 2007) and is achieved by utilizing widely known and proved research collection tools, whose validity is scientifically proved. For the aforementioned reasons, the operationalization of the concepts of sports fans media engagement and football fans' motivations for media consumption, as well as the concept of fan identification with the sports club, developed in the theory section was based in two established scales, increasing the internal validity. Moreover, the distribution of the questionnaire online in Facebook and Instagram pages of numerous groups related to football ensured a non-biased data collection process, higher generalizability of findings and higher external validity. Lastly, control variables were included in the regression analysis model to ensure that the relations between dependent and independent variables are not affected by demographic biases.

Reliability is the notion that the scales used in the survey are consistently measuring accurately, what they are expected to measure and the different results are not based on the "characteristics of the measurement process or the measurement instrument itself" (Lawrence, 2014, p. 212). For this to happen, established scales were used, with slight adjustments to match the functionality of the social media app used. Those established measuring instruments, that have checked all the necessary factors to be considered reliable, will ensure that the concepts investigated in this research are measured accurately consistently.

4 Results

In this chapter are reported the results of the study. Firstly, descriptive statistics are presented. Then the results that were produced from the multiple regression analyses will be analyzed to test the hypotheses developed.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

After the data cleaning, the number of respondents that were analyzed for the hypothesis-testing was 161 ($N = 161$). From the 161 respondents, 137 (85.1%) were male and 23 (14.3%) were female. One respondent (0.6%) has chosen the option “prefer not to say”, but it was included in the multiple regression analysis.

The vast majority of the respondents, 75 of them, were ageing from 18 to 24 (46.6%). The second most frequent age category were people ageing from 25 to 34, 54 respondents (33.5%). The age groups of the respondents were ranging from the category Under 18 to the category 55-65.

Most of the respondents, 71 of them, have a bachelor’s degree level of education (44.1%). 45 of the respondents have a high school level of education (28.0%) and 38 have a master’s degree level of education (23.6%).

The majority of the respondents were located in Europe, 123 of them (76.4%). 14 of the respondents were located in Asia (8.7%), 11 in Africa (6.8%) and 7 in North or Central America (4.3%).

Concerning the motivations for sports media consumption, Brand Love has the highest average score from all the other motivations, with the average response being “agree” ($M = 5.73$). The second motivation with the highest average score was Information ($M = 5.65$), with the average response being “agree”. The third motivation with the highest average was Entertainment, with the average response being “somewhat agree” ($M = 5.38$).

At Table 4.1 are presented the correlations of the main variables and the control variables of the study. It shows which variables are significantly correlated

positively or negatively to the other variables of the model. Below will be presented only the correlations that are high, surprising or interesting.

There is a significant, moderate positive correlation between Information and Integration and Social Interaction ($r = 0.491$), Brand Love ($r = 0.455$) and Light Engagement ($r = 0.390$) with $p < 0.01$ in all cases. This means that the increase in the need for Information about a football team is moderately associated with the increase in the need for Integration and Social Interaction, Brand Love about a football team and also the Light Engagement with the team.

There is a significant, moderate positive correlation between Entertainment and Integration and Social Interaction ($r = 0.526$), Brand Love ($r = 0.532$), Light Engagement ($r = 0.373$) and Considerable Engagement ($r = 0.305$) with $p < 0.01$ in all cases. This means that the increase in the need for Entertainment is moderately associated with the increase in the need for Integration and Social Interaction, Brand Love and Light and Considerable Engagement with the football team on Instagram.

There is a significant, moderate positive correlation between Personal Identity and Integration and Social Interaction ($r = 0.457$), Empowerment ($r = 0.559$) and Considerable Engagement ($r = 0.309$) with $p < 0.01$ in all cases. This means that the increase in the need for Personal Identity is moderately associated with the increase in the need for Integration and Social Interaction, Empowerment and Considerable Engagement with the football team on Instagram.

There is a significant, moderate positive correlation between Integration and Social Interaction and Empowerment ($r = 0.578$), Brand Love ($r = 0.574$), Light Engagement ($r = 0.483$) and Considerable Engagement ($r = 0.405$) with $p < 0.01$ in all cases. This means that the increase in the need for Integration and Social Interaction is moderately associated with the increase in the need for Empowerment, Brand Love and Light and Considerable Engagement with the football team on Instagram.

There is a significant, moderate positive correlation between Empowerment and Brand Love ($r = 0.423$), Light Engagement ($r = 0.301$), Considerable Engagement ($r = 0.522$) and Deep Engagement ($r = 0.403$) with $p < 0.01$ in all cases. This means that the increase in the need for Empowerment is moderately associated with the increase in the need for Brand Love and Light, Considerable and Deep Engagement with the football team on Instagram.

There is a significant, moderate positive correlation between Remuneration and Light Engagement ($r = 0.326$) with $p < 0.01$. This means that the increase in Remuneration is moderately associated with the increase in Light with the football team on Instagram.

There is a significant, moderate positive correlation between Brand Love and Team Identification ($r = 0.372$), Light Engagement ($r = 0.489$), Considerable Engagement ($r = 0.338$) and Deep Engagement ($r = 0.352$) with $p < 0.01$ in all cases. This means that the increase in Brand Love is moderately associated with the increase in Team Identification and all the types of Engagement (Light, Considerable, and Deep) with the football team on Instagram.

There is a significant, moderate positive correlation between Team Identification and Light Engagement ($r = 0.272$) with $p < 0.01$. This means that the increase in Team Identification is moderately associated with the increase in Light Engagement with the football team on Instagram.

There is a significant, moderate positive correlation between Light Engagement and Considerable Engagement ($r = 0.379$) and Deep Engagement ($r = 0.343$) with $p < 0.01$ in all cases. This means that the increase in Light Engagement is moderately influencing the increase in Considerable and Deep Engagement with the football team on Instagram.

Lastly, there is a significant, moderate positive correlation between Considerable Engagement and Deep Engagement ($r = 0.664$) with $p < 0.01$. This means that the increase in Considerable Engagement is moderately influencing the increase in Deep Engagement with the football team on Instagram.

The control variables, as can be seen in table 4.1, do not have any important correlations with the main variables of the study.

Table 4.1 Correlations between main variables (N = 161)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	.393**	.305**	.491**	.333**	.029	.455**	.116	.390**	.187*	.195*	-0.136	-0.102	-0.093	-0.103
		.360**	.526**	.370**	.228**	.532**	.242*	.373**	.305**	.221**	-0.119	-0.074	-0.105	-.175*
			.457**	.559**	.326**	.284**	.145	.179*	.309**	.286**	-.249**	-0.135	0.087	-.170*
				.578**	.157*	.574**	.199*	.483**	.405**	.295**	-.226**	-0.111	-0.057	-.214**
					.379**	.423**	.225*	.301**	.522**	.403**	-.155*	-0.140	-0.079	-.229**
						.071	.138	.038	.326**	.160*	-0.009	0.029	0.040	-0.145
							.372*	.489**	.338**	.352**	-.167*	-.175*	-.176*	-0.098
								.272**	.099	.096	-0.060	-.191*	-0.069	-0.012
									.379**	.343**	-.233**	-0.104	-0.109	-0.078
										.664**	0.017	-0.122	-0.037	-.238**
											-0.135	-.221**	-0.018	-0.139
												.290**	-0.115	0.058
													0.043	0.090
														0.060

	M	SD
Information (1)	5.64	1.01
Entertainment (2)	5.38	1.16
Personal Identity (3)	3.76	1.74
Integration & Social Interaction (4)	5.26	1.27
Empowerment (5)	4.20	1.72
Remuneration (6)	3.49	1.65
Brand Love (7)	5.73	1.09
Team Identification (8)	4.75	1.76
Light Engagement (9)	5.61	1.25
Considerable Engagement (10)	3.10	1.61
Deep Engagement (11)	2.76	1.58
Age (12)	2.65	0.90
Education (13)	2.87	0.82
Gender (14)	1.14	0.35
Location (15)	1.76	0.43

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

4.2. Hypotheses-Testing

It was mentioned earlier, after the creation of the new variables to measure engagement in Instagram, that these hypotheses are partly exploratory, as Instagram has not been studied thoroughly. The results of the multiple regression analyses conducted to test the hypotheses can be seen also at Table 4.2.

Multiple linear regression was conducted to test the Hypotheses 1 and 4 with Light Engagement as the criterium and Information, Entertainment, Personal Identity, Integration and Social Interaction, Empowerment, Remuneration, Brand Love and Team Identification as predictors. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure there was no violation of the assumption of normality, linearity and multicollinearity, as it can be seen in Appendix B1. The model was found to be significant, $F(12, 148) = 6.72, p < .001, R^2 = .35$. Thus, this regression model is useful for predicting Light Engagement, however the predictive power is mediocre: 35% of the Light Engagement can be predicted based on the predictors mentioned above. Only Integration and Social Interaction ($\beta = .25, p < .05$) and Brand Love ($\beta = .19, p < .05$) were found to be a moderate significant predictor of Light Engagement. Hypothesis 1 is partly accepted, as only Integration and Social Interaction and Brand Love were found to moderately influence Light Engagement. Hypothesis 4 is rejected, as Team Identification was not found to influence Light Engagement.

Multiple linear regression was conducted to test the Hypotheses 2 and 5 with Considerable Engagement as the criterium and Information, Entertainment, Personal

Identity, Integration and Social Interaction, Empowerment, Remuneration, Brand Love and Team Identification as predictors. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure there was no violation of the assumption of normality, linearity and multicollinearity, as it can be seen in Appendix B2. The model was found to be significant, $F(12, 148) = 7.00, p < .001, R^2 = .36$. Thus, this regression model is useful for predicting Considerable Engagement, however, the predictive power is mediocre: 36% of the Considerable Engagement can be predicted based on the predictors mentioned above. Only Empowerment ($\beta = .35, p < .01$) and Remuneration ($\beta = .16, p < .05$) were found to be a moderate significant predictor of Considerable Engagement. Hypothesis 2 is partly accepted, as only Empowerment and Remuneration were found to moderately influence Considerable Engagement. Hypothesis 5 is rejected, as Team Identification was not found to influence Considerable Engagement.

Multiple linear regression was conducted to test the Hypotheses 3 and 6 with Deep Engagement as the criterium and Information, Entertainment, Personal Identity, Integration and Social Interaction, Empowerment, Remuneration, Brand Love and Team Identification as predictors. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure there was no violation of the assumption of normality, linearity and multicollinearity, as it can be seen in Appendix B3. The model was found to be significant, $F(12, 148) = 3.84, p < .001, R^2 = .24$. Thus, this regression model is useful for predicting Deep Engagement, however the predictive power is mediocre: 24% of the Deep Engagement can be predicted based on the predictors mentioned above. Only Empowerment ($\beta = .27, p < .05$) and Brand Love ($\beta = .27, p < .05$) were found to be a moderate significant predictor of Deep Engagement. Hypothesis 3 is partly accepted, as only Empowerment and Brand Love were found to moderately influence Deep Engagement. Hypothesis 6 is rejected, as Team Identification was not found to influence Deep Engagement.

Table 4.2. Regression model for predicting engagement (N=161)

	Standardized Regression Weights		
	Light b*	Considerable b*	Deep b*
Constant	1.973	.002	.945
Information	.144	-.063	-.016

Entertainment	0.71	.039	-.017
Personal Identity	-.109	-.020	.056
Integration and Social Interaction	.248*	.131	-.033
Empowerment	.025	.347***	.269*
Remuneration	-.025	.163*	.040
Brand Love	.195*	.159	.267*
Team Identification	.125	-.094	-.092
Age	-.147*	.152*	-.001
Education	.034	-.097	-.152
Gender	-.038	.040	.041
Location	.014	-.098	-.038
R²	0.353	0.362	0.238
Adjusted R²	0.300	0.310	0.176
F	6.719	7.000	3.842

***Significant at $p < .001$. **Significant at $p < .01$. *Significant at $p < .05$.

4.3. Control Variables

The control variables age, education, gender and location were included in the multiple regression analyses as independent variables to check if they influence the three levels of engagement. Only Age was found to be significant predictor for Light Engagement ($\beta = .27, p < .05$) and Considerable Engagement ($\beta = .27, p < .05$).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to shed further light in the motivations that lead football fans to engage with their favourite football team on Instagram but most importantly attempt to explain how engagement is realized and the different types that can describe it. Below, there will be summarized the findings of this study, the results of the hypotheses-testing will be interpreted, the theoretical and practical implications of the findings will be stated and lastly, the limitations of the current study will be explained and advice will be given for future research.

5.1 Summary and findings

The motivations mentioned in the theory together with team identification, which was believed based on the theory that may influence engagement, were tested in order to reveal if there is any influence towards the three types of Engagement found on Instagram and how this engagement is realized.

One of the main findings of this study is that Empowerment ($\beta = .368$) was found to be one of the four motivations leading to Instagram engagement with the football team. Empowerment, as it seems from the results, is mainly responsible for the two highest levels of Instagram engagement, Considerable and Deep engagement, in the football context. This is in accordance to the theory, which stated that consumers embraced social media, as they felt empowered, due to the options offered to them for high involvement, interactivity and co-creation with the brands (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Also, Williams and Chinn (2010) mentioned the empowerment of consumers that created the term prosumers, to describe the change in power, allows consumers to share their opinions, ideas and reviews in social media. It is interesting, yet understandable, that empowerment does not seem to influence the Light engagement, but only the two levels of engagement that demand more active participation and contribution from the user's side. The feeling of empowerment derives from the ability given to consumers in the digital era to co-create content, interact with others and the club and get involved in the public discourse sharing their opinion regarding the team. Hence, the actual participation and contribution by the user can only be

realized in the two later stages of engagement, as in Light engagement, the fan is mostly consuming content without actively participating. Also, Vales and Fernandes (2018) in their study for football fans' Facebook engagement and motivations, found Empowerment to be a motivation responsible for the second and third level of Facebook Engagement.

The second main finding of this study is that Brand Love ($\beta = .208$) was found to be the second most important motivation leading to Light and Deep engagement. It also had the highest average score from all the other motivations, with the average response being "agree" ($M = 5.73$). As suggested in theory, fans desire to be regarded as fans (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015) and by interacting in Instagram, it allows them to show their love for their favourite football team. Sports fans display unique characteristics, bearing a special bond to the club they loved while growing up (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick, 2015). The unique emotional attachments of sports fans to their teams were known, so it could be predicted that Brand Love would influence engagement with the team. What is genuinely interesting, however, is that Brand Love influences the first and the last stage of football fans Instagram engagement. It seems that in the second stage of engagement in Instagram, namely Considerable engagement, sports fans are mostly expressing their views on the team, interacting with others or co-creating content, without expressing their affection at this stage. Considerable engagement is a stage where probably fans are engaged substantially, however, they do not feel the need to share their love for the team. It could be described as a more pragmatic stage, taking into consideration that also Remuneration ($\beta = .171$) was found to be the other motivation responsible for the second stage of engagement. The statement of Albert & Merunka (2013) that consumer's brand love relies on both brand identification and identification with other customers seems to be in accordance with the previous ideas. At this stage, the fan is anticipating to engage in discourse with other fans, interact and express his views, in order to feel that his "voice" has power than having the need to identify with the club or the fellow supporters. Brand Love was also found to correlate significantly with Team Identification which further reinforces the previous statement. This finding is slightly different from the one of Vales and Fernandes (2018) that found Brand Love to be influencing all stages of Facebook engagement.

The next important finding of this study is that Integration and Social Interaction ($\beta = .265$) was found to be the main motivation for Light engagement. Consumers are seeking to accomplish self needs continuously (Grönroos, 2004) and social media facilitate this, through the interaction process. As theory suggested also, people desire to identify with like-minded people (Vales and Fernandes, 2018). Stavros et al. (2014) highlighted that fans desire to interact inside online communities, sharing a spirit of camaraderie that further strengthen their identification with the team. Moreover, As Parganas, Anagnostopoulos & Chadwick (2015) mentioned, fans desire to be regarded as fans. Based on the theory and the findings, it is believed that in the early stage of engagement, Light engagement, with the football team on Instagram, engagement is mostly superficial. Two suggestions can be made at this point. One that at this early stage of engagement, people can choose to follow a football team on Instagram, just for the societal advantages, like belonging to a group and not be left out. People may desire to interact with other people to achieve self-needs, such as belonging to a community. The second suggestion is that the first stage of engagement on Instagram could be a transition of fans in their early years of supporting a football team to the more engaged levels. This notion is reinforced by the suggestion of Stavros et al. (2014) that fans strive to interact inside online communities to share their spirit of camaraderie, that further strengthen their identification with the team. It is also supported by the fact that Brand Love is also a significant predictor of Light engagement that was argued previously that at the early stage of engagement the football fan needs to express his love for the club and to be integrated with football team's community. Moreover, supporting the previous claims, Brand Love and Integration and Social Interaction significantly correlated with each other. These results are different from the ones of Vales and Fernandes (2018), who they found that Information was the most significant motivation for the lowest level of Engagement on football team's Facebook. As it was mentioned above though and will be elaborated on the theoretical and practical implications section, Instagram engagement may be realized differently to the one in Facebook and the reasons for engaging on Instagram compared to other popular social media platforms are different.

Lastly, from the control variables, only Age seemed to negatively influence Light and Considerable engagement. This could suggest that the older football fans grow the lower is the Light and Considerable engagement.

5.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Concerning the theoretical implications of this study, as Hopkins (2013) argued, each social media platform has its unique characteristics for building relationships and approaching consumers. It was proved by the findings, that engagement in Instagram is realized in different ways than the one in Facebook and it is safe to suggest that it would also alter from the rest of the social media platforms. The differences in engagement between Facebook and Instagram are partly justified by the difference in the functionality of the two popular apps. However, as the interpretation of the factor loadings of the scales measuring Instagram engagement has shown, the stages of engagement are different in Instagram. The three developed engagement levels, Light, Considerable and Deep, explain better how engagement is realized in Instagram. It is clear that each social media app has its unique identity and different characteristics offered to its users. Hence, it is only natural, that the ways consumers engage in these social media platforms would alter.

As the findings presented before have shown, there are interesting results that imply certain ways engagement in Instagram works, but also indicate that there is a need for further research. Empowerment, Brand Love, Integration and Social Interaction and Remuneration were proved to be the motivations leading to Instagram engagement. It seems that in the early stage of engagement, Light engagement, the relationship of football fans is mostly superficial, as the fans attempting to be integrated into team's online community, interact with each other and share their love for the football team. The feeling of empowerment offered in this generation of prosumers appears to be the most important motivation in influencing the higher levels of football fans Instagram engagement. Fans seem to fully exploit the capabilities offered by new media, in other words, social media, to co-create content, interact and share their opinion online. It is surprising though, that despite the extant literature on how team identification affects engagement, in this study it was not

proved to influence any kind of engagement levels. Team identification was found to correlate significantly with Light engagement, however, causality was not found to exist.

The results, however, prove to be more interesting once they are compared to the ones of Vale and Fernandes (2018) studying Facebook engagement. Information proved to be the main motivation for the first level of Facebook engagement, compared to this study that has shown Integration and Social Interaction to be the main motivation for the first level of Instagram engagement. This could mean that fans may have specific reasons for accessing and using each social media app. A fan that is on the first stage of Facebook engagement, could use the app to gain information on football players, upcoming matches etc. The same fan being in the same level of engagement on the Instagram app may use the app when in need to interact with the team and team's community. However, the differences in engagement levels and motivations between Instagram and Facebook could vary over time, as social media apps update their features constantly and users' preferences transform continuously.

Concerning the practical implications deriving from this study, they are relevant to the theoretical ones. As Vale and Fernandes (2018) argued, sports organizations need guidance on the ways to engage with fans online and knowledge of their motivations for social media consumption. The blurriness, regarding how to increase engagement, how engagement is realized and which motivations influence each type of engagement, hardens the task of football teams and sports marketers. Football organizations need to predict fans' behaviours, capture the value created by the social interactions and drive up sales related to the team. Sport marketers can gain further insight into fans from this study. The main practical implication of this study is that it proved that Instagram engagement in the football context happens in different ways than on Facebook. Also, the motivations leading to each level of engagement alter between the two apps.

Sports organizations need to understand which functions push fans to deeply engage with the team, in order to create and retain a long and firm relationship with them. Moreover, since different motivations seem to work in the Instagram landscape, they need to try to stimulate those specific ones. Empowerment was shown to

significantly explain Considerable and Deep Engagement, as it was the main motivation for both. Social media consist the perfect environment for empowerment, as they facilitate interaction, co-creation and high consumers' involvement. Social media place consumers in a position of power to express their opinions. Hence, teams need to exploit the platform offered by social media to enhance consumers' feeling of empowerment, for example by creating hashtags and encouraging fans to use them and express their opinion and affiliation to the club. Teams could, for example, also use Instagram to create competitions for fans to design, share and vote on next year's football jersey, in other words, provide the platform to facilitate two-way interaction with the fans and empower them. Sports marketers should attempt to make fans have the impression that they contribute to important team decisions. They should take advantage of the co-creation ways offered by Instagram for empowerment and for fans to express their brand love.

As it was mentioned in the introduction, football has a global appeal and creates unique bonds between the football club and the fans. This was also proved by the fact that Brand Love was significant in influencing two of the three levels of Instagram engagement and it had the highest average score out of all other motivations. This is another proof that football is unique and requires a different approach from sports marketers. If football clubs understand the way engagement is realized in Instagram and they focus their relationship marketing in stimulating the specific motivations leading to the higher levels of Instagram engagement, they will be in a position to capture the value created by fans' interactions online and also create long-term relationships with them. Furthermore, the findings suggested that social media applications could probably be used as complimentary by football fans in achieving their self needs. Hence, this requires football clubs to further investigate the motivations presented in this study to work for Instagram engagement and attempt to distinguish different marketing strategies between the various social media platforms. In this way, they can dominate and increase their following, but most importantly maintain and strengthen their relationship with the fans.

5.3 Limitations and Further Research

As in every study, there are certain limitations and margins for improvement for future studies. As it was explained there is a significant gap on the antecedents for engaging with a brand and specifically on a sports context and how this engagement happens. This study has opened the way for future researchers to understand how Instagram engagement is realised. Moreover, it has also shown which motivations are important for this social media platform. Lastly, it attempted to create certain types of engagement that can explain how fans engage in this platform and measure Instagram engagement accurately.

The most significant limitation for this study is the sample size. Ideally, it should be larger so that the conclusions made regarding the current model are more reliable. However, due to time restraints the gathering of data was difficult. Furthermore, it would be wise to distribute the questionnaire on different periods to ensure that engagement levels and the motivations leading to them do not alter. It is common in the fast-changing social media world, users to change their habits regarding which social media apps they use and for what reason.

Moreover, a triangulation of research methods could significantly raise the validity of this research. Interviews could shed light on how each specific individual is engaging on Instagram and for which reasons. Subsequently, it would facilitate in shaping the questionnaire for the survey to extract more accurately the information about motivations and types of engagement. An experiment would help in getting unprocessed responses from fans and ensuring that the motivations and levels of engagement developed for Instagram are as close as to the truth as possible.

Lastly, even though the model explaining engagement with the motivations stated in theory was significant, the predictive power was not very high. This may mean that further research is needed to accurately measure the Instagram engagement and the motivations leading to it.

For future research, researchers could use the triangulation with the methods mentioned above to improve the validity of the results of the current study. Moreover, further investigation regarding the scale for the Instagram engagement should ensure, that these three types of engagement and the questions to measure them are the best possible. It is of major importance to develop levels of engagement that can accurately describe how engagement is realized. There are literature and knowledge

gaps regarding football fans engagement in Instagram and this is also explained by the scarce research on this topic, especially from the fans' perspective. Lastly, future researchers could elaborate on the model used by also adding games watched and team-related spending to test if these two factors are explained by certain motivations and levels of engagement.

References

- Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of marketing research*, 34(3), 347-356.
- Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., & Reid, I. (2013). Relationship marketing and social media in sport. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 6(2), 120-142.
- Albert, N., & Merunka, D. (2013). The role of brand love in consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*.
- Andrews, D., Nonnecke, B., & Preece, J. (2007). Conducting research on the internet:: Online survey design, development and implementation guidelines.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of management review*, 14(1), 20-39.
- Babbie, E. R. (2016). *The practice of social research* (Fourteenth). Cengage Learning.
- Bauer, H. H., Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., & Exler, S. (2008). Brand image and fan loyalty in professional team sport: A refined model and empirical assessment. *Journal of sport Management*, 22(2), 205-226.
- Bee, C. C., & Kahle, L. R. (2006). Relationship marketing in sports: A functional approach. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 15(2).
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of consumer research*, 15(2), 139-168.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., Rao, H., & Glynn, M. A. (1995). Understanding the bond of identification: An investigation of its correlates among art museum members. *Journal of marketing*, 59(4), 46-57.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2003). Consumer–company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. *Journal of marketing*, 67(2), 76-88.
- Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., & Hollebeek, L. (2013). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of business research*, 66(1), 105-114.
- Clement, J. (2019, Dec. 3). Number of monthly active Instagram users from January 2013 to June 2018. Retrieved from:

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/253577/number-of-monthly-active-instagram-users/>

Clement, J. (2020a, Jan. 8). Number of daily active Instagram Stories users from October 2016 to January 2019. Retrieved from:

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/730315/instagram-stories-dau/>

Clement, J. (2020b, Mar. 9). Most popular social networks of teenagers in the United States from fall 2012 to fall 2019. Retrieved from:

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/250172/social-network-usage-of-us-teens-and-young-adults/>

Clement, J. (2020c, Apr. 29). Most popular mobile social networking apps in the United States as of September 2019, by monthly users. Retrieved from:

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/248074/most-popular-us-social-networking-apps-ranked-by-audience/>

Copulsky, J. R., & Wolf, M. J. (1990). Relationship marketing: positioning for the future. *Journal of Business Strategy*.

Donavan, D. T., Carlson, B., & Zimmerman, M. (2005). Personality influences on spectator need for affiliation and identification. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 14(1), 31-42.

Enginkaya, E., & Yilmaz, H. (2014). What drives consumers to interact with brands through social media? A motivation scale development study. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 148, 219-226.

Evans, J., & Mathur, A. (2005). The value of online surveys. *Internet Research*, 15(2), 195-219. doi:10.1108/10662240510590360

Fetchko, M.J., Roy, D.P. and Clow, K.E. (2013), *Sports Marketing*, Pearson Education Inc., New Jersey, NJ.

Filo, K., Lock, D., & Karg, A. (2015). Sport and social media research: A review. *Sport management review*, 18(2), 166-181.

FourFourTwo Staff. (2017, Jan. 16). Juventus unveil dramatic change to club logo - but not everyone's a fan. Retrieved from:

<https://www.fourfourtwo.com/news/juventus-unveil-dramatic-change-club-logo-not-everyones-a-fan>

Fowler, F. J. (2009). Types of error in surveys. In Fowler, F. J. *Applied Social Research Methods: Survey research methods (4th ed.)* (pp. 11-17). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781452230184

García, C. (2011). Real Madrid Football Club: Applying a relationship-management model to a sport organization in Spain. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 4(3), 284-299.

Gough, C. (2019, Oct. 9). Revenue of the biggest (Big Five*) European soccer leagues from 1996/97 to 2019/20. Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/261218/big-five-european-soccer-leagues-revenue/>

Gough, C. (2020, Feb. 11). Most valuable football brands worldwide in 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/234493/football-clubs-in-europe-by-brand-value/>

Green, B. C. (2001). Leveraging subculture and identity to promote sport events. *Sport Management Review*, 4(1), 1-19.

Grönroos, C. (2004). The relationship marketing process: communication, interaction, dialogue, value. *Journal of business & industrial marketing*.

Hollebeek, L., & Brodie, R. (2016). Non-monetary social and network value: Understanding the effects of non-paying customers in new media. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 24, 169–174. doi:10.1080/0965254X.2015.1097093

Holt, D. B. (1995). How consumers consume: A typology of consumption practices. *Journal of consumer research*, 22(1), 1-16.

Hopkins, J. L. (2013). Engaging Australian Rules Football fans with social media: A case study. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 13(1-2), 104-121.

Jafarnejad, A., Shahroudi, K. and Mousagholizadeh, F. (2012), “Analysis of the effect of brand personality on customer loyalty to the Mellat Bank brand in the Tehran province”, *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, Vol. 3 No. 9, pp. 791-800.

Kahle, L. R. (1996). Social values and consumer behavior: Research from the list of values. In *The psychology of values: The Ontario symposium* (Vol. 8, pp. 135-151). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Karjaluoto, H., Munnukka, J., & Salmi, M. (2016). How do brand personality, identification, and relationship length drive loyalty in sports?. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*.

Kim, C. K., Han, D., & Park, S. B. (2001). The effect of brand personality and brand identification on brand loyalty: Applying the theory of social identification. *Japanese psychological research*, 43(4), 195-206.

- Kim, Y. K. (2008). *Relationship framework in sport management: How relationship quality affects sport consumption behaviors*. University of Florida.
- Kim, Y. K., & Trail, G. (2011). A conceptual framework for understanding relationships between sport consumers and sport organizations: A relationship quality approach. *Journal of sport management*, 25(1), 57-69.
- Kleine, R. E., Kleine, S. S., & Kernan, J. B. (1993). Mundane consumption and the self: A social-identity perspective. *Journal of consumer psychology*, 2(3), 209-235.
- Krishnamurthy, S., & Dou, W. (2008). Advertising with user-generated content: A framework and research agenda. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 8(22), 1-9.
- Kuenzel, S., & Halliday, S. V. (2010). The chain of effects from reputation and brand personality congruence to brand loyalty: The role of brand identification. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 18(3-4), 167-176.
- Kwon, H. H., & Armstrong, K. L. (2002). Factors influencing impulse buying of sport team licensed merchandise. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 11(3).
- Lam, S. K., Ahearne, M., Mullins, R., Hayati, B., & Schillewaert, N. (2013). Exploring the dynamics of antecedents to consumer-brand identification with a new brand. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41(2), 234-252.
- Lariscy, R. W., Tinkham, S. F., & Sweetser, K. D. (2011). Kids these days: Examining differences in political uses and gratifications, Internet political participation, political information efficacy, and cynicism on the basis of age. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(6), 749-764.
- Lawrence, N. (2014). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*.
- Lichtenstein, D. R., Drumwright, M. E., & Braig, B. M. (2004). The effect of corporate social responsibility on customer donations to corporate-supported nonprofits. *Journal of marketing*, 68(4), 16-32.
- Matthews, B., & Ross, L. (2010). *Research methods a practical guide for the social sciences* Essex.
- McCarthy, J., Rowley, J., Ashworth, C. J., & Pioch, E. (2014). Managing brand presence through social media: the case of UK football clubs. *Internet Research*.

- Meadows-Klue, D. (2008). Opinion piece: Falling in Love 2.0: Relationship marketing for the Facebook generation. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 9(3), 245-250.
- Mittal, B. (2006). I, me, and mine—how products become consumers' extended selves. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour: An International Research Review*, 5(6), 550-562.
- Mullin, B. J., Hardy, S., & Sutton, W. A. (2007). Sport marketing, human kinetics.
- New logo, new identity: A new era begins. (2017, July 1). Retrieved from: <https://www.juventus.com/en/news/news/2017/new-logo-new-era.php>
- O'Shea, M., & Alonso, A. D. (2012). Opportunity or obstacle? A preliminary study of professional sport organisations in the age of social media. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 10(3-4), 196-212.
- Parganas, P., Anagnostopoulos, C., & Chadwick, S. (2015). 'You'll never tweet alone': Managing sports brands through social media. *Journal of Brand Management*, 22(7), 551-568.
- Pfahl, M. E., Kreutzer, A., Maleski, M., Lillibridge, J., & Ryznar, J. (2012). If you build it, will they come?: A case study of digital spaces and brand in the National Basketball Association. *Sport Management Review*, 15(4), 518-537.
- Punch, K. F. (2003). *Survey research: The basics*. Sage.
- Ragin, C. C., & Amoroso, M. L. (1994). Constructing social research: Sociology for a new century.
- Richelieu, A. (2004). A new brand world for sports teams. In *Sharing best practices in sport marketing: the Sport Marketing Association's inaugural book of papers. Inaugural Conference, November, 2003* (pp. 3-21). Fitness Information Technology, Inc..
- Rubin, A. M. (1983). Television uses and gratifications: The interactions of viewing patterns and motivations. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 27(1), 37-51.
- Runyan, R. C., Carlson, B. D., Donovan, D. T., & Cumiskey, K. J. (2009). Consumer-brand relationships in sport: brand personality and identification. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*.
- Sapsford, R. (2007). What is survey research?. In Sapsford, R. *Survey research* (pp. 2-12). London: SAGE Publications, Ltd doi: 10.4135/9780857024664

Shamir, B. (1992). Some correlates of leisure identity salience: Three exploratory studies. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 24(4), 301-323.

Shani, D. (1997). A framework for implementing relationship marketing in the sport industry. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 6, 9-16.

Sheth, J. N., & Parvatiyar, A. (1995). The evolution of relationship marketing. *International business review*, 4(4), 397-418.

Sheth, J. N., & Parvatiyar, A. (2000). *Handbook of relationship marketing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Shilbury, D., Westerbeek, H., Quick, S., Funk, D., & Karg, A. (2014). *Strategic sport marketing* (4th ed.). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Siguencia, L. O., Herman, D., Marzano, G., & Rodak, P. (2017). The Role of Social Media in Sports Communication Management: an Analysis of Polish Top League Teams' Strategy. *Procedia computer science*, 104, 73-80.

Smith, A. C., Graetz, B. R., & Westerbeek, H. M. (2006). Brand personality in a membership-based organisation. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 11(3), 251-266.

Statista Research Department. (2015, Feb. 10). Premier League TV broadcasting rights revenue* from 1992 to 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/385002/premier-league-tv-rights-revenue/>

Stavros, C., Meng, M. D., Westberg, K., & Farrelly, F. (2014). Understanding fan motivation for interacting on social media. *Sport management review*, 17(4), 455-469.

Stevens, S., & Rosenberger, P. J. (2012). The influence of involvement, following sport and fan identification on fan loyalty: An Australian perspective. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 13(3), 221-235.

Stokburger-Sauer, N., Ratneshwar, S., & Sen, S. (2012). Motivations of consumer–brand identification. *International journal of research in marketing*, 29(4), 406-418.

Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., & Teichmann, K. (2014). The relevance of consumer—brand identification in the team sport industry. *Marketing Review St. Gallen*, 31(2), 20-31.

Taherdoost, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology; how to choose a sampling technique for research. *How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research* (April 10, 2016).

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1985). The social identity of intergroup behavior,[in:] Worchel S. *Psychology and intergroup relations*. Nelson-Hall, Chicago.

Tuškej, U., Golob, U., & Podnar, K. (2013). The role of consumer–brand identification in building brand relationships. *Journal of business research*, 66(1), 53-59.

Vale, L., & Fernandes, T. (2018). Social media and sports: driving fan engagement with football clubs on Facebook. *Journal of strategic marketing*, 26(1), 37-55.

Vallerand, R. J., Ntoumanis, N., Philippe, F. L., Lavigne, G. L., Carbonneau, N., Bonneville, A., ... & Maliha, G. (2008). On passion and sports fans: A look at football. *Journal of sports sciences*, 26(12), 1279-1293.

Van Doorn, J., Lemon, K. N., Mittal, V., Nass, S., Pick, D., Pirner, P., & Verhoef, P. C. (2010). Customer engagement behavior: Theoretical foundations and research directions. *Journal of service research*, 13(3), 253-266.

Vivek, S. D., Beatty, S. E., & Morgan, R. M. (2012). Customer engagement: Exploring customer relationships beyond purchase. *Journal of marketing theory and practice*, 20(2), 122-146.

Whiting, A., & Williams, D. (2013). Why people use social media: a uses and gratifications approach. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*.

Williams, J., & Chinn, S. J. (2010). Meeting relationship-marketing goals through social media: A conceptual model for sport marketers. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 3(4), 422-437.

Witkemper, C., Lim, C. H., & Waldburger, A. (2012). Social media and sports marketing: Examining the motivations and constraints of Twitter users. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 21(3).

Yan, J. (2011). Social media in branding: Fulfilling a need. *Journal of brand management*, 18(9), 688-696.

Appendix

Appendix A – Questionnaire

Hello,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our research. The following survey will take about 10-15 minutes of your time, but your participation is extremely valuable to our research.

This survey studies sports media consumption, regarding the football team you support and identification with that team. It is necessary that you are a football fan, own an Instagram account and follow the football team you support on Instagram.

Be assured that your anonymity is guaranteed in this survey. You should also be aware that there are no right or wrong answers. Please try to fill in the survey as precise as possible.

If you consent to participate in this survey, answer yes below, otherwise thank you for taking the time to follow the link anyway.

Yes

No

Q1 Tell us some information about yourself concerning football

Are you a football fan?

Yes

No

Q2 Which team do you support?

Q3 Do you own an Instagram account?

Yes

No

Q4 Are you following your favourite football team on Instagram?

Yes

No

Time to get to know you better

Q5 Gender

Male

Female

Prefer not to answer

Q6 Age

Under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-65

65-74

75-84

85 or older

Q7 Education

Less than high school

High School graduate

Bachelor degree

Master's degree

O Doctorate

Q8 Location

O A. North America/ Central America

O B. South America

O C. Europe

O D. Africa

O E. Asia

O F. Australia

O G. Caribbean Islands

O H. Pacific Islands

O I. Other

O J. Prefer not to say

The following part is about what motivates you to follow your favourite team on Instagram

Q9 Information (Hidden)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The sport-related information is useful							
I want to know what							

other people think about the sport club							
I can get information about team performance, player profiles, events and games scheduled							
Because it helps me in forming an opinion about the sport club							

Q10 Entertainment (Hidden)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I like participating in this community because it is entertaining							

The community provides an outlet for me to escape my daily routine							
It arouses my emotions and feelings							
It relaxes me							

Q11 Personal Identity (Hidden)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I want to express what kind of person I am							
It gives me self-confidence							
I want to impress others with what I							

know about the sport club							
---------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Q12 Integration & Social Interaction (Hidden)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I look forward to talking, discussing, and sharing information with others that also like the sport club							
Being part of this community makes me feel more connected to the sport club							
It makes me feel less lonely							

I feel closer to the sport club							
---------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Q13 Empowerment (Hidden)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I want to influence the club to do, or to leave, something							
I want to influence other people							
I feel good about myself when other community members share my ideas and comments							
Receiving more affirmation about my							

comments makes me want to participate in the community							
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Q14 Remuneration (Hidden)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
When I want to buy a ticket, I use the club's community to search for bargain prices							
I'm motivated to participate in this community because I can earn money, prizes or discounts							

I am able to obtain information							
I want without any delay							
I want to get a better service							

Q15 Brand Love (Hidden)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I'm motivated to participate in the community because I'm passionate about the sport club							
I associate the sport club with some important							

events of my life							
I participate in the community because I care about the sport club							
I identify myself with the sport club							

Q16 Consuming (Hidden)

	Always	Most of the time	Often	About half the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I view photos posted by the sport club on Instagram							
I watch videos posted by the sport club on Instagram							
I read the description accompanying the content							

posted by the sport club on Instagram							
I view pictures, videos and comments of others about the sport club on Instagram							
I view the stories posted by the sport club on Instagram							
I receive and view notifications when the sport club posts pictures or videos, uploads stories, uploads IGTV videos or live videos							
I "swipe up" on the Instagram stories of the sport club							

and/or I follow the link on the sport club's bio, when I read it in the posts' descriptions							
I follow hashtags used from the sport club on posts' description or on stories on Instagram							

Q17 Contributing (Hidden)

	Always	Most of the time	Often	About half the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I 'like' content posted by the sport club on Instagram							
I share content posted by the sport club on							

Instagram Direct							
I share content posted by the sport club on my Instagram stories							
I comment on pictures or videos posted by the sport club on Instagram							
I respond to polls, questions, quizzes, slide bars or live stories set by the sport club on Instagram							

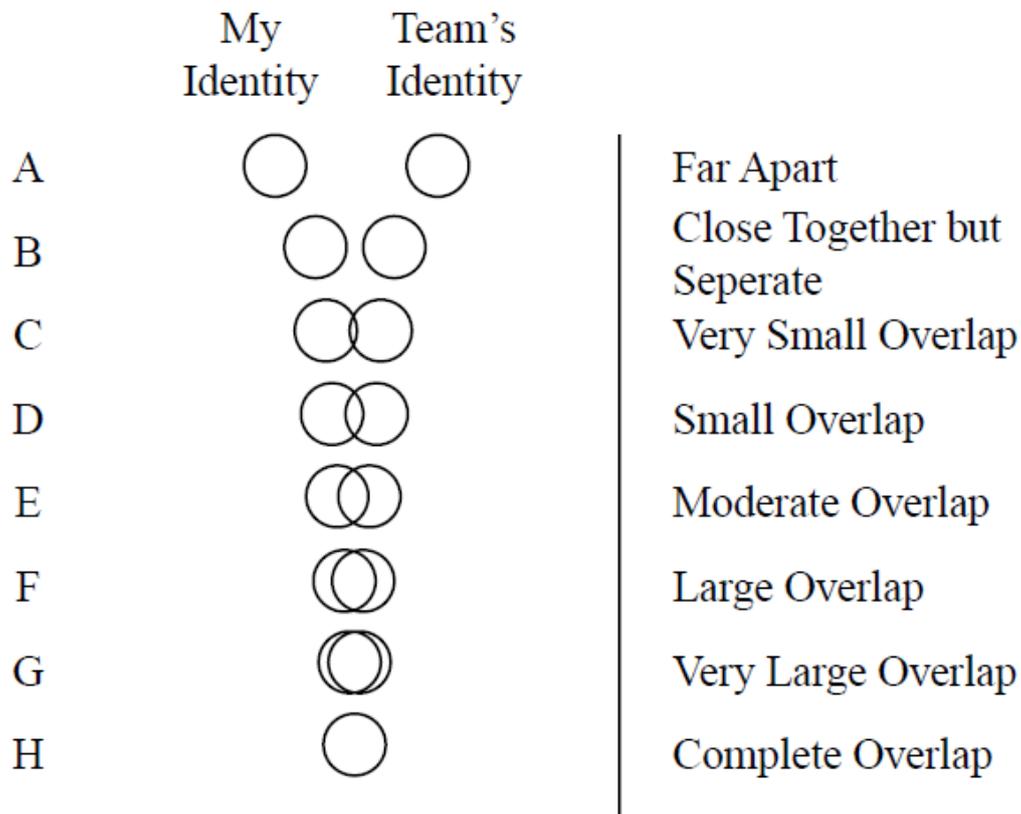
Q18 Creation (Hidden)

Always	Most of the time	Often	About half the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
--------	------------------	-------	---------------------	-----------	--------	-------

I upload posts related to the sport club on Instagram							
I upload pictures or videos related to the sport club on my Instagram stories							
I upload personal pictures or videos related to the sport club on the feed or on my stories on Instagram							
I add labels or hashtags on my posts' description or on my stories related to							

the sport club on Instagram							
I comment my personal opinion on others' posts or stories related to the sport club on Instagram							
I have created a fan account relating to the sport club on Instagram							

Q19 Team Identification



Please indicate which case (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, or H) best describes the level of overlap between your own and your team's identities.

A: Far Apart

B: Close Together but Separate

C: Very Small Overlap

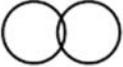
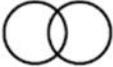
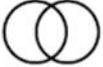
D: Small Overlap

E: Moderate Overlap

F: Large Overlap

G: Very Large Overlap

H: Complete Overlap

	My Identity	Team's Identity	
A			Far Apart
B			Close Together but Separate
C			Very Small Overlap
D			Small Overlap
E			Moderate Overlap
F			Large Overlap
G			Very Large Overlap
H			Complete Overlap

Please indicate to what degree your self-image overlaps with the image of the team.

A: Far Apart

B: Close Together but Separate

C: Very Small Overlap

D: Small Overlap

E: Moderate Overlap

F: Large Overlap

G: Very Large Overlap

H: Complete Overlap

Q20 Would you like to comment on something regarding the questionnaire?

Yes

No

Thank you for participating in our research. Your contribution is of major importance to our research. We wish you a great day and keep enjoying football!

Appendix B- Assumptions testing

Appendix B1-Assumptions testing for Light engagement

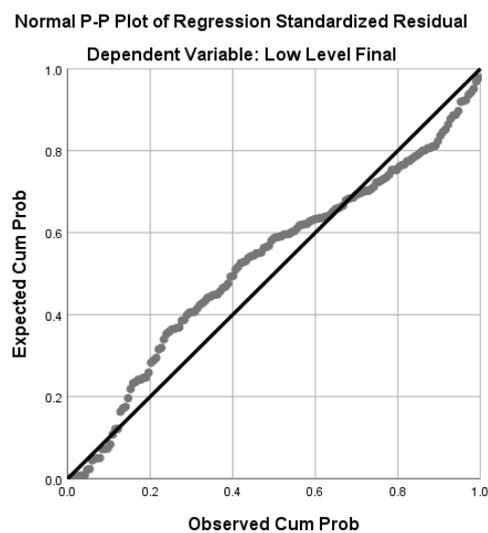


Figure B1.1. Linearity testing

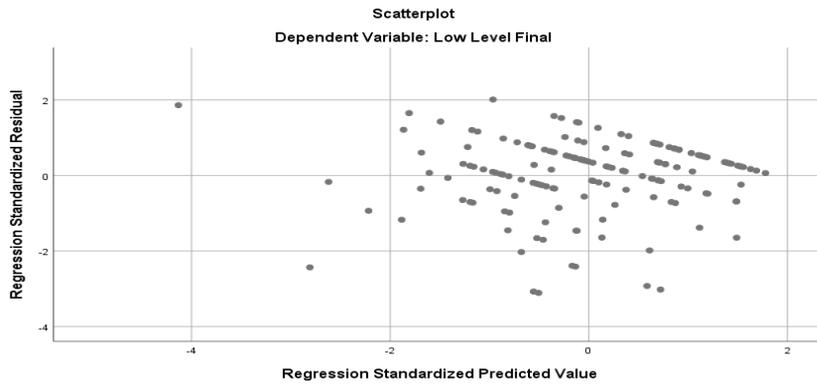


Figure B1.2. Homoscedasticity testing

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.973	.910		2.168	.032		
	Information Final	.178	.098	.144	1.811	.072	.689	1.452
	Entertainment Final	.076	.092	.071	.824	.411	.596	1.679
	Personal_Identity Final	-.078	.061	-.109	-1.267	.207	.592	1.688
	Integration & Socia Interaction Final	.244	.097	.248	2.505	.013	.446	2.243
	Empowerment Final	.018	.069	.025	.265	.792	.487	2.055
	Remuneration Final	-.019	.057	-.025	-.336	.737	.773	1.294
	Brand Love Final	.223	.107	.195	2.081	.039	.497	2.011
	Team Identification	.089	.052	.125	1.711	.089	.819	1.222
	Age	-.202	.100	-.147	-2.032	.044	.837	1.194
	Education	.051	.108	.034	.475	.635	.861	1.162
	Gender Regression	-.135	.246	-.038	-.548	.584	.914	1.094
	Location Regression	.041	.202	.014	.201	.841	.915	1.093

a. Dependent Variable: Low Level Final

Figure B1.3. Multicollinearity testing

Appendix B2- Assumptions testing for Considerable Engagement

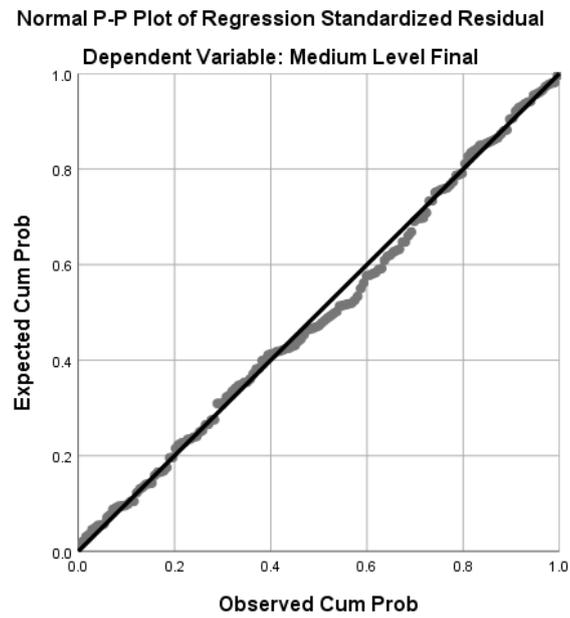


Figure B2.1. Linearity testing

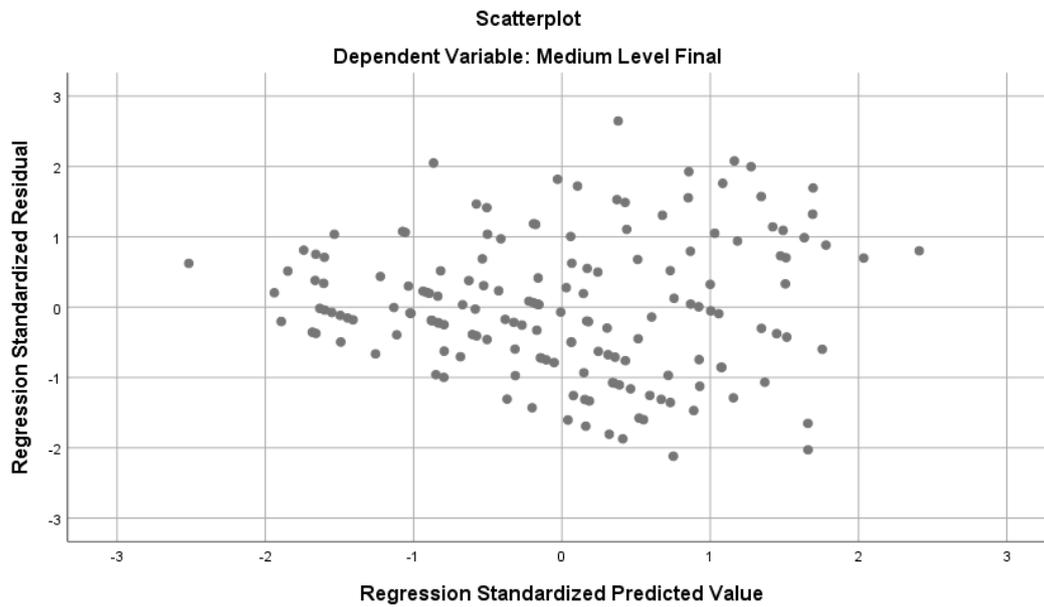


Figure B2.2. Homoscedasticity testing

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.002	1.164		.002	.998		
	Information Final	-.100	.126	-.063	-.798	.426	.689	1.452
	Entertainment Final	.054	.117	.039	.457	.648	.596	1.679
	Personal_Identity Final	-.019	.079	-.020	-.237	.813	.592	1.688
	Integration & Social Interaction Final	.166	.125	.131	1.331	.185	.446	2.243
	Empowerment Final	.325	.088	.347	3.688	.000	.487	2.055
	Remuneration Final	.159	.073	.163	2.188	.030	.773	1.294
	Brand Love Final	.234	.137	.159	1.706	.090	.497	2.011
	Team Identification	-.086	.066	-.094	-1.298	.196	.819	1.222
	Age	.270	.128	.152	2.114	.036	.837	1.194
	Education	-.190	.138	-.097	-1.373	.172	.861	1.162
	Gender Regression	.184	.314	.040	.586	.559	.914	1.094
	Location Regression	-.371	.259	-.098	-1.432	.154	.915	1.093

a. Dependent Variable: Medium Level Final

Figure B2.3. Multicollinearity testing

Appendix B3- Assumptions testing for Deep Engagement

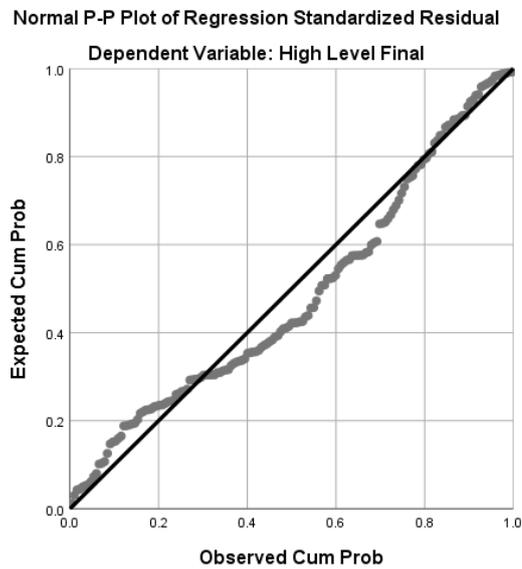


Figure B3.1. Linearity testing

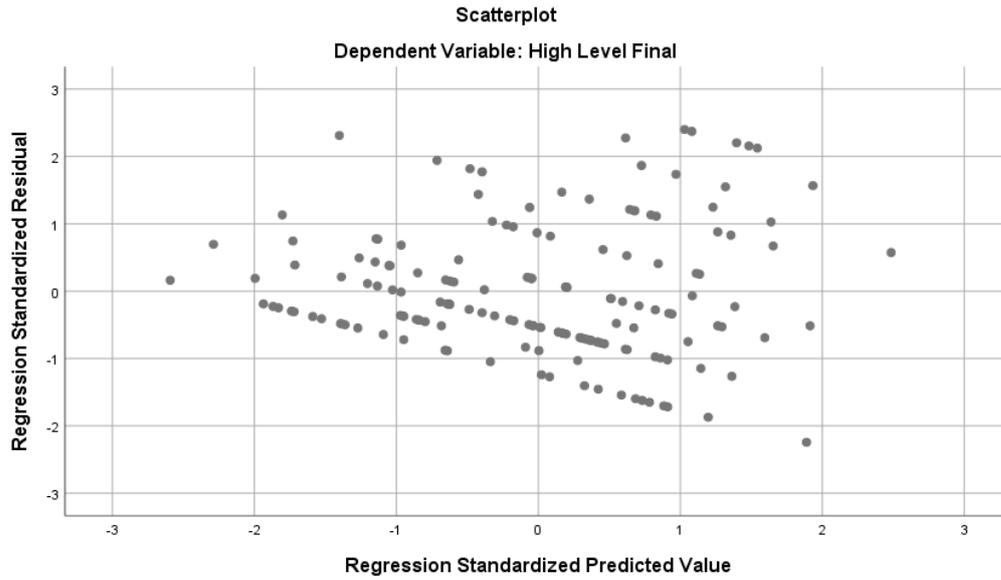


Figure B2.2. Homoscedasticity testing

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.945	1.252		.755	.452		
	Information Final	-.026	.135	-.016	-.189	.850	.689	1.452
	Entertainment Final	-.023	.126	-.017	-.184	.855	.596	1.679
	Personal_Identity Final	.051	.084	.056	.599	.550	.592	1.688
	Integration & Socia Interaction Final	-.041	.134	-.033	-.308	.758	.446	2.243
	Empowerment Final	.247	.095	.269	2.612	.010	.487	2.055
	Remuneration Final	.039	.078	.040	.494	.622	.773	1.294
	Brand Love Final	.386	.147	.267	2.619	.010	.497	2.011
	Team Identification	-.082	.071	-.092	-1.156	.250	.819	1.222
	Age	-.002	.137	-.001	-.013	.990	.837	1.194
	Education	-.293	.149	-.152	-1.969	.051	.861	1.162
	Gender Regression	.186	.338	.041	.549	.584	.914	1.094
	Location Regression	-.139	.278	-.038	-0.501	.617	.915	1.093

a. Dependent Variable: High Level Final

Figure B3.3. Multicollinearity testing