



EUROPEAN FOOTBALL CLUBS AND THEIR OVERSEAS FANS: TIME TO RETHINK MARKETING?

Dr Simon Chadwick

Professor of Sport Business Strategy and
Marketing, Coventry University Business
School & Co-Director of the Birkbeck
Sport Business Centre, University of London





Aims

- To provide an overview of the global development of football
- To identify drivers and problems associated with the phenomenon
- To profile the results of studies undertaken in China, South Korea and Japan
- To provide recommendations for more effective and responsible approaches to marketing



The global game

- Football globally worth \$12 billion per annum (Forbes, 2005)
- English Premier League thought to generate approximately 2 billion Euros worth of activity each year (Deloitte, 2005)
- 8 of the top 20 clubs in the Deloitte European Money League are English (Deloitte, 2006)
- 40% of the UK population express a strong interest in football (Intel, 2004)
- Manchester United is the world's most valuable soccer brand and the third most valuable sports brand (Futurebrand, 2001)
- Manchester United is the world's second most valuable football club brand (BBDO, 2006)



Asia's game?

- AFC accounts for only 9.5% of total world professional and amateur clubs (FIFA, 2000)
- UEFA accounts for 63.3% of total world professional and amateur soccer clubs - 225,000 registered clubs (FIFA, 2000)
- 53% of soccer fans in China have an interest in the Premier League, 51% in Serie A and 45% in La Liga (Sport und Markt, 2003)
- Only 45% of Chinese population claim to have an interest in Chinese football (Sport und Markt, 2003)
- Manchester United has estimated global fan base of 75 million; 1.5 million in UK and 25 million in China (Media Asia, 2005)



The dash for cash

- Pursuit of new revenue streams & profit
- Player acquisition and remuneration costs
- Internet and new media opportunities
- Changing business and management models
- Identification of latent brand equity



Initial concerns

- Exploitation of overseas markets
- Revenue-driven
- Sales-driven
- Brutal and blunt approach
- Cultural homogenisation
- Absence of empathy and affiliation
- Self-defeating
- Short-termist and commercially naive



Research methodology

- Preliminary interviews – a total of 32 across three countries
- Survey – online questionnaire
- Three sections – teams supported; products purchased; motives for supporting teams
- Numerous problems – language and cultural understanding of concepts; access to sample populations; gathering and translating responses
- China: 1118 responses
- South Korea: 604 responses
- Japan: 594 responses





China

- Manchester United the top club
- Strong showings for Real Madrid, two Milan clubs and Chelsea
- Particularly strong young, male interest
- Collective consumption via television important
- European football a luxury, aspirational consumption choice
- Economy – disposable income levels drive consumption
- ‘Englishness’ – PL the most exciting, glamorous league



South Korea

- Manchester United the top club
- Strong support for PSV Eindhoven
- Particularly strong young, male interest
- Individual, internet consumption of the product important
- European football a fashion statement; consumption of a branded Western product
- Self-actualisation – supporting particular teams confers ‘self’ benefits



Japan

- Manchester United, followed closely by Barcelona, then AC Milan (some Liverpool interest)
- Particularly strong young, male interest
- Individual, home-based, televised consumption of the product important
- European football consumed as a product of superior quality
- Nationalism not a major factor; signing a Japanese less likely to influence support than in China and South Korea

Interpreting the results

- Overseas fans are all different!
- Cannot/should not be viewed as a homogenous mass
- Motives and modes of consumption are different
- Socio-cultural influences
- Economic influences
- Psychological influences
- Multinational juggernaut or culturally sensitive, relationship-oriented organisations?





Overseas marketing

- Not a 'smash and grab' raid
- Remove geographic, psychological and personal distance
- Effective marketing achieved by understanding and relating to each different market
- Sustainable fan base built through closeness to fans
- Viewing overseas markets in 'Win-Win' terms is essential
- Naïve to assume 'turning over shirts is the way to go



Thanks for listening





Contact details

Dr Simon Chadwick, Professor of Sport
Business Strategy and Marketing,
Coventry University Business School,
Priory Street, Coventry CV1 5FB, UK

Tel. +44 (0)24 76412365

E-mail: Simon.Chadwick@coventry.ac.uk